



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

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**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Hussein Haniff, Permanent Representative of Malaysia,
on Agenda Item 52: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East,
at the Fourth Committee of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
New York, 07 November 2012**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by thanking Mr. Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for his report as contained in document A/67/13. Malaysia wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered by the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Malaysia would like to commend UNRWA for its consistent and unwavering contributions to elevate the plight of the Palestine refugees in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. As a member of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territory, I wish to share with the Fourth Committee what I personally witnessed at the refugee camps in the neighbouring countries during my visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory in July this year.

3. UNRWA currently operates more than 600 schools, provides basic health care service and food and constructs shelter for Palestinian refugees. Even with such a huge mandate and high expectations, UNRWA continues to operate with very limited resources, in catering the daily needs of the five million Palestinian refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Palestinians continue to bear the brunt of the Occupying Power, as Israel continues to violate international law, particularly humanitarian and human rights laws. The dire situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the continued blockade of Gaza, the illegal but relentless settlement expansion, are attempts to slowly destroy the ability of Palestinians to build a productive and peaceful future based on the two-State solution.

5. The illegal blockade of Gaza has continued into its fifth year. We take note that the report mentioned of some little easing of the blockade. Nevertheless, the effects of Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip are still apparent. The blockade has cut-off supply of food and needed goods from the population in Gaza, thus, burgeoning the humanitarian situation. This has led to 75 percent of Gazans now being dependent on humanitarian assistance, while another 54 percent are facing food insecurity

6. As the Occupying Power, we wish to remind that Israel bears the responsibility for the safety and security of Palestinian civilians, under international law, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Malaysia urges Israel to immediately lift its illegal blockade of the Gaza and

allow immediate and regular flow of food supply, building materials, medicine and humanitarian aid to reach the 1.6 million people in this embattled territory of Palestine.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Malaysia is mindful of the predicament and sufferings of the Palestinian people. In this regard, Malaysia is deeply concerned with the current financial state of UNRWA. With a reported expenditure of almost a billion dollars in 2011, UNRWA must be allocated enough resources needed to fulfil its mandate, using funds from the UN regular budget.

8. Towards elevating the plight of the Palestinians, Malaysia calls upon Member States to consider increasing voluntary financial support in funding UNRWA's work. We believe that UNRWA must be accorded the needed funds and resources to ensure that the plight of the Palestinian people under occupation are met and provided for. Malaysia calls for higher budget allocation for the work of UNRWA from the UN regular budget in the coming financial cycle. The UNRWA, having to depend on partly regular budget and voluntary contributions, is currently almost insolvent. In 2011, UNRWA's expenditure was US\$989 million. Of which, US\$572 or 57.9 percent was provided through the unrestricted regular budget of the UN. This is too little compared to the tasks UNRWA needs to fulfil.

9. If we cannot bring a political solution to the Palestinian Question, the minimum we can do is to provide enough funding from the UN regular budget for the work of UNRWA. In this connection, we seek the cooperation of our colleagues in the Fifth Committee to show support for the work of UNRWA by according higher allocation to fund this important organisation. It is obvious that, having only 57 percent of its expenditure appropriated from the UN regular budget is not enough. We should increase this amount, to the rate of 85 percent to 90 percent. If we can comprehend how New Yorkers suffered in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, than I wish to reiterate that it is Hurricane Sandy everyday in these camps.

Mr. Chairman,

10. The report also highlighted the evolving situation in Syria. Malaysia is concerned with the situation in the country particularly the continued violence that has engulfed in Syria and the neighbouring states. What is more concerning is that the situation has reached a point in which the well-being and safety of 500,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria are now compromised. Worst still is the safety of UNRWA's staff, which is also a huge concern. We call on all parties to cease all violence and return to negotiations in order to achieve a sustainable peace in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

11. Malaysia has been a firm supporter of UNRWA and a consistent contributor to the funding needs of UNRWA since 1978. As an example, from the period 2000 to 2011, Malaysia contributed to the Palestinian cause through UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority amounted to US\$575,000.00. Malaysia's contribution demonstrates our support to UNRWA and its works in elevating the sufferings of the Palestinian refugees. Our support to UNRWA and the Palestinian people does not end there. Malaysian NGOs and volunteers have been active in contributing in 'kind' assistance to the people of Palestine. In this regard, I call upon all Member States to contribute in whatever way possible to UNRWA, and the Palestinian people in general.

12. To conclude, let me reiterate the support and commitment of the Government of Malaysia for the work of UNRWA. We would remain committed to the cause of the Palestinian people and we call on all parties to commit in finding a lasting and sustainable solution to the current situation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.