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

Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/86](#). On 5 June 2020, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States and to the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of the resolution and requesting that any pertinent information concerning any action taken or envisaged in relation to its implementation be conveyed by 15 July 2020. Replies were received from Belgium, Namibia and the State of Palestine. The replies are reproduced in the present report.

* [A/75/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 74/86 on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues.
2. On 5 June 2020, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States, as well as to the Permanent Observer State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of the resolution and requesting that any pertinent information concerning any action taken or envisaged in relation to its implementation be conveyed by 15 July 2020.

II. Replies received from Member States and the Observer State of Palestine

Belgium

[Original: English]
[15 July 2020]

In the absence of a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Belgium recognizes that the rights, property and interests of the Palestine refugees must be protected.

Belgian support to Palestinian refugees is mainly channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) whose mandate remains vital for the refugees.

As a flexible and predictable humanitarian donor, Belgium disbursed its annual commitment (€6.25 million) in the beginning of 2020, as part of our recurrent multi-year financial agreements (2018–2020). Belgium is looking at complementary funding for 2020.

Belgium joins other States in their concern regarding the risk of annexation in the West Bank. Annexation would have grave consequences on the status and political, civil, economic and social rights of Palestinians, including property rights. It would increase forcible transfers of already fragile communities; often already displaced multiple times. Annexation would be a clear breach of international (humanitarian) law. In addition, it would limit the ability of UNRWA to implement its mandate and to assist the refugee populations in these annexed areas.

Belgian support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(Euros)

<i>Intervention</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020^a</i>
Core funding	6 250 000.00	6 250 000.00	6 250 000.00	6 250 000.00	6 250 000.00	6 250 000.00
Headquarters		502 400.50	167 466.50		300 760.00	
Gaza	2 070 000.00	3 000 000.00	2 000 000.00	4 000 000.00	1 818 998.00	
West Bank	380 000.00	138 739.25	46 246.75		292 940.00	
Jordan		98 539.25	782 846.75	250 000.00	125 091.00	
Lebanon		371 819.50	1 623 939.50	500 000.00	504 425.00	
Syria	1 500 000.00	1 138 501.50	379 500.50		2 307 786.00	
Total	10 200 000.00	11 500 000.00	11 250 000.00	11 000 000.00	11 600 000.00	6 250 000.00

^a The 2020 humanitarian budget has not yet been fully allocated and additional funding is being considered.

Namibia

[Original: English]

[16 June 2020]

The Republic of Namibia, as a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, reaffirms its unshakeable solidarity with and strong support for the Palestinian people in their just cause for the restoration of their dignity and peace and the independence of their country. The immeasurable suffering and humiliation of the Palestinian people will only end when Israel withdraws its illegal occupation of all Palestinian territories.

We call upon the Security Council, which has the full responsibility to maintain international peace and security to urgently exercise its mandate in this regard.

State of Palestine

[Original: English]

[17 June 2020]

The question of the Palestine refugees and displaced persons remains among the highest national priorities for the State of Palestine. It constitutes one of the core, final status issues that must be justly resolved, in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, for a peaceful and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine to be achieved.

For over seven decades since the Nakbah, Israel has denied and obstructed the rights of the Palestine refugees, foremost to return to live in peace in their homes and to just compensation for their losses and prolonged suffering, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law.

The protraction of this injustice is what has kept the Palestine refugees, 5.6 million of whom are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), away from their ancestral homes and lands, the majority still living in camps established as temporary shelters in 1948 in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Denied the right to return to their homes and the villages and towns where they had peaceably resided before the Nakbah, they continue to endure exile, dispossession and immense hardship due to the continual deterioration of the political, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions in the region, which has depleted their coping capacities and intensified their vulnerability.

The reporting period witnessed continued turmoil affecting the Palestine refugee community, including cynical attempts to negate their status and rights, malicious narratives aimed at discrediting and undermining UNRWA, and the Agency's deepening financial fragility. In UNRWA fields of operation challenges continued to mount, marked by instability, rampant poverty and unemployment, repeated displacement and protection crises. Such challenges have been particularly acute in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, especially in the Gaza Strip, where Palestine refugees continue to be disproportionately affected by Israel's military raids, killing and injuring of civilians, demolition of homes and properties and forcible transfer, especially of the Bedouin community of refugees. The ongoing repercussions of the devastating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and its impact on Jordan and Lebanon and the Palestine refugee communities in those host countries also remained of serious concern, along with the difficult socioeconomic conditions affecting the host countries and thus the refugees.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative that the international community continue to reaffirm the fundamental principles regarding the Palestine refugee question, and strongly support the UNRWA mandate to ensure the refugees' well-being, protection and human development, pending a just solution to their plight on the basis of resolution 194 (III). Also imperative is the provision of sufficient funding to ensure continuity of its humanitarian and emergency assistance in all fields of operation, as well as its contribution to regional stability, which has been widely recognized.

In this regard, we deeply appreciate the near-unanimous support expressed for UNRWA in the renewal of its mandate in 2019 by the General Assembly by an overwhelming majority, as reflected in the vote on resolution 74/83 on assistance to Palestine refugees, as well as the votes on Assembly resolution 74/84 on persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities, resolution 74/85 on operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and resolution 74/86 on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues.

At the seventy-fourth session, nearly all delegations – with the notable exception of two, namely Israel and the United States of America – lauded UNRWA delivery of programmes as exemplary, recognized its role in helping to preserve the rights and dignity of Palestine refugees, commended the commitment and extraordinary efforts of UNRWA staff, and stressed the indispensability of the Agency. Such broad support was also repeatedly reaffirmed at the Security Council in debates on the Palestine question.

It is obvious that the cynical attempts by UNRWA detractors – whether to politicize the Agency's mandate or undermine its credibility and international support, including donor funding, which escalated in 2019 with the proliferation of distorted narratives after the leak of an UNRWA ethics report and a United Nations investigation into allegations of management misconduct – were firmly rejected by the international community. Such libellous claims against UNRWA are part of prolonged attempts, specifically by Israel, to distract from the core issues concerning the Palestine refugee question, particularly in terms of their rights and applicable international law. Moreover, ongoing attempts to discredit UNRWA ignore the United Nations investigation's conclusions, which underscored that no fraud, corruption or misuse of funds was found and that the alleged misconduct did not impair UNRWA operations.

Instead, the international community has continued to recognize, in the absence of a just solution, the vital role and necessity of UNRWA. It is noteworthy that as we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in 2020, we also commemorate the seventieth anniversary of UNRWA. Established by the General Assembly by its resolution 302 (IV) in 1949, UNRWA remains a collective expression of the international community's shared responsibilities, legal obligations, humanity and multilateral spirit.

For seven decades, through the provision of education, health, relief and social services and emergency assistance, UNRWA has fostered the Palestine refugees' well-being and human development and provided an important measure of protection and social resilience, making a tangible difference in the lives of the refugees. This includes the children it educates; the mothers and babies benefiting from its maternal health programme; the abject poor whose sustenance it ensures with food and cash assistance; the displaced it shelters, the most vulnerable it protects, or those in need of life-saving emergency aid, helping them persevere and, in many cases thrive, despite all odds, and sustaining them with hope.

Beyond the provision of crucial humanitarian aid, the contribution of UNRWA to the refugees' development has been achieved through key services, many

reinforcing and meeting critical Sustainable Development Goals. This includes vocational training, job creation programmes, sports and recreation, psychosocial support and microfinance capacity-building, particularly for young people and women, fostering their abilities to be productive members of their communities and host countries, promoting livelihoods and self-reliance and mainstreaming gender equality.

Today's realities, marked by increasing vulnerability, marginalization and hardship among refugee families, make the hybrid humanitarian and development mission of UNRWA even more necessary. Especially for refugee youth, the lack of opportunities and absence of a horizon to the future are eroding hope and beliefs in the possibilities of peace and a better life, putting them at greater risk of despair and exposure to radical, extremist forces in the region. Yet, through its programmes and services, UNRWA has remained the salve to this despair, alleviating suffering, and offering hope for a better, more just future.

All of this has proved essential for the stability of the refugee communities and their host countries, a fact that has been fully recognized by the General Assembly. It has been equally essential for preserving the prospects for a just peace. It is vital that these essential roles be supported and sustained during this critical period and until the achievement of a just solution to the Palestine refugee question, which remains central to the achievement of a just solution to the Palestine question as a whole, lasting Palestinian-Israeli peace and Arab-Israeli peace.

Addressing the recurrent, severe UNRWA funding crisis therefore remains a matter of urgency. Immediate funding is needed to remedy the immense shortfall and more sufficiently, sustainably and predictably support the Agency's mandate to ensure the continuity of its operations in all fields, in line with all relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Ministerial Pledging Conference set to be convened by Jordan and Sweden on 23 June 2020 presents a critical opportunity for the international community to respond to the Agency's needs in line with those resolutions and inherent responsibilities and commitments made.

The current financial shortfall to the core budget of UNRWA and its chronic structural underfunding risk the viability, continuity and quality of the Agency's services in all of its fields of operation, as well as its emergency assistance capacity during periods of crisis, including in this period of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Agency could soon be forced to cancel programmes and services, with dire impact on humanitarian conditions and stability in the refugee community.

The interruption or suspension of any of UNRWA core services and programmes, and the inability to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in refugee camps, would have many consequences, including humanitarian, political, security, economic and social, as well as psychosocial, for the Palestine refugee community, and must be averted. These disruptive effects would be especially felt in the besieged Gaza Strip, where poverty, hunger and need are at dramatic levels and the fragile health system is on the brink of collapse under the weight of Israel's illegal 14-year blockade. The negative implications for the host countries, as well as the region, which is already experiencing dramatic instability due to ongoing conflicts and crises, extremism and the COVID-19 pandemic, also cannot be ignored.

In this regard, the State of Palestine is deeply grateful to all States, organizations and institutions that have supported UNRWA, both financially and politically, and helped the Agency to overcome its recurrent shortfalls, most notably in 2018. Given the perpetual deterioration since then, we must once again urgently appeal for continued generosity, fulfilment of pledges, resumption of suspended assistance and enhanced support as well as multi-year contributions if possible. This will be vital for UNRWA operations in the coming months, including in the context of the COVID-19

pandemic, and for ensuring the Agency's financial health for the remainder of 2020 and continuity of operations for the duration of its mandate.

We recognize the serious response to the crisis by UNRWA. Despite the immense, sudden shortfall of voluntary contributions during 2018 due to the termination of United States funding, compounded by the managerial issues that had to be addressed in 2019 and a very unstable environment, UNRWA operations continued uninterrupted, delivering assistance to the refugees in all fields of operation in an exemplary manner. This is a testament to the Agency's efficacy and the strength of its management and staff and of the international community's strong support for its mandate and what can be realized when collective responsibility is upheld. It is also a testament to the Agency's engagement with key regional and traditional donor countries, outreach to diversify the donor base, and the impact of its cost efficiency measures.

The Palestinian Government remains committed to providing every necessary facilitation and support for UNRWA in the implementation of its General Assembly mandate. The Government is keen to continue its regular consultations with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA with a view to addressing the challenges faced by the Palestine refugee community and addressing the Agency's operational and funding concerns. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, we have continued to cooperate with UNRWA to ensure proper coordination with the Directors of Operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip.

In this regard, the Palestinian Government is deeply concerned by statements made throughout 2019 and 2020 by Israeli officials threatening UNRWA presence and operations in Occupied East Jerusalem, causing deep distress in the refugee community and anxiety to Agency staff. In escalating their pressure against UNRWA operations, Israeli officials were no doubt emboldened by recent events, including the termination of United States funding to UNRWA after decades as its largest donor and champion, and the unveiling on 28 January 2020 of the United States Administration's plan for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which undermines the rule of law and the inalienable rights and national aspirations of the Palestinian people, including callously dismissing the rights of the Palestine refugees. The Palestinian Government continues to call on the international community to take action to protect the mandate and operations of UNRWA, including in occupied East Jerusalem, in respect of relevant resolutions, including with regard to the immunity and protections that must be accorded to the United Nations.

In addition, the Palestine Liberation Organization Department of Refugee Affairs continues to work with all relevant stakeholders, including donors, host countries and members and observers of the Advisory Commission, towards maintaining strong international and regional support for the rights of the Palestine refugees and for the mandate and operations of UNRWA. It is responsible for coordination with the host countries to ensure the unity of positions on the Palestine refugee question and to also support the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions within the framework of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Equally, the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations stands ready to continue its constant cooperation with the UNRWA Representative Office in New York on all of these important matters and to advocate for the necessary legislation in the General Assembly to address the needs and challenges faced by the Agency in the implementation of its mandate and to ensure the necessary support, including through outreach to redress its unprecedented financial crisis.

In this connection, the State of Palestine persists with its appeals for support to UNRWA at the United Nations, whether at the General Assembly or Security Council,

as well as within different international platforms and forums, including within the framework of the Arab Group, the Group of 77 and China, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, stressing the importance of such broad, multilateral support. Palestine has also actively engaged in successive international and regional meetings mobilizing support for UNRWA and will continue to do so.

It also continues to exert efforts with concerned partners to follow-up on the report of the Secretary-General, issued in March 2017, on UNRWA operations (A/71/849) and the recommendations made towards securing more sufficient, sustainable and predictable funding for the Agency, as called for by the General Assembly. In the light of the persistent, critical shortfalls, it is more imperative than ever to mobilize efforts on actionable recommendations. Thus, Palestine has actively engaged with strides made to develop new support modes for UNRWA, including in connection with the important decision by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in March 2019 to establish a Waqf development fund in support of Palestine refugees, with UNRWA as implementing partner.

The State of Palestine will not forgo any opportunity to help UNRWA remedy its funding shortfall and implement its mandate. But, it is essential to reiterate that the only sustainable solution for the Palestine refugee question is a political one, by which their rights and justice can be ensured, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 194 (III). This requires the mobilization of political will that until now remains absent.

Israeli rejection of these rights and rhetoric minimizing the importance of a just solution for the Palestine refugee issue for the achievement of peace are irresponsible, provocative and must be denounced. It is another reminder of Israel's total disrespect of human rights and failure to commit to even the most basic principles required for making peace. The international community must demand compliance by Israel with its legal obligations, under the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant resolutions, and hold it accountable for its violations and continued obstruction of a just and peaceful solution.

We recall in this regard the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in which States were called upon to "actively promote durable solutions, particularly in protracted refugee situations, with a focus on sustainable and timely return in safety and dignity". Palestine cannot be the exception to this rule.

We thus call once more upon the international community to act humanely and responsibly to finally bring an end to this injustice and achieve a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict whereby the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, will finally realize their inalienable human rights, including to a life of freedom and dignity.

Until the achievement of such a just solution, the plight of the Palestine refugees will tragically continue to demand international attention and compassion, including through support to UNRWA. Thus, the annual resolutions of the General Assembly under the agenda item on UNRWA remain relevant and must once again be considered and strongly supported during the seventy-fifth session and their implementation must be actively pursued, as a contribution to ensuring the well-being, development and protection of the Palestine refugees, as a contribution to regional stability and as a contribution towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace of the question of Palestine, which is vital for peace in the Middle East, as per the long-standing international consensus.