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**to the United Nations**

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**Statement by Mr. Norzuhdy Mohammad Nordin**
**Representative of Malaysia**
**on Agenda Item 30: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**
**at the Fourth Committee of the 60th Session of the General Assembly**
**New York, Wednesday, 2 November 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to Mrs. Karen Koning AbuZayd, Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for presenting the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Agency during the period under review, as contained in document A/60/13. Allow me this opportunity to congratulate her on her appointment as the new Commissioner General of UNRWA. We are confident that given your knowledge and experience, including as Deputy-Commissioner General for over five years, you will be able to lead the Agency in its relief efforts and work in a competent manner. Allow me also this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to Mr. Peter Hansen, former Commissioner General, for his dedication and commitment to the cause of the Palestine refugees.

2. As its predecessors, the report of the Commissioner General contains very disturbing accounts and figures concerning the Palestine refugees. They are among the poorest and most easily affected by Israeli aggression. Most disheartening is the continued and increased destruction of refugee shelters, rendering over 16,000 Palestinian refugees homeless. In this regard, we call on Israel to desist from destroying Palestinian homes and property and ensure that the deterioration of humanitarian and socio-economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is reversed immediately. We are pleased with the various rehousing and infrastructure projects undertaken in the Jenin, Neirab, Tel el Sultan, Khan Danoun and other camps, as well as the Palestine refugee records project currently underway.

3. The Separation Wall continues to further aggravate the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The excessive regimes associated with the Wall imposed by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories should be removed. Those restrictions have led to the loss of access by the Palestine population to employment and income as well as access to essential goods and services.

*313 East 43rd Street*
*New York, NY 10017*

*Tel.: (212) 986-6310*
*Fax: (212) 490-8576*

*E-mail: malnyun@kln.gov.my*
*Website: www.un.int/malaysia*

Of equal concern is that those restrictions have had a serious impact on the freedom of movement of UNRWA, to move staff and humanitarian assistance to those in urgent need. Obstacles to the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance to refugees have remained in place as the conflict and level of violence have persisted. We can conclude that such difficulties will increase and replicate as Israel continues with its defiance of the ICJ Advisory Opinion of July 2004 by constructing the remaining sections of the Wall. The international community must prevail upon Israel to take urgent measures to remove those restrictions placed especially on the movement of Agency staff and goods, in keeping with international law and the agreements between UNRWA and the Government of Israel.

Mr. Chairman,

4. My delegation reaffirms its support to and admiration for the staff members of UNRWA for their resolute and effective response to the continuing emergency humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Malaysia commends their dedication and hard work under extreme circumstances and constraints. While we take comfort over the absence of casualties among staff members of UNRWA, we are concerned however, over the arrest and detainment of over 31 staff members of the Agency during the period under review. We stress the importance to respect the integrity of the United Nations and the immunity of its staff and to ensure their safety and security, particularly in the case of humanitarian staff courageously operating in areas of conflict, as stated in Security Council resolution 1502 (2003).

5. My delegation commends the serious efforts by UNRWA to conduct an effective programme of delivery of emergency assistance to the affected refugees and for the Agency's periodic reports to donor countries about the implementation of this programme. We believe that the measures that have been identified and implemented to strengthen and improve the coordinating mechanisms to respond to humanitarian emergency situations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would bear the desired results. The existing close cooperation between UNRWA and a number of United Nations agencies, has proven to be beneficial in ameliorating the quality of life of Palestine refugees. Malaysia also recognizes the crucial role of the NGO community, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Malaysia encourages the further enhancement of such cooperation and coordination.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The regular budget of UNRWA is crucial in order to enable it to implement its activities. My delegation has taken note that for 2004, almost US$ 433 million had been received. The continuous efforts by the Agency to mobilize contributions from the international community to its Emergency Appeals, which successfully raised US$ 185.8 million in 2005, should be supported. We stress the importance of a steady and predictable growth in contributions to the regular budget of the Agency in the coming years, which is indispensable if the Agency is to respond adequately to the real needs of the Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied

territories. However, we are concerned that the level of response has stagnated, thereby gradually decreasing the level of contributions to this initiative. Continued support to the UNRWA Emergency Appeal is crucial to the survival of the Palestine refugees.

7. My delegation recognizes that donors are becoming increasingly reluctant to fund construction of new homes for refugees whose shelters have been destroyed by the Israeli Defence Forces, since such contributions could perhaps be seen as making them complicit in the violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Occupying Power. We share the Agency's view that, while the wide-scale destruction could well be considered contrary to international humanitarian law, it would be particularly ironic if this position of principle were applied to the sole detriment of the refugees and other civilian victims. In this connection, we appeal Member States to enhance their contributions to the Agency's emergency programmes. We also call on UNRWA to continue to examine closely its programmes, priorities and needs, and to explore further options to widen the donor base.

Mr. Chairman,

8. My delegation recognizes the vital role of UNRWA in forestalling a more alarming humanitarian disaster through its work in alleviating the plight of the Palestine refugees. In the last 55 years UNRWA has done a lot in providing education, health and social services to the refugees and in improving the socio-economic conditions of the refugees. The Agency has contributed greatly towards humanizing the lives of the Palestine refugees in the occupied territories and neighboring countries and lessening their sufferings.

9. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is the primary source of humanitarian relief assistance to Palestine refugees. The Agency's activities constitute an essential component in the struggle for and realization of peace in the Middle East. Its critical work furthermore demonstrates in a tangible way, the concern and sympathy of the international community, and that we have not forgotten the dire plight of the Palestine refugees who have been severely disadvantaged and deprived of justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The work by the Agency serves as a testament to the humanitarian commitment that we have pledged. Its continued operations in the region remains crucial. While the international community has a collective role to play in finding a solution to the Palestinian question, it is our shared responsibility to assist and provide the vital support required by UNRWA to effectively fulfill its mandate. The United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, has a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in its entirety on the basis of the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law. This responsibility includes the preservation of life, well being of health, promotion of basic human rights, and many other aspects, which in this case, is that of the Palestine refugees. All these have been done and must continue to be alleviated through UNRWA, an indispensable organ of the United Nations in the service of the Palestinian refugees.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.