Excellencies, Ministers, distinguished colleagues,

Let me start with expressing my sincere gratitude and respect to UNRWA and its dedicated staff for their tremendous work in supporting Palestine-Refugees.

UNRWA is a beacon of hope for millions of Palestine-Refugees. Its mandate is vital to 5.3 Million people and must be protected, until a just, lasting and comprehensive solution is found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

UNRWA is and has been - ever since its establishment by the UN General Assembly in 1949 - a critical partner of Germany in the Middle East. UNRWA’s mandate to assist the most vulnerable, to provide hope, dignity and perspectives, is contributing to stability in the region.

In this context I would like to underline that humanitarian assistance must not be politicized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Germany is deeply concerned about the continuous funding crisis, which threatens to spiral out of control. It is our joint responsibility to ensure timely and sufficient funding for UNRWA. We must all stand by our commitments.

The humanitarian consequences of funding gaps are both immediate - for instance with regard to an increased number of children out of school and persons without access to health care and social safety-nets - and long-term - when considering unemployment, food insecurity, poverty, migration, growing hopelessness and despair.

Irrespective of a broadening of the donor base, UNRWA needs to continue its reform process. This will be painful but is essential for UNRWA’s budget to be financially sustainable in the future. Germany commends UNRWA’s management on the impressive achievements made so far.
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, the new German Government will be approved by Parliament. For this reason, I am not in a position to announce new contributions here and now.

Germany has provided UNRWA with 76 Mio. EUR in 2017. We will continue to be a reliable supporter to UNRWA for 2018 and the years ahead through annual voluntary contributions and multi-year project funding for humanitarian assistance and developmental approaches.

It is the firm conviction of the new Federal Government to provide support to UNRWA, financially and reform agenda in order to find a more sustainable basis for UNRWA.

We must move away from short-sighted, ad-hoc solutions and establish a sustainable and predictable funding basis for UNRWA.

To this end I suggest exploring synergies with UNRWA’s operations and developmental approaches and best practices. Germany therefore will consider a contribution to the inception of a Worldbank Trust Fund to assist UNRWA.

My new Government’s coalition agreement is committed to providing support for UNRWA’s finances and reform agenda. And we will do so in close cooperation with our partners.

Thank you for your attention and thanks to Egypt, Jordan and Sweden for organizing this important conference.