



**CHAIR OF
THE COORDINATING BUREAU
OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT**



**STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN, ON BEHALF OF THE NON-ALIGNED
MOVEMENT (NAM), ON AGENDA ITEM 50, ENTITLED “UNITED
NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)”, WITHIN THE
FRAMEWORK OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

New York, 11 November 2019

Mr. Chair,

1. The Republic of Azerbaijan is honored to take the floor on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement during the consideration of an agenda item on a matter to which we have historically attached special importance.
2. At the outset, we seize this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the invaluable work done and the essential assistance provided by UNRWA to the Palestine refugees. UNRWA’s humanitarian mission remains vital, considering the continuing and rising needs of the refugees in the absence of a just solution for their plight and in the context of the crises, instability and conflicts affecting all fields of operation in the region, including the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as a result of the continued violations by Israel, the occupying Power.
3. We reiterate the Movement’s firm appreciation to UNRWA’s entire staff for their tireless efforts, courage and dedication to serve the Palestine refugees, even under the most adverse and dangerous conditions that regrettably in some cases have led to the loss of their lives while on duty.
4. In regards to the recent investigation into allegations of misconduct by UNRWA senior staff, the Movement takes note of the conclusion of investigation and that no fraud, corruption or misuse of funds was found. We are reassured by the administrative measures taken by the Secretary-General, including the appointment of Mr. Christian Saunders as Officer-in-Charge of UNRWA. As strong supporters of UNRWA’s mandate, the Members of the Movement wish Mr. Saunders success in carrying out the duties of this important post at this critical time. We echo the Secretary-General’s thanks to the former Commissioner-General, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, for his commitment and



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dedication to UNRWA and the Palestine refugees over the years of his tenure.

Mr. Chair,

5. Returning focus to the core issue before us, the Non-Aligned Movement underscores the importance of the work carried out by UNRWA, and reiterates its strong support to the Agency and its mandate given by the General Assembly, to provide humanitarian, development and emergency assistance and protection for over 5 million Palestine refugees, pending the achievement of a just solution to their plight on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, including resolution 194 (III), which affirmed, *inter alia*, their right to return and fair compensation.
6. The Member States of the Movement believe that the mandate and operations of UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, since 1949, remain essential and indispensable until the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including for the plight of the Palestine refugees. The longstanding, strong and generous support of the international community, including the host countries, has been critical for ensuring the continuity of UNRWA services over the years, and is especially needed now in light of the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and instability in the region and the recurrent, severe financial shortfalls that still affect its vital humanitarian programmes. In this regard, we reaffirm the urgency of providing UNRWA with sustained, predictable and uninterrupted support, as called for by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
7. In this context, Non-Aligned Movement deeply regrets the exacerbation of the Agency's severe funding crisis, particularly following the punitive and unjustified decision of the U.S. Government to suddenly terminate its funding to the Agency, which not only targets the most vulnerable segment of Palestinian people by undermining the provision of vital humanitarian and development assistance to them, but also threatens the region's stability, as UNRWA has been repeatedly acknowledged as making a significant contribution to regional stability. Similarly, the Movement expresses its concern over the provocative announcement of Israeli authorities to terminate UNRWA service provision in the Occupied East Jerusalem, and call for the respect of the UN Charter and the privileges and immunities of the Organization.
8. The annual report of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly, contained in document A/74/13, noted that in 2019 UNRWA continues to face challenges on many fronts.



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9. As a result of prevailing conditions, including the volatility in the region and widespread violence, as well as the marginalization and poverty that continue to affect them, Palestine refugees still face serious protection challenges. The ongoing Israeli occupation, which has now been imposed for over 51 years, inflicting armed conflict, collective punishment and forced displacement on the Palestinian people, including refugees, among them thousands of Bedouins, has compounded the hardships endured by refugee families. In many cases, these people face existential threats and sink deeper into poverty and desperation, as is the case for Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the protracted plight of the Palestine refugees has been exacerbated due to ongoing crises in the region, including the conflict in Syria, which has intensified the need for humanitarian assistance, and has resulted in thousands of refugees fleeing to other countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and beyond.

Mr. Chair,

10. The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its grave concern regarding ongoing illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. This situation continues to gravely affect the well-being and living conditions of Palestine refugees, causing more suffering and hardship. In particular, the unprecedented increase in forced displacement, settlers' violence, demolition of homes and economic assets, as well as other illegal policies and measures by Israel, the occupying Power, to serve the expansion of its illegal settlement campaign, have further entrenched this half-century occupation of the Palestinian land, exacerbating the encroachment and violation of the rights of the Palestinian people and undermining the prospects for a just and lasting solution.
11. The Gaza Strip has been crippled by the illegal blockade imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, for more than twelve years, imposing untold humanitarian, social and economic suffering on the more than 2 million Palestinian children, women and men there, the majority of whom are refugees. This unilateral blockade still severely affects every aspect of life, including by obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic materials to Gaza Strip, impeding the reconstruction of the thousands of homes and infrastructures, including refugee shelters and refugee camps that have been destroyed, hindering economic and social recovery, deepening needs and aid dependency. In these conditions UNRWA is compelled to respond as more and more families descending into poverty and facing food insecurity, which now affects over 80% of the population in Gaza.
12. The Member States of the Movement seize this opportunity to stress that the crisis in Gaza must be comprehensively addressed, in accordance with international law,



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including humanitarian and human rights law, and the relevant UN resolutions, in the context of the overall efforts to bring an end to the illegitimate, belligerent, Israeli foreign occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967. Similarly, we call once again for the full and immediate lifting of the illegal Gaza blockade, which is the only way for the Palestine refugee population in Gaza to decrease its dependency on UNRWA.

13. Moreover, we reiterate our concern over the increased restrictions on movement and access imposed on Palestine refugees and UNRWA's staff within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, we call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately meet its obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, including relevant UN resolutions, and the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, to enable UNRWA to discharge its duties freely, without hindrance or additional costs. Similarly, we call for the full respect of the immunity of the United Nations and the inviolability of all United Nations premises and installations, including of UNRWA, and for an end to the violations in this regard.

Mr. Chair,

14. The Movement commends the support extended by several NAM Member States in support of UNRWA and urges continued, and where possible, increased support for the Agency in light of the severe and recurrent funding crisis and continuing budgetary shortfalls that UNRWA continues to face and the urgent appeals made by the Commissioner-General at the Pledging Conference held on 25 June 2019. The continuity of UNRWA operations and service delivery must be ensured in line with its General Assembly mandate.
15. The Non-Aligned Movement hopes that the Member States of the United Nations will continue to give their strong support to all of the draft resolutions under this item, including for the renewal of UNRWA's mandate for a period of three years. Such support would constitute a clear reaffirmation of the international community's long-standing political and financial commitment to the Agency in support of its mandate to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to alleviate the plight of the Palestine refugees and ensure their well-being and protection in the absence of a just solution.
16. The Movement once again urges all Member States, especially the traditional donors, to increase their contributions to UNRWA, which will help avoid creating uncertainty and precipitating instability among the refugees, and we also urge new donors to come



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forward with generosity to meet the growing needs, in line with the permanent responsibilities and obligations of the international community, until a just solution is realized.

17. To conclude, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its unwavering support to UNRWA's mandate, efforts and contribution to the human development and protection of the Palestine refugees and the promotion of their rights and dignity as well as regional stability, despite many prevailing difficulties, while also reiterating the need to continue all efforts to bring an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine. We once again reaffirm our commitment to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Question of Palestine in all its aspects, including for the plight of the Palestine refugees, and reaffirm our support to the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve justice and fulfill their inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations, including to self-determination, freedom and independence in their sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.