



## BANGLADESH

Please check against delivery

Statement by

**Tareq Md. Ariful Islam**

First Secretary of Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations  
at

The General Debate of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee  
(Fourth Committee) of the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
on

**'United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the  
Near East (UNRWA)' [agenda item 31].**

New York, 31 October 2006

Let me begin by warmly congratulating you Mr. Chairman and the Bureau upon your well deserved election. I am confident that under your able stewardship our deliberations will lead to fruition. I also assure you Mr. Chairman, of my delegation's unqualified support in the proceedings of this Committee. Our profound appreciation is also owed to Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd, Commissioner-General, for her comprehensive annual report on the activities of the UNRWA.

Mr. Chairman,

Like the Commission, my delegation is deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Gaza strip, the West Bank and Lebanon. That the UNRWA had to once again expand its emergency operations in the West Bank, the Gaza strip and Lebanon instead of the expected phasing out of its activities is a sad commentary of the situation. We are particularly dismayed at the imposition of the de facto sanction regime following the election of the new Government in Palestine which is emaciating the flow of fund from the donors thereby rapidly deteriorating the socio-economic and living condition of the Palestinians. Socio-economic indicators also reveal that unemployment, poverty and food insecurity have hit a new low following tightening of the closure regime. We urge its total withdrawal.

While acknowledging the continued support of the donor countries/communities, we appeal to them to maintain adequate level of funding commensurate with the expanded emergency requirements of the UNRWA.

Mr. Chairman,

With Israel's disengagement in 2005 from the Gaza Strip and the Northern West Bank, my delegation, like others, was sanguine of significant amelioration in the overall plight of the Palestinian people by way of economic recovery through unrestricted movement of Palestinian goods and services and people to and from the outside world. The signing of the Agreement on Movement and Access in November 2005 that resulted in opening of the Rafah terminal though only for people and not for goods is indeed a significant positive development. But other undertakings enshrined in the agreement remain to be implemented. Also movement of the Palestinian people and goods through other commercial crossings came under heavier restrictions than in the previous few years. Particularly Palestinian access to Israeli labor and markets was blocked. As stated in the World Bank report, these restrictions are mainly responsible for the Palestinian economy not being able to fully realize its productive potential. We urge upon Israel for immediate and full withdrawal of all such restrictions.

UNRWA, as we all know, is the main provider of basic services to over 4.3 million registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East. My delegation remains deeply concerned about the continued imposition of restrictions by Israel on the freedom of movement of UNRWA personnel and vehicles. This not only impeded the timely shipment of humanitarian goods and supplies and other assistances to the refugees but also caused substantial financial loss to UNRWA in the form of payment of excess charges and taxes. Continued construction of the separation wall by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories is exacerbating the situation. We reiterate our demand on Israel to ensure unrestricted mobility and non-interference in the activities of the Agency so that it can perform its mandated responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation notes with satisfaction the continued endeavour of the UNRWA to enhance its operational performance and management to cope up with the continuously evolving requirements and increasingly complex situation on the ground. Launching of the Agency's medium term plan for 2005-2009 and its undertaking in 2005 of a number of steps to streamline its operational management functions are the major steps forward in this direction. Its simultaneous efforts to better understand the profile and needs of refugees and to facilitate Agency's transition from a status-based to a needs-based planning and outcome-based monitoring programmes are laudable.

Its heartening that the Agency's endeavour to install a process of management reform culminated in the adoption of the organizational development package entitled 'Serving Palestine refugees more effectively--strengthening the management capacity of UNRWA' that contains the blueprint for comprehensive

reform over the next three years. We are confident that its implementation would modernize the Agency's management and increase its efficiency particularly in the targeted crucial areas of performance namely, programme cycle management, strategic planning, resource mobilization and public information.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh, being the birth-place of the concept of micro-credit finance, its gratifying for us to observe the success of micro-finance and micro-enterprise programme of the Agency and its resultant rapid growth and wide acceptance in the region as a major tool for poverty alleviation and economic development. Although due to the continuing intifada, rise in inter-Palestinian strife and an intensified closure regime, the programme could not achieve full operational self-sufficiency in Palestine, it did attain profitable operational self-sufficiency in Jordan and Syria. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Bangladeshi economist and proponent of micro-credit finance Professor Muhammad Yunus this year also bear testimony to the effectiveness of the programme in poverty alleviation. Given our vast experience in this field, we would be happy to share our expertise particularly to further fine-tune the programme to the benefit of the Palestinian brethren and the region as a whole.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, my delegation extends its deep appreciation to the UNRWA and all its personnel for their indomitable and effective engagement in the Agency's work in the face of deteriorating often under life-threatening conditions. Their dedication, commitment and sacrifice are exemplary. The way UNRWA, while remaining focused on its mandated responsibilities, extended its support undaunted by its modest means to the wider Lebanese population following the eruption of hostilities in Lebanon is really commendable. But the onus is on the international community not to test its limit to avert catastrophe of the humanity.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.