

2 June 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the UNRWA High-Level Conference**

**Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Since the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) first began its work in 1950, few could have imagined that 65 years later, it would continue to play such a vital role in the lives of millions of Palestine refugees.

Since its establishment, UNRWA's mandate has evolved and expanded in many unanticipated ways, although its commitment to improving the lives of Palestine refugees has remained unwavering.

Today, UNRWA provides assistance and protection to nearly 5.2 million registered Palestine refugees through the provision of health care, education, social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and microenterprise, and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.

Thanks to the steadfast support of many Member States, UNRWA has made important contributions to the human development and protection of Palestine refugees.

**Excellencies,**

The deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions in the region, as well as increasing instability due to conflict has had devastating impacts on the lives of the Palestine refugees.

These conditions have created formidable obstacles to the Agency's ability to provide necessary assistance, including in many facets of its emergency, recovery, reconstruction and development programmes.

Last year's conflict in Gaza has had far-reaching, negative impacts on the 1.2 million people UNRWA provides assistance to there. Thousands died and many more were injured, some of whom will suffer from life-long physical disabilities and emotional trauma.

The large scale destruction that took place is further amplified by a lack of resources. It is of great importance that the necessary funding is provided as quickly as possible so that reconstruction can begin in Gaza.

In this context, I urge all donors to seek ways to further support UNRWA's vital work across the region. Renewed support from the UN system, donors and the international community will be critical to further strengthening the work of the Agency.

I wish to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to UNRWA under the leadership of the Commissioner-General, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl for its extraordinary work.

I also thank all those who work tirelessly on behalf of Palestine refugees and express my sincere condolences to the loved ones of those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

I thank you.