

Mr. President,  
Madam Deputy Commissioner-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs of Luxembourg, it is for me a great pleasure to be able to take part for the first time in person in the important work of this Ad Hoc Committee which allows the members of the United Nations General Assembly to announce their voluntary contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA. I would like, first of all, to reiterate the full support of Luxembourg to UNRWA, which continues its remarkable and still indispensable service to five million Palestinian refugees, in particular with regard to economic development, access to education, access to health and, more generally, access to basic social services.

Madam Deputy Commissioner-General,

I am particularly delighted that Luxembourg has been invited this year to become a member of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA. This membership testifies the continuous commitment of our country to support the Agency. We intend to play our role in this context, as demonstrated by our first participation in the meeting of the Advisory Commission which was held on November 28 and 29, in Jordan.

UNRWA is Luxembourg's main partner when it comes to assisting the Palestinian people. Since 2009, Luxembourg has provided financial support to the activities of UNRWA, covering both general budget and programmes, amounting each year to over 5 million dollars, which is equivalent to 57% of our overall support for the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This contribution comes in addition to the support channeled through the European Union, to which Luxembourg contributes its share as a Member State.

In order to strengthen our partnership even further, we have decided to conclude a multi-year agreement with UNRWA, mirroring our commitment to other Funds and Programmes. We hope to sign this agreement in early 2012. In this framework, we are ready to envisage even more predictable and flexible multi-annual contributions both to UNRWA's general budget and to programmes in the field, for example in the sectors of health and microfinance.

We remain very concerned by the economic and humanitarian situation of refugees, and more particularly by the critical situation in the Gaza Strip, where 75% of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. The ongoing restrictions on movement and access have adverse consequences on access by Palestinians to basic social services such as health and education and threaten the economic viability of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Luxembourg shares the view of those who point out that the problem is not logistics, but politics, and that we must continue to work for a sustainable solution, a solution based on the coexistence of two States, the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. President,

To quote Commissioner-General Grandi, we acknowledge that « financial support is as important as political support, especially in the present context ».

Next year, the Agency can continue to count on the substantial support of Luxembourg. I have thus the honour to announce today that in 2012, Luxembourg will increase substantially its voluntary contribution to the general budget of UNRWA. This contribution will go up from 2.75 to 3.75 million euro, or approximately 5.1 million dollars, which represents an increase of more than 36%. This announcement of contribution is made subject to approval of the 2012 budget by our Parliament.

We pledge to UNRWA our full cooperation for the ever more crucial support it lends to the Palestinian refugees.

I thank you for your attention.