



Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations**

**at the
High-level Conference**

**“UNRWA@65: Sustaining Human Development
and Protecting Rights of Palestine Refugees”**

New York, June 2, 2015

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Commissioner General of UNRWA,

Today, while we commemorate the 65th anniversary of UNRWA, the focus should remain on what matters most which is the welfare of the refugees of Palestine and the protection of their rights.

Year after year, generation after generation, thousands upon thousands of Palestine refugees have benefitted from education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement. But these services are jeopardized by the chronic shortfall in UNRWA's funds. This dire financial situation coupled with the lack of progress in the "peace process" due to the persistence of Israel in undermining international efforts to settle the conflict, the latest being Secretary Kerry's efforts, clearly exacerbates the vulnerability of those refugees.

It is time for the international community to live up to the aspirations of those refugees to have their independent state and a better future. Indeed, the international community and in particular the Security Council should do much more to establish a new credible and comprehensive framework for negotiations to be conducted in a defined timeframe and based on the well known parameters set by relevant UN resolutions in particular General Assembly resolutions 181 and 194, the Madrid principles and the Arab peace initiative.

Furthermore, the international community should ensure the financial stability of UNRWA's budget and increase the predictability of its resources which will strengthen the agency's ability to provide better services to those refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

As one of the host countries of Palestinian refugees, Lebanon has been working closely with UNRWA to address their needs for the past 65 years. Today, the challenges are increasing from lack of financial resources to minimal health services and overcrowding of the 12 densely populated refugee camps by the new influx of about 50,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria.

Moreover, we would like to reaffirm that we have been working with the Palestinian representatives through the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee to address the socio economic and security challenges. Strides have been made, from the adoption of the Law 129 regulating the access of Palestinians to the Lebanese labor market to the publication of the "Guide to the Palestinian workers, rights and obligations," to name a few. But the task remaining ahead of us is enormous.

The reconstruction of Nahr el Bared camp should be completed. While we appreciate the generosity of donors, we need to remind that only \$188 million has been received by September 2014, leaving a shortfall of \$157 million. The full reconstruction will allow the relocation of 26,000 of the registered Palestine refugees which are still displaced in temporary accommodation.

Furthermore, we urge the donors to fully cover UNRWA's appeal on the basic humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees fleeing the crisis in Syria which is \$63.5 million for 2015, in order for UNRWA's services to the Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria to continue.

Mr. Chairman,

Protection of Palestinian refugees begins by protecting their basic rights; the right to return to their homeland, to live in dignity, freedom and peace... and above all to end their tragedy.