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PRESS RELEASE

EU AND UNRWA SIGN A 12 MILLION EUROS AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF PALESTINE REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon, and UNRWA Commissioner General, Filippo Grandi, signed this morning a 12 million Euros agreement to strengthen UNRWA's work in Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon. The project aims at providing adequate shelter to the most vulnerable Palestine refugee families living in Lebanon for the period 2011-2013.

The project is financed by the Instrument for Stability (IfS), which is the EU mechanism to respond to crises, facilitate recovery processes and pre-empt further relapses. In 2008 and 2009, the EU already mobilised the IfS to support UNRWA operations in North Lebanon to create the conditions for the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp and the revival of the local economy.

On the occasion of the signature of the agreement with UNRWA, Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the Delegation of the EU to Lebanon said: "By providing funds for the rehabilitation of more than 700 shelters in Palestinian camps throughout Lebanon and by paying cash rental subsidies to more than 3,000 families waiting to return to their reconstructed houses in Nahr el-Bared Camp, the project presents a tangible evidence of the EU willingness to keep on improving the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, while awaiting that more long-lasting solutions are found in the framework of a comprehensive and negotiated peace agreement between Palestinian and Israeli authorities".

On his part, Commissioner General, Filippo Grandi, said: "This important contribution will go a long way towards improving the dire living conditions of thousands of impoverished refugee families across Lebanon who are living in unsafe or unhealthy shelters. It demonstrates, once again, the EU's steadfast support for UNRWA and the refugees we serve, allowing UNRWA to help those in need until such time as a just and lasting solution to their plight has been reached".

The EU and its Member States are the biggest donors to UNRWA. Together with humanitarian aid, support from the Instrument for Stability and from the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the European Commission has disbursed more than 80 million Euros in support of Palestine refugees in Lebanon over the last four years, through UNRWA and other partners.

UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for nearly 5 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, pending a solution to their plight. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, social safety-net, camp infrastructure and improvement, community support, microfinance and emergency response, including in times of armed conflict. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by contributions from States. The Agency's core

budget for 2010-2011 stands at \$1.23 billion. In 2009, emergency appeals for the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon amounted to \$827.4 million.