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General Assembly
66th session

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for
Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

Swiss Statement

presented by
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Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations

New York, 1 November 2011

Madam Chair,

Switzerland welcomes the efforts undertaken by UNRWA over the past few years. UNRWA's central role as a provider of education, health, relief and social services, as well as camp infrastructure, microfinance, protection and emergency assistance in its five fields of operation, has been essential and is broadly acknowledged.

In the current volatile regional context, this role is more crucial than ever. It is therefore of the utmost importance that UNRWA continues to fulfil its mandate in the best possible way, in cooperation with national and local authorities. This applies in particular to Syria, where the economic situation has considerably deteriorated over the past few months, thereby affecting the most vulnerable groups, including refugees. We also urge the Lebanese authorities to effectively implement the legislation adopted in 2010 by the Parliament aimed at facilitating access for refugees to employment opportunities. Moreover, ongoing and systematic violations of international humanitarian law in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, continue to negatively impact on the basic human rights of Palestinian refugees, as well as on their human development, while at the same time placing an additional enormous financial burden on the donor community.

While the international community has repeatedly acknowledged UNRWA's central role as a stabilising body, it must provide the agency with the necessary funds for delivering effectively. The 2010-2015 medium term strategy requested by donors and supported by the Advisory Commission is only partially funded to date. With ever increasing financial pressure relating to factors such as growing refugee numbers, political turmoil and increasing living costs, the gap between financial needs and resources is continuing to widen. Moreover, lack of funds for the much needed reconstruction of Nahr el'Bared is resulting in an additional annual financial burden of 15.7 million US dollars for emergency housing for the displaced refugee population. In this context, Switzerland urges donors to increase their commitment, and supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the provision of an additional 5 million US dollars from the ordinary UN budget. Given the high needs, a further and sustained increase would be welcome. Furthermore, my country will support UNRWA in its efforts aimed at expanding its donor base and in implementing new fundraising strategies. Switzerland will maintain its financial commitment to UNRWA at the current level.

Madam Chair,

Switzerland understands UNRWA's mission in accordance with Resolution 194 as a quadri-partite partnership – the agency, host nations, donor nations and refugees. Ongoing and upcoming reforms which reflect UNRWA's need to remain up to date with global and regional developments will require the agency to stay flexible and ready to adapt to changing circumstances while safeguarding its mandate. In a context of increasing funding difficulties it is essential to optimise the efficiency of service delivery in order to reach a maximum of vulnerable target groups with sustained quality services. In this perspective, alternative approaches such as the provision of cash to support sustainable poverty alleviation can contribute towards the optimisation of efficiency and the impacts of aid, as well as support local markets.

Further awareness raising and advocacy with all stakeholders will be required for the implementation of such strategies. Switzerland welcomes the reported progress relating to UNRWA's organisational development and ongoing reform strategy, and is looking forward to reports of further improvements in this regard. My country has been engaged in supporting UNRWA's reform processes since 2004 and is ready to continue its support through different instruments such as earmarked contributions and strategic secondments.

Madam Chair,

Switzerland has played an active role in different bodies such as the Advisory Commission, and in particular this year as Chair of the Advisory Commission Sub-Committee. My country has done its very best to facilitate frank discussions among all Sub-Committee members (UNRWA, hosts and donors) on sensitive issues, with the focus of this year's activities on budget and reforms.

Switzerland will continue to offer its services as a facilitator for constructive dialogue between UNRWA and the governmental institutions responsible for dealing with the Palestinian refugees in the region, and looks forward to pursuing its collaboration with UNRWA in its activities aimed at supporting Palestinian refugees.

Thank you.