

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

VIDEO REMARKS TO UNRWA CONFERENCE

Brussels 16 November 2021

I am pleased to join you in this critical conference in support of UNRWA.

My thanks to the governments of Jordan and Sweden for organizing this event and to all of you for being here.

You understand the essential role that UNRWA plays in the lives of generations of Palestine refugees.

UNRWA today is providing more than half a million children with high quality education;

Investing in human development;

Ensuring that Palestine refugees -- children, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities-- have lifelines of hope and opportunity;

Managing the impact of shocks on the most vulnerable;

And empowering millions, despite the many obstacles and difficult conditions in which they live.

Through all of these efforts and more,

UNRWA is also enabling many of them to make extraordinary contributions to their communities and to the world at large.

And UNRWA is playing a pivotal role in promoting regional stability.

UN Member States have agreed on UNRWA's comprehensive mandate for decades.

And yet UNRWA continues to face an existential crisis. We need to protect UNRWA from being used as a political pawn – and focus on its ability to carry out its General Assembly mandate and its unrelenting commitment to humanitarian principles and shared UN values.

Despite widely recognized achievements, UNRWA is prevented from assisting Palestine refugees in a predictable way.

Overwhelming support for UNRWA is not adequately matched by sufficient funding for its operations.

These recurring funding crises have led UNRWA to introduce austerity measures.

But these have reached their limits. What UNRWA really needs is adequate resources, including human resources.

I have put forward a proposal to the General Assembly for additional posts from the UN Regular Budget as a step to increase the core capacity of the Agency.

Today, I have two specific requests:

First, we need urgent and decisive support to maintain UNRWA's ability to operate this year. We must bridge the immediate funding gap. UNRWA's essential health, education and services must not be interrupted. A disruption of services and salaries would have a crippling impact – especially in a region already struggling with the consequences of the pandemic. These repeated funding crises affect the quality of UNRWA's services and impose immense stress on Palestine refugees.

Second, I urge Member States to step up longer-term commitments and solidarity and match the generosity of the countries that host Palestine refugees. We need to collectively find a path towards more predictable, sufficient and sustainable funding for the Agency, including through multi-year commitments. I ask for your support.

Finally, I know you join me in expressing deep admiration for UNRWA's work -- day in day out. The teachers, the doctors and nurses, the sanitation workers, the engineers, and so many others -- all are working under extreme duress to provide Palestine refugees with access to basic services that all of us take for granted.

I am grateful to all UNRWA staff for their tireless efforts to deliver, protect the rights of Palestine refugees and support their human development. Let's help them help Palestine refugees. An investment in UNRWA is an investment in peace and hope. Thank you.

Watch the video:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+/SG+9+Nov+21/2683744_MSG+SG+UNRWA+PLEDGING+CONFERENCE+09+NOV+21.mp4