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Summary Note

Regular Session
Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency
Mövenpick Hotel, Dead Sea
17 and 18 June 2007

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17 June 2007

The meeting was called to order at 1.35 p.m.

Opening of the session by the Chairperson

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the second regular session of the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for 2007. The backdrop of the session was a challenging one: the Middle East region was once again in turmoil as a result of recent developments on the ground, particularly in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Three UNRWA staff members had been killed within the last four weeks, two in Gaza and one in Lebanon.

   The participants in the session observed a minute of silence in tribute to the three UNRWA staff members who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

Statement by the Vice-Chairperson

2. **Mr. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-Chairperson of the Advisory Commission, said that he appreciated the Advisory Commission's efforts to ensure that UNRWA could continue to provide health, education, relief and social services to all Palestine refugees until such time as a just solution to the regional conflict was found and the refugees were able to return to their homeland, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Recent events had underscored the importance of fully supporting the work of UNRWA, which the refugees regarded as their primary source of international assistance.

3. Host countries, donor countries and observers alike should seek to increase the Agency's funding, broaden its donor base and facilitate its operations. The Syrian Arab Republic, on the
instructions of its President Bashar Al-Assad, continued to coordinate and cooperate with UNRWA in providing services for Palestine refugees, which it treated as brothers, on an equal footing with Syrian citizens. In particular, the Syrian Government's provision of facilities for the arrival and work of volunteers resulted in considerable cost savings for UNRWA. He reiterated his Government's position that the Agency's services should not be reduced and should be provided free of charge.

4. Forty years after the Israeli aggression of June 1967, Israel continued to occupy Arab lands and to perpetrate attacks on Palestinians' lives, homes and livelihoods. The many closures and security procedures it imposed delayed the Agency's operations and increased their cost. The international community should take immediate action to stop the aggression, secure Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands in the Golan, Palestine and Lebanon to the 1967 borders, establish a sovereign Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and enable Palestine refugees to return to their homes. That was the only way to achieve security, stability and peace.

5. He commended the Agency's senior officials, particularly the Commissioner-General and Deputy Commissioner-General, for pursuing the organizational development (OD) process, whose aim was to improve refugee services. He also appreciated the efforts of the two Sub-Committees to provide advice and assistance to the Commissioner-General through the Advisory Commission. Lastly, he thanked the Director of UNRWA Affairs in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Government of Jordan and its Department of Palestinian Affairs, and the delegation of the Netherlands, particularly the Chairperson of the Advisory Commission, who had made outstanding efforts to serve the Agency and Palestine refugees.

Statement by the Commissioner-General

6. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that, once again, the Advisory Commission was meeting at a time of dramatic developments in the Middle East. The
relationship between UNRWA and the Advisory Commission was particularly important in such a highly charged, politically vexing environment, which was increasingly problematic for the Agency's operations. Just four days earlier, two UNRWA staff members, Mr. Hassan Ahmad El-Leham and Mr. Abdul Fateh Hussein Abu-Ghali, had been killed in the inter-factional violence in Gaza. UNRWA had been forced to partially suspend its operations in Gaza, but had subsequently resumed full operations in light of the relative calm that had prevailed since Hamas had taken complete control of the area. It was closely monitoring the situation in the West Bank.

7. The drastic decision, over a year earlier, to impose comprehensive international sanctions on the Palestinian Authority had had predictably severe consequences: internal conflict, economic collapse and increased uncertainty, particularly with regard to the possibility of establishing a Palestinian State. There had accordingly been a surge in demand for the Agency's services. Economic hardship had forced more refugees to turn to UNRWA, particularly for health services. Demand for emergency assistance had also risen sharply. In many cases, refugees had sought assistance for the first time after decades of self-reliance. The Palestinian people had shown admirable strength, dignity and resilience despite years of armed conflict, humiliation and dispossession, but in Gaza they were currently struggling to uphold their societal values. She urgently called upon the international community to re-engage with the Palestinian people, for the sake of peace and of saving human lives.

8. UNRWA, with its extensive field presence in the occupied territory, faced the full force of the grave conditions in Gaza and the West Bank. Hopelessness had increasingly radicalized Palestinian society, leading to unprecedented attacks on UNRWA staff, including the Director of the Gaza Field Office. The Agency had been forced to drastically review its modus operandi in Gaza. However, UNRWA staff remained highly motivated; for example, the Gaza Field Office was determined to go forward with the educational summer programmes planned for the benefit of nearly 200,000 children. Currently, she and the Director of her Office were the only international staff based at Gaza headquarters; it was unlikely that other international staff would
be able to return in the near future. Arrangements were being made for those staff to work from Jerusalem and Amman, albeit at considerable inconvenience.

9. An additional problem in the West Bank was the multiplication of obstacles to free access, both within the territory and to East Jerusalem. Those obstacles included checkpoints, roadblocks, settlement growth and the construction of the separation wall, which was exacerbating the segmentation and isolation of Palestinian communities. Tighter controls at the entry points into Jerusalem would severely impair refugees' access to services and disrupt the functioning of the West Bank Field Office. Those conditions were prompting many Palestinians to leave the territory.

10. In Lebanon, open warfare between the army and the militant group that had established a presence in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp had caused more than 25,000 refugees to flee. Currently, humanitarian and security conditions in the camp were very precarious. An UNRWA staff member, Mr. Adel Khalil, had been killed by sniper fire on 21 May 2007. Nonetheless, staff of UNRWA and other agencies continued to make admirable efforts to help the refugees and others in need.

11. On a positive note, the response to the Agency's $12.7-million flash appeal had been generous. When conditions permitted, UNRWA would assess the damage and would give priority to rebuilding, clearing mines and unexploded ordnance and carrying out other projects needed to enable the refugees to return to the Nahr el-Bared camp. It was clear that additional funding would be necessary.

12. The Agency's operations elsewhere in Lebanon had continued without interruption. UNRWA remained in close contact with the Lebanese Government to ensure emergency aid and security coordination. The Camp Improvement Initiative launched in 2006 was continuing apace.

13. The UNRWA reform process was well under way. Week-long workshops had been held at field offices to engage all staff in the Agency's evolving approach to management and accountability, and had been well received. The strengthening of some indispensable field
functions would soon bear fruit. Work was beginning on optimizing the staffing structure so that the Agency's human resources could serve refugees more efficiently and effectively. While funding for the OD process had been satisfactory thus far, resources would continue to be required for 2008 and 2009. She recalled that UNRWA was seeking 20 additional posts to be funded under the regular budget. It would focus on 10 posts for the coming biennium; the other 10 would be included in the 2010-2011 budget proposal. She hoped that the countries represented on the Advisory Commission would support those requests in the forthcoming budget debates to be held at United Nations Headquarters.

14. With respect to the programme strategy, the biennial budget, the financial situation and the resource mobilization strategy, the Agency's overall strategy and the programme management cycle that would derive from it were still being developed. An interim programme strategy and a draft budget summary had been prepared for consideration at the current Advisory Commission session. While UNRWA would like to base its budget proposals on the full implementation of its mandate, as called for by some stakeholders, in recent years that approach had not ensured that the budget was fully funded. Accordingly, the Agency sought to combine the needs-based approach with a realistic funding outlook. Current projections for 2007 pointed to a $100-million funding gap in the Agency's General Fund and a comparable shortfall in emergency appeal funds. Similarly, while the resource mobilization strategy should ideally seek full funding of all UNRWA programmes, in practice it was necessary to focus scarce resources on direct delivery of essential services rather than indirect investment in fund-raising.

15. The Commissioner-General's most recent Annual Report to the General Assembly (A/62/13) covered the calendar year 2006 and would be considered by the Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). The report reflected both programme objectives and programme delivery, along with relevant performance indicators. In 2006 the Agency's hopes for major economic support and development following Israel's disengagement from Gaza had been dashed. Rapidly increasing humanitarian needs had led to a
dramatic review of the United Nations Consolidated Appeal, and traditional donors had responded swiftly and generously. In Lebanon, the war in the summer of 2006 had propelled UNRWA into an emergency relief mode.

16. The success of the revitalized Advisory Commission was due in particular to the hard work and leadership of the current Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. She appreciated their efforts and those of the Sub-Committee Chairpersons, and trusted that, under the guidance of the new officers who would take up their duties as from 1 July, the Advisory Commission would continue to provide useful advice and assistance to UNRWA, thereby enhancing its ability to serve Palestine refugees.

Recent developments in the UNRWA area of operations

17. Mr. Kingsley-Nyinah (Director, Executive Office) read out a message from the Director of UNRWA Operations in the Gaza Field, noting that the message's brevity underscored its urgency. The violence in Gaza over the last week had left over 100 people dead and over 500 injured. Two UNRWA staff members had been killed and two had been injured in the crossfire. One civilian had been killed and 15 had been injured during a peace rally held in Gaza City at the height of the conflict. That tragedy was the easily foreseeable result of the international community's failure to deal constructively and even-handedly with a complex situation. Gaza's 1.4 million inhabitants, many of whom had not engaged in the fighting, feared that they would pay a heavy humanitarian price for the political fallout yet to come.

18. UNRWA staff and other humanitarian workers on the ground hoped that all local, regional and international decision-makers would focus on the plight of the civilian population and would carefully measure the impact of their policy decisions on living conditions in Gaza. If the economic and humanitarian situation improved, peace and security would result; if it did not, further violence and despair could be expected.
19. UNRWA had just returned to full operations in Gaza and would shortly launch the Summer Games initiative for 192,000 young people in the territory, along with a two-month remedial education programme for 50,000 students under the Schools of Excellence initiative. The generous donations provided to the Field Office would, through the efforts of its brave and dedicated staff, make a life-saving difference at an unprecedentedly difficult time.

20. **Ms. Shenstone** (Deputy Director of UNRWA Operations, West Bank Field Office), introducing a PowerPoint presentation on access issues in the West Bank, said that people in the West Bank lived in a context of military occupation, economic decline, poverty, despair and suffering. The situation was as dire as ever; any hopes people might have had vis-à-vis the national unity Government had now been dashed. Even though internal conflict in the West Bank was sporadic, the international community must not be complacent. The West Bank could easily become another Gaza.

21. There had also been an increase in aggressive behaviour by some refugees towards UNRWA staff. Such incidents reflected people's increasing despair and frustration both with UNRWA, which they felt was no longer capable of meeting their ever-growing needs, and with the impoverished Palestinian Authority.

22. The tightening permit regime was well documented. The presence of checkpoints and closed areas in the West Bank was leading to a process of "cantonization". Not only were people forbidden to use the main roads and therefore forced to take detours, but increasingly they were denied permission to move within the West Bank itself. As a result, it was difficult for people to move goods, access health care and visit their relatives. The situation in Nablus and Jerusalem was particularly bad.

23. The checkpoint and permit system was causing a concentration of population towards the centre and south of the West Bank. The areas where Palestinians were allowed to live were becoming increasingly limited and now corresponded to about 40 per cent of the land. The
remaining land was taken up by Israeli settlements, military areas and reserved areas where permits were needed. Of particular concern were the seam zone, where the permit regime was particularly strict and life particularly difficult; the area around Jerusalem and towards Bethlehem; the main areas of Israeli settlements to the north; and those areas where the barrier went far inside the West Bank.

24. The barrier was the most significant factor affecting Palestinians, undermining both their ability to lead a normal life and any hopes they might have of establishing a viable State. As a result of the increasingly restrictive permit regime, only a few people could access their land. Communities living on the Israeli side of the barrier, meanwhile, were cut off from essential services such as health services, owing to unpredictable closures. Furthermore, because the barrier went far inside the West Bank and seemed increasingly likely to form an international border in the future, many people were concerned that they would lose not only their land but also their status.

25. Turning to recent developments affecting UNRWA, she expressed grave concern about the plan to mechanize the terminals controlling access into and out of Jerusalem by installing huge iron gates controlled by magnetic cards. Such a system would cause problems for everyone. The United Nations identity card was not magnetized and UNRWA staff would not, therefore, be able to go through the gates. Moreover, 350 UNRWA staff went into and out of Jerusalem every day by bus. Currently, buses were generally allowed to go through. Requiring all passengers to get off the bus and swipe their cards would cause huge delays. In addition, because a mechanized system obviated the need to have people manning the gates, there would no longer be anyone to approach in the event of access problems. Lastly, the plan to introduce back-to-back unloading and reloading of supplies at the terminal would be awkward and costly, cause huge delays and potentially result in loss of or damage to goods. Such developments would have a significant impact on UNRWA operations and should be forestalled. UNRWA staff were entitled to freedom of movement. Indeed, without it, they could not do their work.
26. UNRWA had also been informed that United Nations staff would no longer be able to enter the seam zone without a permit. UNRWA did not believe in permits; its staff were United Nations staff and needed to enter the seam zone to help the people they served. She also expressed concern about the planned privatization of control functions, given the problems that had been caused by the privatization of the Erez crossing. When crossings were controlled by private contractors, it was very difficult for UNRWA to intervene or to appeal to a local authority in the event of access problems and to know which entity it should contact, and which law applied, in the event of violence or violations.

27. By way of a response, the United Nations needed to ensure inter-agency coordination and draw up a plan of action as a matter of urgency. The heads of United Nations agencies active in the West Bank were planning, as a group, to protest strongly to the Israeli authorities. UNRWA must also make a separate protest of its own. The principle of free movement of its staff was fundamental to the Agency's ability to operate in the West Bank. UNRWA would not, therefore, be requesting permits for the seam zone.

28. She called on the international community to recognize the seriousness of the issue not only for Palestinians but also for the United Nations agencies supporting them, and urged the members of the Advisory Commission to make the necessary protestations to the Israeli authorities through their respective capitals, with a view to obtaining recognition that such obstacles and controls were a violation of international humanitarian law and would have a serious impact on all Palestinians. The Agency's operating environment was becoming increasingly complex at a time when Palestinians needed its help more than ever.

29. **Mr. Pitterman** (Director of UNRWA Operations, Jordan Field Office) said that increased funds were needed in order to ensure that quality services were provided to refugees, whether by UNRWA, the Government of Jordan or other partners. Without such an increase,
UNRWA would not be able to maintain, let alone expand, its services without seriously compromising their quality.

30. Since the previous session, there had been a number of positive developments at the Jordan Field Office, particularly with regard to the education programme. The Agency's Education Science Faculty, for example, was the only teacher training facility in Jordan to have been ranked excellent in the university qualification exam. A number of students and teachers had also received awards. He welcomed the agreement of the United States of America to provide project funds to rebuild ageing and structurally dangerous schools in Zarqa, to expand the health centre in Talbieh refugee camp and to rehabilitate the shelters of persons regarded as special hardship cases; the German Government's offer to help launch the studies to be undertaken by the camp improvement department in Talbieh camp; and the recent mission of the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society to UNRWA installations in Zarqa. However, the reconstruction of two schools would not alleviate the main challenges facing students in the rest of the Agency's 177 schools in Jordan, most of which worked on a double-shift system and 51 of which were housed in unsuitable rented facilities.

31. The expansion of one health centre in Talbieh camp would make it possible to provide an additional doctor in the camp. However, 10 of the Agency's 24 health centres in Jordan were located outside the camps, and UNRWA was therefore actively seeking new buildings in order to improve service coverage and quality. That task was becoming even more important in the light of the economic impact of the regional situation on Jordan, where the cost of living and basic services was rising. In that context, it was not surprising that the number of refugees using UNRWA health services in Jordan had increased from 66 per cent in 2005 to 72 per cent - or some 1.3 million refugees - in 2006, and that it was expected to rise further. However, owing to budgetary constraints, the Jordan Field Office was unable to provide additional facilities, furniture, equipment or staffing to meet the increased demand.
32. He welcomed the United States funding for shelter rehabilitation, the only contribution received thus far for such an intervention besides the funding provided by the European Union for the project in Jerash camp. A recent assessment of shelter conditions in Jordan's 10 refugee camps had revealed that Jerash and Talbieh camps had the highest percentage of shelters in need of attention. The German Government's contribution to Talbieh camp would enable the Jordan Field Office to conduct a comprehensive study of the situation there in close cooperation with camp residents, building on work already being done by the Jordanian Government's Department of Palestinian Affairs. However, the study would be only the first step. On the basis of the additional data obtained, the Jordan Field Office would adjust programme priorities and seek additional funding in order to make the necessary improvements.

33. A ceremony would be held the following week to mark the start of the European Union-funded project in Jerash camp. Most of that camp's residents were from Gaza and therefore entitled to temporary passports. Recently, measures had been taken to improve their access to national education and health services. However, because they did not have citizenship or, therefore, full opportunities to work, they remained economically underprivileged and in particular need of UNRWA support. The Jordanian Government planned to link the camp to the main sewerage and water infrastructure in Jerash governorate once a new treatment plant had been built.

34. Contrary to what many people thought, most beneficiaries of UNRWA services in Jordan lived not in refugee camps but in local communities throughout the Kingdom. Over half of the Jordan Field Office's budget was allocated to that group. Indeed, 105 of the Agency's 177 schools, almost half of its health centres and most of the 39 community-based organizations for women and the disabled operating under the Agency's umbrella in Jordan were found outside refugee camps. The microfinance and microenterprise programme, which had three branch offices in Amman and a fourth due to open in Zarqa, serviced refugees and non-refugees living in
local communities. The little shelter rehabilitation that was done by the Jordan Field Office was limited to the 10 official camps under an agreement with the Jordanian Government.

35. The Jordanian Government wanted UNRWA to meet its obligation to provide full services to all Palestine refugees. However, UNRWA was unable to do so because of underfunding of the General Fund, on which the Jordan Field Office was largely dependent. The Government continued to provide services to refugees, but its traditionally generous approach was taking an increasing toll on an already stretched national budget. Notable camp improvements included the provision of sewerage, water and electricity in Talbieh camp, funded by Italy. A project to upgrade the road infrastructure in Baqa'a camp had just begun.

36. The programme strategy document highlighted areas where the funding shortage directly impacted service quality. The Jordan Field Office had some $20 million in unfunded requirements in the "justification reserve". Any additional contributions to the General Fund would enable it to access that reserve and address such compelling needs as new laboratory equipment, upgraded facilities, improved working conditions for local staff and expanded services for the neediest refugees. Without such additional contributions, activities not already included in its General Fund allotment could be undertaken only if they were offset elsewhere in that increasingly skeletal allotment. For example, the Office urgently needed to modernize information technology in its education and health installations and administrative offices. In the Department of Education specifically, such modernization was imperative in order to meet the standards of the Eduwave programme, which was a requirement of the host Government's curriculum. Owing to shortages in the General Fund, implementation was behind schedule, since the Office had not been able to identify offsets that did not have repercussions for other core activities.

37. The OD initiative had taken root in the Jordan Field Office in recent months. A week-long workshop had been organized to introduce the concept to over 100 senior and middle managers, and subsequent meetings with over 1,000 staff members had demonstrated the Jordan
Field Office's commitment to listening to staff concerns and reforming and simplifying key processes. A recurrent theme at those meetings had been that staff were committed to providing the best quality of services to refugees, but they faced increasingly difficult working conditions and refugee beneficiaries were becoming increasingly frustrated. In the context of the OD initiative, the Jordan Field Office had, since the beginning of 2007, introduced the distribution of pre-packed foods, better management of photocopying services and simplified procedures for billing telephone calls, accepting donations and lodging staff complaints with the front office in Amman. The Jordan Field Office intended to move those initiatives forward and step up the involvement of refugees in the future, so as to address their concerns more directly.

38. UNRWA operated in a secure and facilitating environment in Jordan, particularly in comparison with the current situations in the Agency's other fields of operation. Jordanian Government policies on citizenship, access to work, service provision and political participation all contributed to that environment. The achievements he had described were also the result of the strong commitment of UNRWA staff and refugee children and parents. He hoped that donors would help the Jordan Field Office narrow the significant gaps in resources by increasing their support for the General Fund, channelling more project funding to the Jordan Field Office and financing the Jordanian Government's activities for refugees.

39. Mr. Cook (Director of UNRWA Affairs, Lebanon Field Office) said he had originally anticipated that the main focus of his presentation would be the Camp Improvement Initiative. However, UNRWA once again found itself confronted with a humanitarian emergency: the ongoing conflict between the Lebanese Army and the extremist group Fatah al-Islam at Nahr el-Bared camp in northern Lebanon. The challenge UNRWA now faced was to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to those who had fled the camp as well as those who remained in it, and at the same time to prepare for the eventual reopening of the camp.
40. The conflict that had begun on 20 May had often been ferocious, and it was currently impossible to estimate the cost in human life and property. However, the Agency's own observations, as well as reports from the displaced persons and from Agency staff who had been resident in the camp, indicated that considerable destruction had occurred. The water and electricity networks had failed; those utilities were therefore available only to those who had private wells and generators and the fuel to operate them. As a result, conditions for those remaining in the camp were extremely unpleasant, and it was also difficult to communicate with them. The sewage systems, which had been completed only two years previously, would have gradually become dysfunctional owing to the lack of water. It was known that the water wells had been damaged, and it would be necessary to assess the extent of that damage before the cost of refurbishment could be estimated.

41. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Lebanese Red Cross and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) had continued to provide humanitarian assistance to those besieged in the camp whenever the safety and security situation had allowed them to do so. He expressed admiration for the courage and sacrifice of the staff of those organizations, who were working at considerable risk to themselves, a fact underlined by the recent death of two Red Cross workers just outside the camp. He also recalled the Palestinian civilians and Lebanese soldiers who had died or been injured.

42. UNRWA had provided the first humanitarian assistance to the camp, on 22 May. Despite an attack on its convoy, which had resulted in the abandonment of four vehicles, the staff had still managed to deliver their cargo of commodities, and he commended their courage and commitment.

43. Some 31,250 people had been registered by UNRWA as displaced, a number larger than the actual population of the camp. It was therefore believed that a number of people living in the heavily populated area around the camp had also been displaced. Most had fled to Beddawi camp with only the clothes they wore, and many without their identification documents or money. As a
result, the population of Beddawi camp, which normally numbered 16,000 refugees, had more than doubled. Some of those displaced persons had since moved on, but the camp remained seriously overcrowded. Some were housed in UNRWA schools or in mosques or social clubs, but most lived in people's homes. Often, several displaced families lived with a single host family. One of the main challenges now was to provide alternative accommodation. The Prime Minister of Lebanon had offered the use of government schools as the school year ended, and many families were now living in considerably better conditions, with assistance provided by the Government, United Nations agencies and NGOs. It was also necessary to assist the host families, many of whom lived in poverty themselves. It was a question not just of living space and basic needs but also of dignity.

44. To monitor the emergency response, the Prime Minister had established and was chairing a higher coordination committee comprising representatives of UNRWA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ICRC, PRCS, the Lebanese Red Cross and the Higher Relief Committee of the Lebanese Government, as well as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Chair of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. UNRWA was also providing the Higher Relief Committee with regular updates on the distribution of humanitarian assistance, and the Committee had provided UNRWA with warehouse space and several thousand food parcels.

45. UNRWA had taken measures to ensure good coordination between the humanitarian agencies operating on the ground. The United Nations Resident Coordinator had requested UNRWA to be the lead United Nations agency, and the other members of the United Nations country team had provided excellent support. As soon as the crisis had begun to unfold, UNRWA had established an emergency coordination team, which had been joined by staff from a number of other organizations and representatives of donors. Clusters, based on those established for the 2006 conflict and chaired by UNRWA staff, had been set up. The World Food Programme (WFP) had provided a cluster and NGO coordinator, who had made recommendations for improvements in coordination that were now being implemented.
46. The displaced persons in Beddawi camp and elsewhere in the north were now well provided for. The major remaining concern was the overcrowding in the camp. In addition, 50 women were due to give birth within the next few weeks, and UNRWA was working with the Government to find suitable accommodation for them. Substantial assistance, in the form of food, drinking water, bedding, hygiene kits, kitchen kits, baby kits and toys, had also been provided by other organizations. Several NGOs had provided a substantial amount of clothing, but more was needed.

47. UNRWA had opened a health centre in Beddawi camp within hours of the displaced persons beginning to arrive. The health situation was under control and there were no signs of serious outbreaks of contagious disease. The crowded conditions meant that certain complaints, such as skin and respiratory ailments and lice, were prevalent, but the Agency had adequate health supplies to deal with those and the other usual chronic and acute diseases. The Agency had also established a mobile health clinic to provide services to displaced persons elsewhere in the north. Other entities, including the Qatar Red Crescent Society and the PRCS hospital, were also providing health services, and the Agency was coordinating closely with them.

48. The Agency's flash appeal included $750,000 for emergency cash assistance. However, the Prime Minister of Lebanon had recently announced a donation of at least $10 million from Saudi Arabia, to be divided between the displaced families of Nahr el-Bared and the host families of Beddawi.

49. The trauma experienced by the displaced was clear to anyone who had visited Beddawi camp. Several organizations were providing psychosocial support to those who needed it, including UNRWA staff. Psychiatric support was also being provided where appropriate.

50. Approximately 1,000 students from Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi camps had been due to sit official school examinations in summer 2007. Since the schools in Nahr el-Bared were now inaccessible and those in Beddawi were being used for shelter, the Agency had bussed the students to schools in Tripoli, which had opened on a double-shift basis in order to cater for them.
The Agency had provided many students with new textbooks and school supplies and had also provided them with one meal a day. Recreational activities were also being offered, in cooperation with many other organizations, to distract both children and adults from their difficult circumstances.

51. The Lebanese Government had also responded to the emergency by providing shelter and food and non-food items. In addition, the Prime Minister had assured the displaced that they would return to their homes, which would be reconstructed by the State. Of the 315 Agency staff who had been in Nahr el-Bared camp at the start of the conflict, one - Mr. Adel Khalil - had, sadly, been killed by a sniper. However, all the other staff had been safely evacuated.

52. It was still unclear when the conflict at Nahr el-Bared would end, allowing the displaced to return to their homes. The camp had been heavily bombarded since 20 May, and unexploded ordnance and booby traps planted by Fatah al-Islam would pose a hazard. UNRWA and a number of other entities had coordinated a response to the problem, which included the provision by the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) of heavy equipment to remove rubble from the streets. The Prime Minister had also instructed a Lebanese/Palestinian engineering firm to undertake a damage assessment. UNRWA was providing the firm with information and assistance, and had also prepared a plan to provide emergency water supplies to the camp and to assess the damaged environmental health systems.

53. Considerable temporary shelter would be required, owing to the extent of the destruction in the camp. In addition, temporary school premises would be needed, since at least one school in the UNRWA compound in Nahr el-Bared had sustained serious damage. It was not yet clear whether the Agency's health centre in the same compound had sustained damage. The Agency was therefore making provision for temporary health services. The United Nations country team was working on a plan for the return to the camp in coordination with relevant organizations. A recovery cluster to be headed by the Resident Coordinator would include all organizations able to support the recovery process.
54. The response to the flash appeal to date had been generous and swift, and the funds would be quickly disbursed to the refugees affected by the conflict. A further appeal would be necessary once the Agency had been able to assess the situation in Nahr el-Bared camp. If the flash appeal was oversubscribed, UNRWA would be seeking to set the additional contributions against the rehabilitation and repair work in the camp. He thanked those donors that had responded to date and those that intended to make donations in the future. While the turmoil went on in northern Lebanon, UNRWA was continuing to provide normal services to the refugee population in the rest of the country.

55. The Camp Improvement Initiative had been progressing well. A total of $3.9 million had been received for the early recovery phase after the conflict of summer 2006 and had been used to fund projects that could be considered camp improvement. A further $24 million had been pledged, of which $8.5 million had been received to date. UNRWA would therefore be able to carry out many projects, including the rehabilitation of shelters and environmental health infrastructure, early interventions for the disabled, capacity-building and the provision of health centres and new training courses.

56. The events at Nahr el-Bared and the need to undertake reconstruction must not distract attention from the need to improve conditions both within and outside the other camps in Lebanon. The Lebanese Government and UNRWA remained fully committed to the Initiative.

57. Mr. Ferre (Spain) said that his delegation was concerned by the spiral of violence in Gaza and Lebanon, which was leading to the collapse of social and political structures. In that context, he commended UNRWA for its continued efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance and praised the rapid response to the recent crisis in Lebanon. Action was required to cater for the most urgent needs, including future reconstruction interventions. Spain was pleased to announce a non-earmarked contribution of 600,000 euros to the recently launched flash appeal, to be
channelled through UNRWA and UNICEF, in addition to the 4 million euros already contributed to the emergency appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory.

58. **Mr. Nour** (United Kingdom) commended the work of UNRWA, particularly in the recent crises in Gaza and Lebanon, and the courage and commitment of its staff. He also acknowledged the efforts of ICRC and other NGOs in Nahr el-Bared camp. The United Kingdom had provided a sum of $500,000 which, together with Norwegian assistance, was being used to fund MAG operations to clear unexploded ordnance in Nahr el-Bared. He requested an update on the Agency's appeal for funds for its emergency programmes in Lebanon from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). He also asked whether any of the money pledged for camp improvement in Lebanon would be available for rehabilitation in Nahr el-Bared.

59. **Ms. Mokaddem** (Lebanon) commended the efforts of UNRWA and of other organizations to meet the needs of Palestine refugees. She also expressed gratitude to all those who had made donations to the flash appeal.

60. **Mr. Azayzeh** (Jordan), having praised the Agency's efforts to carry out its work in extremely difficult circumstances, said that the international community must provide protection for Agency staff to allow them to continue their work. All refugees in Jordan were entitled to work, although refugees from Gaza, who accounted for 7 per cent of the total number of Palestine refugees in Jordan, were allowed to work only in the private sector. Some 1,800 shelters in Baq'a camp and 600 in Marka camp were in need of attention.

61. **Mr. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the presentations just made highlighted the vital role of UNRWA. He particularly wished to commend the efforts of the Director of
UNRWA Affairs at the Syrian Arab Republic Field Office, who was unable to be present at the current session because he was accompanying a United Arab Emirates delegation on a visit to Neirab camp. He, Mr. Mustafa, had just received news that the European Union planned to fund the construction of 250 shelters and a health centre in the camp.

62. **Mr. Cook** (Director of UNRWA Affairs, Lebanon Field Office) said that funds totalling $5.7 million would be available from CERF, of which $419,000 would be allocated to the Department of Safety and Security and $193,000 to UNICEF. The remainder would go to UNRWA and included funds for the implementation by UNRWA of programmes planned by all other agencies except UNICEF. The other agencies in question would play a supporting role.

63. In the light of recent events, it was unlikely that camp improvements in Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi could go ahead in the form originally envisaged. The situation in those camps would need to be reassessed.

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Annual report of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly (A/62/13)**

64. **The Chairperson** said that, pursuant to an exchange of letters with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, the second sentence of paragraph 62 of the draft report of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly (A/62/13) would be deleted because it erroneously indicated that that country imposed restrictions on Palestinian employment in the public sector.
65. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that the draft report before the Advisory Commission reflected the new practice of taking the calendar year as the reporting period. It also had a new shorter format in which the programme narratives were replaced by performance indicators. The Advisory Commission's comments would inform her presentation of the report to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly.

66. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada) said that the report highlighted the difficult context in which UNRWA had operated in 2006 and that her delegation appreciated the dedication demonstrated by the Agency's staff. Performance indicators should be more fully developed in subsequent annual reports. In addition, the implementation of the OD plan and the programme strategy should be linked to a more robust results framework. The indicators currently being used did not give a clear picture of the results being achieved on the ground. She encouraged UNRWA to continue to improve the quality of the annual reports, particularly by more precisely defining indicators and results.

67. **Ms. Mokaddem** (Lebanon) said that she welcomed the new format of the report, which presented the information very clearly. Paragraph 15, which described developments in Lebanon during the reporting period, did not reflect previously agreed language concerning the Israeli military operations that had resulted in the deaths of some 1,200 people, the displacement of close to 1 million and severe damage to infrastructure. More precise and balanced language should be incorporated into that paragraph, which currently implied that Hizbullah was solely responsible for the conflict.

68. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said, in response to the Canadian delegation's comment, that UNRWA was aware of the need for further work on the indicators.
She would review the paragraph referred to by the Lebanese delegation and, in any event, would take Lebanon's comment into account when presenting the report to the Fourth Committee.

69. **Mr. Nakashima** (Japan), noting the indication, in paragraph 38 of the report, that some 14,500 local UNRWA staff in the occupied Palestinian territory did not receive hazard pay, asked for information on the cost of providing such hazard pay. With respect to paragraph 43, his delegation felt that, given the necessity of building a good working relationship with the Israeli authorities, the Advisory Commission should be given more information on the Agency's dealings with those authorities. He also asked for an update on the situation of the Palestine refugees from Iraq who had been provided with UNRWA service cards (para. 80 (j)). Lastly, he asked the Commissioner-General to elaborate on the background of the $2-million expansion of the microfinance and microenterprise programme (para. 88 (b)).

70. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that the provision of hazard pay to the UNRWA staff currently not covered would cost several million dollars a year. The Staff Association in New York had taken up the issue, but the hazard pay was unlikely to be approved. In lieu of hazard pay, UNRWA had been giving those staff members modest additional payments of $100, drawn from emergency appeal funds, at least once a year in view of the difficult conditions in which they worked.

71. UNRWA, together with the entire inter-agency community in the West Bank and Gaza, could provide more information on its interactions with the Israeli authorities if delegations so desired. With respect to the Palestine refugees from Iraq referred to in paragraph 80 (j), the Agency, at the request of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), had opened a tented school at the Al-Tanf camp located in the no-man's land between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Moreover, the Agency's schools and health clinics were available to Palestine refugees in other parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. Lastly, she had no
details on the expansion of the microfinance and microenterprise programme, but other presentations in the course of the session could shed some light on the subject.

Adoption of the Chairperson's letter to the Commissioner-General

72. The Chairperson said that the Advisory Commission had come close to reaching a consensus, in informal consultations, on the letter from the Chairperson to the Commissioner-General, which would be included in the final version of her report to the General Assembly.

73. Mr. Hallam (United Kingdom) said that the wording of paragraph 4 of the draft letter implied that the decision by donors to suspend direct aid to the Palestinian Authority was linked to the increase in poverty in the occupied Palestinian territory. However, the amount of aid provided for Palestinian livelihoods had actually been higher in 2006 than in 2005, as recognized in the most recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) report on economic developments in the territory in 2006; the increased aid had been provided through UNRWA, the European Union's Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) and other channels. He proposed adding the sentence "without substantial and increased donor support, the situation would have been much worse" after the first sentence of paragraph 4.

74. While he did not oppose the thrust of the argument contained in paragraph 9 of the draft, which concerned the costs incurred by UNRWA as a result of restrictions imposed by Israel, his delegation could not, at the current stage, agree to "endorse" the Agency's demands for compensation from Israel because his Government was still in the process of defining its position in that regard. He proposed that the word "endorses" in the third sentence of paragraph 9 should be replaced with the word "notes". He expressed a similar concern about the use of the word "endorsement" in the last sentence of paragraph 12, in connection with the Agency's staffing proposals.
75. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada) proposed that the last sentence of paragraph 12 should begin with the words "the Advisory Commission endorsed these staffing proposals in a letter dated 29 January 2007".

_The letter dated 17 June 2007 from the Chairperson of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA addressed to the Commissioner-General, as amended, was adopted._

**Enhancement of support for the Commissioner-General**

76. **Mr. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic) noted that much had already been said about the importance of helping UNRWA to provide services to all Palestine refugees in all areas of operation. Such support must come from all parties - Advisory Commission members, hosts and donors. The Palestine refugees were an extremely important cause. They had been displaced from their homeland almost 60 years previously and still no solution had been found to their predicament.

77. The Syrian Arab Republic cooperated with UNRWA management and was in contact with various donor and non-donor countries with a view to finding ways to support the Agency's budget and programmes. For example, it had recently met with representatives of the United Arab Emirates and its Red Crescent Society, which had reviewed the situation of the refugee camps and provided a quick response for the Palestine refugees through UNRWA. It was important to continuously seek ways to help UNRWA provide its services as effectively as possible, regardless of the obstacles that might arise from time to time. His Government fully supported the Commissioner-General, the Deputy Commissioner-General and the senior management, all of whom worked tirelessly to reduce the suffering of the Palestine refugees and provide them with the best services possible.
78. *Ms. Porter* (Canada) said that her comments would concern indirect rather than direct support for UNRWA and the Commissioner-General, and advocacy for refugees rather than for UNRWA. In the autumn of 2006, Canada had approached many of the countries previously involved in the multilateral Refugee Working Group to seek their views on the possibility of reactivating it. Some countries were interested in the refugee issue but were actively involved in UNRWA and therefore nervous about duplication of its work. Her Government had therefore concluded that the time for such an initiative was not right. The very purpose of the multilateral process had been to support the bilateral process; without an active peace process, it made no sense to reactivate a multilateral initiative.

79. Instead, Canada had invited a small group of donor countries to attend an exploratory meeting in April 2007 in Berlin, under the name of the Refugee Coordination Forum, to discuss ways of focusing efforts outside the scope of UNRWA on the refugee problem. In an effort to be as transparent as possible, Canada had discussed the agenda in advance with meeting participants, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. The very modest objective of the meeting had been to determine how much interest there was in establishing a group to look at issues falling outside the Agency’s mandate. Participants had agreed that such a group would be valuable and, while they had not reached consensus on specific follow-up initiatives, they had expressed interest in holding further meetings. Canada had therefore conducted consultations and had now prepared specific suggestions for follow-up.

80. One suggestion made at the meeting had been to create an informal group of "friends of the Commissioner-General", which could explore political support for fundraising and advocacy for refugees. That idea was not yet, however, fully developed. Many countries would consider that a group of friends of UNRWA and the Commissioner-General already existed in the shape of the Advisory Commission, and that any other group would represent a duplication. Canada, however, felt that there was room to work on issues falling outside the Advisory Commission’s mandate, in particular political issues, which the Advisory Commission generally did not address.
Another area where it might be possible to add value concerned Palestine refugees from Iraq. Canada had had some positive discussions with UNHCR in that regard. Much attention was being paid to Iraqi refugees in general, but not to the small but particularly vulnerable group of Palestine refugees among them. Canada would be interested in exploring the idea of setting up a small group which would focus attention on such refugees and support the work of UNHCR in that regard.

Canada had also held discussions with the Government of Lebanon as to how the international community might assist it in its work with UNRWA and help it improve the situation of Palestine refugees living within its borders. The Lebanese Government had said that it would appreciate such international support. In the coming months, Canada and Lebanon would be discussing what shape such support might take. One idea was to set up a small group of friends or contact group.

The last area for possible follow-up was research. The current idea was to coordinate a stocktaking exercise among the parties supporting refugee research and policy analysis.

All the ideas she had mentioned had been discussed with PLO and shared with Israel. Canada wished to be as transparent and inclusive as possible during the process of establishing what the Refugee Coordination Forum would do. As soon as the way forward was clearer, Canada would give serious consideration to the question of how to involve the host countries and, more broadly, Arab countries in the process.

In July 2007, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London would be organizing a round table as part of its ongoing work on the regional dimension of the refugee problem. In particular, it was working to develop a network of people directly involved in the refugee issue in the host countries. Participants would include representatives of Arab host countries as well as academics and interested Government officials.
Lastly, the summary note from the April meeting had been shared with meeting participants, PLO, Israel and those countries that had been consulted ahead of the meeting but had been unable to attend. Copies were available in the room.

The Chairperson asked whether any concrete decisions had been taken regarding future meetings and possible next steps.

Ms. Porter (Canada) said that, following the Chatham House round table, Canada would be meeting with the participants of the round table to discuss how to move forward in the four areas she had mentioned, with a view to holding another Refugee Coordination Forum meeting in the autumn. In the coming months, Canada would also be holding discussions with the Lebanese Government and UNHCR with a view to identifying what kind of support they needed.

Mr. Azayzeh (Jordan), referring to the subject of support for the Commissioner-General, suggested an increase in donor support for the emergency budget; the use of the media to raise awareness of UNRWA programmes and to encourage private sector support for them; and the establishment of a special mechanism to ensure the free movement and safety and security of UNRWA staff, which would enable them to do their job more effectively.

Regarding the Canadian proposals, he saw no value in considering the refugee issue in isolation. All the relevant issues must be considered together. Moreover, he had reservations about the proposal to focus attention on refugees in certain geographical areas; refugees in all areas needed friends to secure support for them. Such activities should therefore be conducted in all five areas of operation.

Lastly, it was regrettable that UNRWA staff had not been invited to a workshop organized in Cyprus in April; the Commissioner-General, at least, should be able to participate in
such meetings. In that regard, he hoped that UNRWA representatives would be invited to the upcoming round table in London.

92. **Mr. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, while UNRWA must be the main voice and provider of services for Palestine refugees, other parties - such as groups of friends of UNRWA - were needed to support the Agency in its work and to help it improve its services, until such time as a just and lasting solution to the refugees' situation could be found. Indeed, that was one of the recommendations of the 2004 Geneva Conference on Meeting the Humanitarian Needs of the Palestine Refugees in the Near East; such recommendations needed to be implemented.

93. The present discussion was supposed to be about support for the Commissioner-General. However, the representative of Canada, on behalf of the donors, had spoken about refugees in general, not UNRWA specifically. Moreover, he agreed with the representative of Jordan that the refugee issue must be addressed as part of a comprehensive peace process. It was not possible to focus on one aspect of that process while disregarding others.

94. **Mr. Kirst** (Sweden) said that his Government had full confidence in the Commissioner-General and was ready to work either bilaterally or through the Advisory Commission to support her in her work. Sweden was reluctant, however, to establish any group that might duplicate the Agency's work. The primary entity through which UNRWA, hosts and donors, and other stakeholders worked together was the Advisory Commission. That mandate must be protected.

95. **Mr. Ferre** (Spain) said that his Government was very concerned about Israel's violation of the tax exemption granted to UNRWA under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and its imposition of port charges in violation of the 1967 Comay-Michelmore Agreement between Israel and UNRWA. Israel's actions had devastating
financial consequences for UNRWA, and urgent and effective joint steps were needed to ensure that both instruments were implemented. Moreover, Spain fully supported the Agency's demand for compensation from the Israeli authorities for damaged UNRWA installations. Advocacy action should be agreed upon and implemented jointly by UNRWA and donors in an effort to resolve the situation.

96. Ms. Mokaddem (Lebanon) said that her Government's position had not changed: it was not possible to address the refugee issue without addressing the peace process as a whole, including such issues as the right of return, the future Palestinian State and Israeli-occupied land in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. That was, she believed, the view of all parties in Lebanon. Any attempt to revive a multilateral refugee initiative without also reviving the peace process would, therefore, be met with suspicion. The two must go hand in hand.

97. Referring to the Canadian proposals, she wondered if there might be a way of setting up a group of friends of Lebanon in the context of an Advisory Commission sub-group, so as to create a linkage between the two. Ultimately, the international community's responsibility for meeting the needs of Palestine refugees until they could return to their homeland was embodied in UNRWA. Her Government would not reject the idea of a group of friends of Lebanon; however, it would be better if such a group were formed within the Advisory Commission and better still if it were coordinated with UNRWA and the Commissioner-General.

98. Mr. Meritan (Observer for the European Commission) wondered whether, in addition to bilateral advocacy work by Advisory Commission members, it might be a good idea for the Task Force on Project Implementation to raise the issue of port charges with Israel. The Task Force, which included representatives of the World Bank, the European Commission, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of the United Nations Special
Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, discussed movement, access and other issues relating to project implementation with Israel.

99. The Chairperson welcomed that suggestion. He wondered whether the European Commission, as a member of the Task Force, would like to raise the issue.

100. Responding to the representative of Lebanon, he said that discussions about political issues must stay outside the Advisory Commission and its sub-groups. He could not, therefore, endorse her proposal. Furthermore, those issues that could be discussed by the Advisory Commission should be considered by the Commission as a whole, not by its Sub-Committees, in order to avoid overlap. Issues that could not be addressed by the Commission were of course open to outside initiatives.

101. The main concerns raised during the discussion related to duplication and participation; he invited the representative of Canada to respond in that regard.

102. Ms. Porter (Canada) reiterated that the aim of the April meeting had been simply to determine whether there was any interest in establishing a multilateral group to add value in areas outside existing mandates and, if so, to identify what those areas might be. On the issue of Palestine refugees from Iraq, for example, UNHCR was actively engaged in offering protection and finding solutions. The meeting participants had discussed whether there would be any value in a small number of groups working with UNHCR to help advance the work it was already doing. The initial response from UNHCR had been positive. The question of what form that support would take and which parties would be involved was still under discussion.

103. Her Government would certainly be interested in expanding participation, particularly among the regional parties, once the way forward was clearer. First, however, it would be necessary to decide what the Forum's agenda might be, in order to bring the right parties to the table and avoid duplication with work being done elsewhere.
104. She emphasized, again, that the idea was still a very tentative one. Her delegation had not intended to make people nervous.

105. The Chairperson expressed appreciation for all the suggestions that had been made. The discussion was still at a preliminary stage. He looked forward to hearing more ideas in the future and asked the representative of Canada to keep the Advisory Commission informed of future developments.

External review of the emergency programme in the occupied Palestinian territory

106. Ms. Cruden (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, drew attention to the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on the external review of UNRWA emergency activities in the occupied Palestinian territories 2000-2005 and on the Agency's preliminary response to it. A high degree of consensus had already been reached on the document, but she would welcome any further comments on it.

107. Mr. Grandi (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA), introducing the updated matrix outlining the Agency's response to the external review of UNRWA emergency activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, said that the issue of improving emergency management was becoming increasingly important. He therefore welcomed the comments of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration in that regard. He assured the Advisory Commission that emergency programming was already being integrated into OD reforms, for example, in the areas of programme management, process simplification and human resources. In some cases, the Agency was fast-tracking elements of the OD process that could be of benefit to emergency programming. For example, a project was being piloted in Gaza to double the speed
of cash distribution to needy refugees. However, in general it was difficult to fast-track individual elements of the process, since they were all interrelated.

108. UNRWA was already implementing a number of the recommendations in the review. For example, it had improved its ability to pre-finance certain activities under the emergency programmes by establishing more flexible procedures. It was also benefiting from the appointment of an emergency programme officer. A field emergency response team had been set up at the Gaza Field Office, which had helped to address some of the most dramatic developments of recent months. Progress had also been made with regard to research and assessment relating to emergency management, through more effective use of data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to monitor the economic impact of the humanitarian crisis on refugees. Further work was being done with PCBS to follow up on the study that had been commissioned the previous year, although it was difficult for PCBS to operate normally in the current circumstances. However, if the situation improved, UNRWA would be in a better position to carry out proper needs assessment with regard to emergency programming and the 2008 emergency appeal.

109. He assured the Advisory Commission that UNRWA would continue its efforts to improve cooperation with other agencies and organizations, especially those dealing with food aid, such as WFP, with particular emphasis on the assessment and monitoring of food security conditions. His recent presentation to the WFP Executive Board on the Agency's existing and planned cooperation with WFP and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had been well received and had played a role in convincing the Executive Board to approve a special project for Palestine refugees for the next two years. Having noted the Sub-Committee's useful remarks on the issue of food aid versus cash assistance, he said that UNRWA would be exploring that issue with WFP with a view to benefiting from the latter's worldwide experience in that regard. Naturally, any resulting initiatives would have to be adapted to the specific needs of Palestine refugees.
110. Having welcomed the Sub-Committee's endorsement of the maintenance of two separate budgets for core activities and the emergency programme, he agreed that a discussion of possible overlaps might be useful and requested Commission members to clarify their concerns in that regard. Activities under the emergency programme, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory, were still seen as supplementary to activities under the General Fund; therefore, the risk of overlap was perhaps more limited than it seemed. The discussion of the interim programme strategy would provide the required holistic presentation of all the Agency's activities.

111. He was unsure of the need for a formal management response to the review, the preparation of which would distract the Agency's attention from other pressing concerns. A response had already been provided in the updated version of the matrix now before the Commission. Further elements of a response were included in the OD plan, the programme strategy and the responses to the audit recommendations. However, he would welcome members' comments on that score.

112. It was crucial for donors to take on board the general need for increased funding acknowledged by the Sub-Committee, particularly given that the Agency's emergency appeal would generate at best 50 per cent of the funds hoped for. He expressed reservations about the statement in the Sub-Committee document that efforts by UNRWA to implement reforms were the most effective incentive for donors to change their funding practices. The dramatic situation on the ground and the needs of refugees should be the strongest incentive for increased funding.

113. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, said she was pleased to note that an updated version of the matrix had been distributed but would defer her comments on it until the Sub-Committee had had time to consider it. With regard to the initial version of the matrix, Sub-Committee members had felt that a more strategic response to the external review might be needed in addition to the
information provided about specific actions relating to individual recommendations in the review. However, that issue could be discussed further in the light of the recent updates to the matrix.

114. She was pleased to note that emergency management was being made an integral part of the OD process. Acknowledging that it was sometimes difficult to fast-track individual elements of the process, she nonetheless encouraged UNRWA to consider using that approach wherever possible.

115. With regard to incentives for increased funding, she said that reform efforts by UNRWA helped build trust with donors, making it easier for delegations to raise the issue of increased funding with their capitals. However, the wording of the recommendation in question could be amended if necessary.

116. **Mr. Kirst** (Sweden) said that his delegation had initiated the recommendation to prepare a more formal management response to the external review because the initial version of the matrix had not made it entirely clear how certain recommendations were to be dealt with. However, he agreed that the issue could be discussed further on the basis of the updated version of the matrix.

117. **Ms. Mokaddem** (Lebanon), expressing agreement with the remarks of the Deputy Commissioner-General concerning incentives for increased funding, proposed that the phrase "the most effective incentive" in the Sub-Committee document should be amended to read "one of the incentives".

118. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, and **Mr. Kirst** (Sweden) expressed support for that proposal.
119. **Ms. Brooks-Rubin** (United States of America) welcomed the updated version of the matrix. Referring to the Sub-Committee's recommendation that a separate analysis of the financial management aspects of the review should be undertaken, she said that her delegation was not certain that such an analysis was necessary but would welcome the comments of the Deputy Commissioner-General in that regard.

120. **Mr. Grandi** (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that that issue was addressed to some extent in the updated version of the matrix, although a more detailed response might be required. UNRWA would follow up on the recommendation in question.

121. **The Chairperson** said he took it that the Commission wished to incorporate the amendment to the recommendations of the Sub-Committee proposed by Lebanon and suggested that the Commission should take up the document again at its next meeting, when the Sub-Committee had considered the updated version of the matrix and had reviewed its recommendation on the preparation of a more detailed management response to the external review of emergency activities.

   *It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.*
18 June 2007

The meeting was called to order at 8.40 a.m.

Update on the organizational development process

122. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, said that she appreciated the quarterly report on the implementation of the organizational development (OD) process which UNRWA had submitted pursuant to a recommendation made by the Advisory Commission at its preceding session. UNRWA had made considerable headway in the OD process. The Advisory Commission might wish to recommend that UNRWA should indicate, in the quarterly OD reports, whether or not the different aspects of the process were on track and that it should provide annual or semi-annual updates of the risk analysis it had presented at the February 2007 session.

123. **Mr. Grandi** (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that one of the main activities carried out in recent months had been the conduct of week-long OD workshops in the field offices to consolidate awareness and a sense of ownership of the process. Thus far, over 200 mid-level managers had participated in the workshops, which had given rise to many proposals and a debate on how best to implement the strategy, policy, accountability, results and envelopes (of resources) (SPARE) paradigm. That new approach was more decentralized and transparent and involved the redefinition of decision-making roles; for example, a head teacher at a school was also a manager and a resource administrator. The focus was on the layer of management closest to the level of service delivery.

124. In the area of human resources, UNRWA was in the process of engaging experts to review its post classification and compensation structure. Performance management at the
Agency was based on best practices both within and outside the United Nations system. A competency framework for human resources was being developed in-house. With respect to the staffing strategy, UNRWA had begun to review, with a consultant, how effectively it was using its large (29,000-strong) staffing component. Since the staffing strategy was obviously dependent on the programme strategy, both strategies were being developed simultaneously.

125. UNRWA was actively seeking to simplify business processes. To that end, it had selected a number of pilot processes in the areas of emergency management, finance, procurement and human resources. Those efforts should yield quick wins by the end of the current year in terms of improved cost-effectiveness and service delivery. Regarding information technology, UNRWA received support from the relevant department at United Nations Headquarters and was closely following the reforms which the latter was carrying out in that area. One initiative under discussion was the possibility of linking up with the disaster recovery plans already developed by other agencies.

126. He then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the budget for the OD process. The total budget for the three-year process had originally been $30 million but was currently estimated at $28.6 million up to the end of 2009; the Agency would continue to seek further savings. He presented a per-year breakdown of the funding requirements for the process, which showed that the pledges and contributions received in 2006 and 2007 had come close to meeting the targets. Total pledges to date already covered nearly 50 per cent of the resources needed for the entire process. However, because OD was a front-loaded process in which most of the investment was to be made at the earlier stages, he urged delegations to bridge the $2-million gap in funding for 2007.

127. If the General Assembly did not approve the 20 additional regular-budget posts being sought for international staff under the OD plan, the Agency would incur further sustainability costs. UNRWA had proposed to phase in the new posts: in 2008-2009 10 of them would be funded under the regular budget while the other 10 were funded under the OD budget, and in
2010-2011 all 20 posts would be funded under the regular budget, since the OD process would have been completed by that time. The average annual cost was $175,000 per post. Thus far, only two of the 10 posts requested had been secured for the coming biennium. In sum, what the Agency needed most from the Advisory Commission was assistance in shifting key posts from the OD budget to the regular budget and additional efforts to fill the $2-million gap in OD funding for 2007.

128. Lastly, he drew attention to a table providing an update on the status of OD initiatives. In response to the request made by the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, he said that an update of the risk analysis would be provided at the November 2007 or February 2008 session.

129. **Mr. Christensen** (Denmark) asked how the OD process would be affected by continued underfunding. He also wondered how the process was perceived on the ground and whether mid-level managers were demonstrating an increased sense of ownership.

130. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) said that his country's regular contributions to UNRWA had declined. It was currently considering the possibility of earmarking part of its 2007 contribution for the OD process.

131. **Mr. Azayzeh** (Jordan) reiterated the host countries' position that the OD budget should not be dependent on the regular budget and that it should not be necessary to use the regular budget to fund OD processes.

132. **Mr. Jonker** (Netherlands) asked what UNRWA would do if it could not obtain full funding for the process and whether in-house solutions could be found if the General Assembly did not approve all 10 additional posts for 2008-2009.
133. **Mr. Ferre** (Spain) said that the Agency's efforts to achieve its goals had been made more complex by the challenging operational environment, especially in the Gaza Strip. He asked whether UNRWA had devised any alternative solutions in view of the new situation in Gaza.

134. **Mr. Kirst** (Sweden) said that his delegation was concerned about the possibility of a funding shortfall, especially for 2008-2009. As stakeholders of the Advisory Commission, donors had a responsibility to provide adequate funding.

135. **Ms. Vege** (Switzerland) said that her delegation would welcome more frequent reports on the OD process, possibly on a quarterly basis. She commended UNRWA for having made significant headway with the process, especially in the field offices and with mid-level managers. In addition to those steps to improve internal communication, the Agency should enhance its communication with donor representatives in host countries, which were currently not sufficiently aware of the OD process.

136. **Mr. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic) said he agreed that such communication was important. Representatives of donor countries and of Palestine refugees should be kept informed of the OD process, which demonstrated the Agency's commitment to developing and improving its ability to deliver services to refugees.

137. **Mr. Hallam** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation strongly supported the OD process, both morally and financially. It was interested in working with UNRWA to demonstrate how the OD process was helping the Agency to improve refugee services, as that would help convince taxpayers in donor countries to support the process's funding. As the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) also faced tight restrictions on the number of
international staff it could recruit, it was making better use of its local staff. He wondered whether, in a similar vein, UNRWA could make better use of its Palestinian staff in senior positions.

138. **Mr. Albright** (United States of America) said that his Government had provided $2.7 million for the OD process in 2007. However, because of the timing of the United States budget cycle, he could not yet say with certainty how much it would provide in 2008. Recalling that the proposal concerning disaster recovery plans had been a recommendation of the United Nations Board of Auditors, he asked whether the Agency's work with the United Nations Secretariat on that issue would affect the timeline for implementing the Board's recommendation. With respect to the international posts that UNRWA had requested, the Agency's planning should contemplate the possibility that it might not receive those posts.

139. **Mr. Meritan** (Observer for the European Commission) said that the OD plan brightened the outlook for the Agency's future. Some 70 per cent of the European Commission's funding for UNRWA was provided through the General Fund. A clear picture of the consequences of a funding shortfall in 2008-2009 should be provided so that, if necessary, the European Commission could plan to provide specific support for the OD process, for which it had not yet earmarked any funds. The General Fund should not be used to offset any shortfall in OD funding in 2008-2009.

140. **Ms. Mokaddem** (Lebanon) said that her Government had held preliminary discussions with UNRWA on how the host countries would benefit from the OD initiative.

141. At the previous meeting, the possibility of fast-tracking elements of the OD process relating to emergency programming had been raised. She asked whether it would also be possible
to fast-track some of the OD work relating to Lebanon. Otherwise, donors might have the impression that the Agency’s absorption capacity was lacking.

142. **Mr. Grandi** (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that an OD funding shortfall would have two consequences. First, some initiatives would not be implemented. However, there were fewer and fewer initiatives that could simply be shelved, since the various elements of the OD process were designed to run in parallel. Sometimes it was not possible to shelve one initiative without affecting the whole system. The other, more likely, outcome was that not all initiatives would be completed by the end of 2009, as hoped. He suggested that the Advisory Commission should discuss which initiatives would be affected at its next session, when the funding situation would be clearer.

143. UNRWA must of course envisage the possibility that it might not receive all the international posts it had requested, or at least not immediately. In response to the suggestion that UNRWA could make better use of its local staff, he pointed out that UNRWA was often asked to conduct activities requiring expertise not available in the region. The current reform was one example.

144. The General Fund would not be used to cover shortfalls in OD funding. An already underfunded budget could not be used to finance such activities. He fully endorsed the comment made by the representative of Jordan that contributions to the OD process should be additional to contributions to the General Fund and emergency activities.

145. An effort would be made to produce quarterly reports on the OD process and to identify areas of concern more clearly.

146. He agreed that the Agency needed to step up communication and the dissemination of information in the host countries, for example through donor representatives and field directors, and to involve host countries more in the OD process. Those ideas had been discussed in Beirut recently and could be pursued with other host country representatives too. It was also important to
explain to refugees how reform would impact positively on services. Following some recent appointments, including a spokesperson, he was confident that the situation would improve.

147. Lastly, the disaster recovery plan was merely a proposal at the current time. UNRWA would need to consider it carefully to make sure it was the best and most cost-effective option. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations was leading the discussion in New York; UNRWA had only recently begun discussing the issue itself. As a possible alternative, UNRWA had drawn up a partnership agreement with the International Computing Centre in Geneva. It was now weighing up the two options in order to decide which was best.

148. **The Chairperson** noted that the OD process had required a huge amount of energy at the start, but that in the present discussion there had been only a few comments and questions from Commission members. He took that as a sign that the implementation and monitoring of the OD process was on track.

**Interim programme strategy and proposed biennium budget 2008-2009, current financial situation and resource mobilization strategy**

149. **The Chairperson** said that the interim programme strategy document now before the Advisory Commission reflected the interlinkage of various issues that were becoming increasingly difficult to consider separately. The process of preparing it had required a huge effort in terms of producing and reading all the relevant documentation. Henceforth, the paper flow should decrease and it should become easier to report on and monitor progress. First, though, the process embarked upon needed to be endorsed by the Advisory Commission, so that UNRWA could continue with its blessing.
150. Ms. Cruden (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, said that, because the interim programme strategy and proposed biennium budget 2008-2009 related to the agendas of both Sub-Committees, a joint report had been produced, containing questions, observations and recommendations to help frame the discussion. It would be up to the Advisory Commission to decide whether or not to adopt the recommendations.

151. While commending UNRWA for the considerable effort that had gone into developing the interim programme strategy and proposed biennium budget, she, too, hoped that the paper flow would be reduced over the coming year. While policy dialogue was very important, the process had required a huge effort on both sides.

152. Lastly, she was pleased to note that the interim programme strategy document provided a clear description of the Agency's objectives, principles and strategic themes, including a breakdown of objectives for each field of operation.

153. Mr. Grandi (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA), introducing the interim programme strategy and proposed biennium budget 2008-2009, said that UNRWA had been delivering high-quality services to Palestine refugees for almost 60 years. The aim of the interim programme strategy was not to redefine but rather to improve the work of UNRWA. For some years, the need had been felt for a clearer strategy with regard to service delivery. The interim programme strategy was the culmination of such previous efforts as the medium-term plan 2005-2009, the OD plan and the human resources management strategy. However, it was not a final document, not only because it was a draft paper for discussion, but also because a strategy was never final, but rather a dynamic process that would continue to be discussed and refined.

154. A few years previously, UNRWA had decided that its guiding principle would be human development. It was now engaged in applying that principle more concretely to its work. The Agency had adopted the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) definition of human
development, which could be regarded as a summary of the Agency's work. In essence, Palestine refugees should have a long and healthy life; appropriate knowledge and skills; a decent standard of living; and human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible. The goal now was to translate that concept of human development into concrete results in the most effective and integrated way possible.

155. In the past few weeks, he had conducted a number of workshops in the field. UNRWA staff themselves had asked why such a strategy was needed. The answer could be summed up in four words: vision, context, performance and resources.

156. UNRWA needed to have a clearer, more integrated vision of its strategic objectives and a better understanding of what was meant by a human development framework. For many years, UNRWA had measured itself against sectoral indicators. However, now that its strategy was broader, it needed to define more clearly the outcomes of human development objectives. The interim programme strategy was a good start, but it would need to be translated into concrete indicators in the next few months. UNRWA also planned to incorporate such cross-cutting themes as inclusion and gender into all its programmes and into its overall strategy. It was also discussing what could be done, though not necessarily by UNRWA, with regard to environmental issues that affected its areas of operation. A cross-sectoral approach would reinforce the overall vision that was being adopted.

157. The constantly changing political context in which UNRWA operated posed major challenges in terms of service delivery. That had been particularly true in the past two years. UNRWA was required continually to adapt to that changing context, while maintaining its overall objectives. While the Agency's mandate and the rights of refugees were the same in all the fields of operation, conditions differed widely from one field to another. UNRWA needed to have a better understanding of those conditions and to develop tailored interventions, such as the camp improvement programme in Lebanon. He hoped that, ultimately, specific implementation plans would be drawn up for each field.
158. UNRWA was currently discussing how to find a balance between field-specific characteristics and field management, on the one hand, and input from headquarters in terms of strategy, policy, monitoring and guidance, on the other. UNRWA was aware that, in order to measure the progress it was making towards its goals and demonstrate that progress to stakeholders, it needed to improve its collection and analysis of data. It was also aware of the controversy surrounding the survey conducted by the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED). However, it was considering other sources of data too. He suggested that in the coming weeks a presentation on the IUED survey results and other data should be organized for the subcommittees and the various fields if necessary, in order to give people - particularly those who had reservations about the IUED survey - a better idea of how UNRWA could use such data to improve its programming.

159. Hosts, donors and refugees themselves were constantly asking UNRWA to improve its performance. The interim programme strategy paper was a preliminary attempt to move from the programme level to the human development level. He expressed appreciation to the European Commission and others for their work on developing new indicators. However, more needed to be done. Monitoring and evaluation capacity also needed to be strengthened further both at headquarters and in the field, where programme support units were being established.

160. Lastly, on the subject of resources, he said that one of the aims of the interim programme strategy was to help UNRWA make better use of its scarce resources and convince donors of the Agency's sound management and ongoing efforts to improve service delivery. Part II of the paper described the budget preparation process and presented a proposed biennium budget for 2008-2009. UNRWA had built on the idea of needs-based budgeting and had sought to link the resource allocation process more clearly with human development outcomes. Ideally, that process would not begin until strategies were in place. However, owing to strict budgetary deadlines, it had not been possible to pursue that approach in the proposed budget for 2008-2009. He hoped that it would be possible when the following biennium budget was prepared.
161. The proposed budget for 2008-2009 represented a compromise between the totality of the Agency's needs and an estimate of projected income up to 2009. The Agency would continue to pursue its prudent approach of using, at the beginning of the year, only those resources firmly committed by donors and funding further activities only when more pledges were made.

162. In response to members' call for transparency with regard to the formulation of the budget, the proposed budget was for the first time being presented to the Advisory Commission before being submitted for consideration by the General Assembly in New York. Even though the proposed regular budget of $1,079,957,000 for the biennium already represented a compromise between needs and projected income, significant shortfalls were still expected to jeopardize vital activities such as training and infrastructure improvement. However, it was hoped that such funding gaps would be filled over the course of time. A separate project budget of $211,298,000 had also been included to cover additional activities, for which earmarked contributions were invited. If the interim programme strategy was endorsed, the Agency would, within the next few months, recommend how those activities should be prioritized.

163. Mr. Al-Omari (Comptroller, UNRWA), presenting the Agency's financial situation by means of a slide presentation and referring first to the regular budget, said that the total expenditure on staff costs for January to May 2007 was $127.3 million, or $25 million per month. Staff costs would increase to about $27 million per month as of September, when additional teachers would be recruited for the new school year. The total allotment for staff costs for 2007 was $328.2 million.

164. The total allotment for non-staff costs for 2007 was $72.8 million, of which $42.1 million had been either spent or committed in the first five months of the year. Those costs included services such as hospitalization, training and travel; supplies such as medical supplies, textbooks and food aid; utilities, maintenance and rent; and grants and subsidies. The amount allotted for equipment and construction was relatively small, since it was hoped that most of the costs
relating to those items would be funded from the project budget. The total expenditure for January to May 2007 was $169.4 million, against a total budget of $401 million. The Agency expected to recover $10 million of programme support costs over the year, of which $4.2 million had been recovered thus far. Net planned expenditure for the year would thus be reduced to $391 million.

165. The total amount of money pledged by donors for 2007 was $365.5 million, of which $261.4 million had been received in the first five months of the year. Of the $20 million of United Nations regular budget funding expected for 2007 - which would be used to finance the Agency's 113 international posts - $7.8 million had been received. A total of $2 million of income from other sources, comprising interest income and exchange rate gains, had been received in the first five months of the year, and that amount was expected to increase to $5 million by 31 December. The total income forecast was therefore $390.5 million, representing a $0.5 million shortfall from the net planned expenditure of $391 million for 2007. The amount of $104.1 million in the "justification reserve" represented budget items that were currently unfunded. It would be available for expenditure only upon receipt of additional funding.

166. The Agency had begun the year with a cash balance of $25.6 million in the General Fund, since some of the $40 million available at the end of 2006 had been used to make up the deficit for that year. The figure of $385.5 million for expected contributions for 2007 was not necessarily equal to the amount pledged for the year, since some of the funds received in 2007 would have been pledged in 2006, and other funds pledged in 2007 would not be received until 2008. Expected cash from other sources amounted to $5 million, bringing the total amount of cash to $416.1 million. After subtracting the expected disbursements of $391 million, the ending cash figure was $25.1 million, a sum equivalent to one month's worth of salary payments. Since most funding was not received until March each year, such a cash sum was essential in order to bridge the funding gap between one fiscal year and the next.
167. The projected funding shortfall for 2007 was $104.6 million, made up of $33 million for staff costs, $17.4 million for supplies, $8.1 million for premises-related costs such as rent and utilities, $31.2 million for construction and equipment, $7.6 million for services such as hospitalization and training, and $7.3 million for grants and subsidies for special hardship cases and medical needs.

168. Turning to the emergency appeal, he said that the Agency was appealing for a total amount of $246.2 million and that $70.5 million had been pledged thus far, not including an expected pledge of $40 million from the United States of America, which would increase the total amount pledged from 29 per cent to 44 per cent of the appeal target. The amount actually received to date was $34.1 million, of which $29.6 million, or 86 per cent, had been spent. The unfunded amount was currently $175.7 million but would be reduced to $135.7 million once the United States pledge had been confirmed. Emergency appeal expenditure by calendar year had stood at $139 million in 2006; for 2007, the figure was $75.2 million as at 1 June.

169. Lastly, against the 2006 project budget of $146.2 million, $55.9 million had been pledged and $27.8 million spent. Against the 2007 project budget of $131 million, only $19.5 million had been pledged but $36.4 million had been spent, a figure which included hard commitments, i.e. contracts which had been signed and in respect of which work was already under way.

170. Mr. McNeill (Deputy Director of External Relations, UNRWA), introducing the resource mobilization strategy, said that the strategy existed simply to procure the resources required to deliver the programme strategy. It could be considered within a similar framework to that which had been used to discuss the programme strategy, i.e. in terms of context, clarity, performance measurement and resource allocation.

171. With regard to the context of the resource mobilization strategy, UNRWA had been almost wholly dependent on voluntary contributions from external sources since its inception nearly 60 years previously. No resource mobilization strategy had ever been prepared before.
However, a number of factors made such a strategy necessary now. In terms of external factors, voluntary contributions had failed to keep pace with the Agency's needs over successive bienniums; there was growing competition for resources at the local, regional and global levels; and the Agency was operating in a complex environment with rapidly emerging challenges requiring a programmatic response which had to be resourced. As for internal factors, the strategy formed part of the third lever of the OD plan. In other words, it was an Agency initiative aimed at enhancing leadership and management capacity.

172. The strategy provided a clarity of focus on resource mobilization issues by establishing, for the first time, a transparent and strategic framework for the process of deeper engagement with stakeholders which the Agency had already been pursuing for a number of years. The goal that had been defined was to secure adequate resources for the Agency to deliver the services set out in the interim programme strategy for 2008-2009 and its successor document for 2010-2011. That goal had to be supported by a number of key, measurable objectives.

173. First, the Agency's programmes were almost entirely dependent on voluntary contributions from Governments, a situation which would not change markedly for the foreseeable future. It was therefore essential to develop a limited number of key relationships in order to ensure full funding from governmental sources for the Agency's regular budget.

174. Second, given the volatile context in which the Agency operated, the application of funding criteria by donors was subject to many pressures and changed over time. At the same time, at the urging of the international community, UNRWA was attempting to lengthen its planning horizon and develop its strategic focus. Such long-term planning could not be underpinned by short-term funding. It was therefore vital to increase the predictability of funding flows.

175. Third, notwithstanding the continuing role of member States in the funding of core activities, UNRWA recognized the need to seek new sources of funding as well as to develop
existing sources of funding from beyond the core group of donors. The Agency therefore wished to focus on broadening its donor base, particularly within the countries of the region.

176. Fourth, UNRWA had for many years suffered a chronic shortage of international staff in managerial roles. In addition, pressure for new initiatives to respond to developments in the region and to address issues of best practice had increased. It was therefore necessary to obtain additional human resources in order to fill the gaps in the international staffing table.

177. In order to monitor progress towards those objectives, the resource mobilization strategy set out a logical framework (logframe) for the measurement of performance, which would be further refined over the coming months.

178. With regard to the allocation of existing resources for the implementation of the strategy, the aim was to maximize coordination among the different Agency departments involved in fund-raising. Such coordination had already produced positive results in the preparation of the Lebanon flash appeal and the subsequent application for resources from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which had netted more than $5 million in emergency funding. As for the allocation of additional resources, UNRWA was an operational agency, and operational needs would always be paramount. As the Deputy Commissioner-General had indicated, the budget exercise had been conducted under intense pressure. The Agency was loath to divert fund-raising resources to the analysis and costing of initiatives which it knew in advance would not be given priority over the delivery of services to refugees.

179. UNRWA welcomed the comments in the report of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration with regard to the resource mobilization strategy and agreed that it was necessary to promote the General Fund and to make it more attractive to donors. With regard to multi-year funding arrangements, UNRWA recognized that alternatives such as long-term cooperation agreements and partnerships might be less problematic for some donors.

180. As requested by the Sub-Committee, a strategic work plan for the implementation of the strategy would be prepared over the next few months, once the Advisory Commission had
approved the overall strategic direction of the document. Outreach activities in the area of public information were already under way and had recently been boosted by the hiring of additional staff. Work would soon begin on the development of a communications strategy. The newly appointed Agency spokesperson was of the view that much could be done at limited cost - for example, through more effective use of the press - but that new levels of investment might be required to implement the final strategy, particularly given that the budget for public information activities had been minimal in recent years.

181. With regard to the prioritization of project financing, the Agency had in the past produced prioritized lists which had not always been respected by donors with firm geographical and sectoral interests. Such lists might need to be more readily accepted by donors in the future. With regard to the choice of resource mobilization activities to be continued or discontinued, some analysis had been conducted and more was planned. However, resources were few, and there was limited scope for diverting people away from productive activities. Therefore, where opportunities and opportunity costs were immediately apparent, the Agency would proceed without lengthy analysis. Some steps had already been taken along those lines. For example, one staff member had been transferred from the pursuit of non-governmental and private funding in the West to the pursuit of governmental and private resources in the Gulf, a measure which had already produced benefits.

182. Turning to the question of non-regular staff, he said that, besides the Junior Professional Officers from Denmark, France, Italy and Switzerland already with the Agency and those from Germany and Italy due to join it in the near future, UNRWA was also benefiting from the deployment of fully funded volunteers from Australian Volunteers International, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It was also open to the possibility of new secondment arrangements and was grateful to those Governments represented on the Advisory Commission which had provided help in that regard.
183. The Agency was presently negotiating a memorandum of understanding with UNDP in order to make use of the Junior Professional Officer Service Centre to gain access to more candidates through its central roster. That approach would not, however, preclude the continued use of the bilateral track. The Agency was also keen to develop the role of United Nations Volunteers, who represented a cost-effective though not cost-free resource: each post under the scheme cost about $50,000 a year to fund. The Agency would be interested in discussing that option with any party that might consider such an investment worthwhile. Internally, UNRWA had work to do with regard to prioritizing the posts to be filled by the non-traditional methods described.

184. The Advisory Commission, as an intergovernmental body, had a vital role to play in the implementation of the resource mobilization strategy, in ensuring that the financial needs of the budget were met and in convincing both members and non-members of the need to increase the level of contributions. The Agency hoped to secure the continued involvement of the Commission in that process by providing regular updates on the implementation of the strategy.

185. The proposed regular budget figure for 2008 was $527.9 million, but the expected income was only $389.4 million. He asked all members of the Advisory Commission how they intended to bridge that significant funding gap so as to ensure that the interim programme strategy could be implemented as planned in the coming year. Addressing the representatives of donor Governments, he noted that the resource mobilization strategy proposed a significant shift in the nature of the relationship between themselves and their UNRWA counterparts. He wished to know how they proposed to facilitate that shift. Lastly, he asked the representatives of host countries how they saw their role within the resource mobilization strategy and what steps could be taken by their Governments to contribute effectively to the implementation of the strategy.

186. Mr. Grandi (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA) said that, as mentioned in the earlier discussion on emergency management, process improvements constituted one of the
incentives for donors to increase their contributions. However, the Agency's main commitment was to continue to deliver its services in often dangerous conditions. That fact should provide the fundamental incentive for donors to contribute resources. In the interim programme strategy and resource mobilization strategy documents, the Agency had attempted to take account of the concerns of all stakeholders - refugees, host countries and donor countries - and had made important commitments, namely to use the concept of human development as the framework for the budget, to develop better tools for programme management, to strengthen cooperation and partnership, to improve data collection and analysis, and to implement more effective approaches to resource mobilization. What was needed now was the Advisory Commission's broad endorsement of the strategies so that the Agency could turn those commitments into concrete operational plans.

187. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada) said that her delegation welcomed the interim programme strategy but still had concerns about the performance indicators it included, some of which were not measurable or realistic. A results framework linking resources to outcomes was needed. In addition, more work was needed on the strategic themes and drivers, particularly to show how they were integrated throughout the strategy. More information should also be given on how gender mainstreaming would be operationalized in the field. With respect to needs analysis, she wondered to what extent the IUED survey would inform the work on indicators. An analysis linking the interim programme strategy to the budget should be provided as well. On the subject of camp improvement, she asked how the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme was helping to develop initiatives in Lebanon, what lessons had been learned from the Neirab rehabilitation project and how those lessons were being put to use. Lastly, she asked which emergency activities had been affected by the 71-per-cent shortfall in funds received in response to the West Bank-Gaza emergency appeal.
188. Speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, she said that more guidance was needed from UNRWA on the kind of policy dialogue it wished to have with the Sub-Committee. She would welcome a presentation on the IUED data for the two sub-committees.

189. **Mr. Meritan** (Observer for the European Commission) said that the interim programme strategy paper contained precise information indicating what the Agency would and would not be able to accomplish within the specified funding level. The weakest aspect of the paper was the linkage between the strategy and the budget, although he was confident that progress would be made in that regard. He invited delegations to comment on the recently circulated terms of reference for the joint UNRWA-European Commission review of indicators, which would be conducted in September and would provide input for future dialogues.

190. Speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Programming, he said that he, too, would welcome a presentation on the results of the IUED survey and would like UNRWA to specify what kind of advice it needed from his Sub-Committee.

191. **Ms. Ingraham** (United States of America) said that one way for the Agency to achieve quick wins would be to provide more hard data on its website. It should also provide information on how the lack of funding affected its programmes. That would help donors to gain approval of additional funding. UNRWA should try to provide information on its funding requirements as early as possible, since budgeting cycles in many countries, including the United States, began well in advance.

192. **Mr. Hallam** (United Kingdom) commended UNRWA for its commitment to develop the interim programme strategy further and use it as a basis for the 2010-2011 budget proposal. The forthcoming UNRWA-European Commission review of indicators would help to advance that
work; a logframe would also be useful. He encouraged donors to increase the amount and predictability of their contributions so as to maximize the Agency's flexibility. The United Kingdom was increasing its support to UNRWA by more than 50 per cent, as it had pledged to provide some $200 million over the next five years.

193. **Mr. Güney** (Turkey) said that his Government was considering the possibility of increasing the modest level of its contributions to UNRWA and had launched a programme of in-kind donations through Turkish NGOs. The Agency should take the comparative advantages offered by each donor country into account in drafting the programme strategy.

194. **Mr. Mustafa** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the recommendations made at the 2004 Geneva Conference on Meeting the Humanitarian Needs of the Palestine Refugees in the Near East had been aimed at raising donors' awareness of the Agency's services so that they would be willing to continue to fund the budget. Further efforts should be made to spread awareness of the Agency's achievements; for example, in his country a great deal of work had been done to improve infrastructure and services in refugee camps.

195. **Ms. Vege** (Switzerland) said that she looked forward to the presentation on the results of the IUED survey. She noted that the resource mobilization strategy was driven by the Agency's financial constraints. She agreed that improvement of the UNRWA website could bring quick wins and suggested that links should be included to information on the Advisory Commission and relevant documentation.

196. **Mr. Kirst** (Sweden) said that he welcomed the use of the human development approach in the interim programme strategy. UNRWA should further develop the linkages between field-specific needs and the budget. He was also pleased to note that the programme management cycle
formed part of the strategy, which was essentially an exercise in prioritization. With respect to the funding gap, he was concerned to note that only a few donors had increased their contributions; he encouraged other donors to follow suit. In evaluating the Agency's performance, it was necessary to take into account the volatile environment in which it operated.

197. The resource mobilization strategy appropriately focused on increasing contributions to the General Fund and on broadening the donor base. A discussion on how to enhance donor visibility would be useful; in Geneva such visibility was currently being discussed in connection with the principles of good humanitarian donorship. Lastly, he agreed that the Agency's website should be further developed and used as a fund-raising tool.

198. Mr. Ferre (Spain) said, with respect to the resource mobilization strategy, that the establishment of a national UNRWA committee in Spain two years earlier had helped raise awareness in Spanish society of the plight of Palestine refugees and had enabled UNRWA to raise additional funds from both public and private entities in that country. His delegation encouraged UNRWA, as part of its strategy, to promote the establishment of national UNRWA committees in other countries.

199. Mr. Jonker (Netherlands) said that he welcomed the use of the human development approach and the incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals in the interim programme strategy. The greatest emphasis should be placed on Goal 1, since needy refugees were the highest priority for UNRWA; that was what was meant by a needs-based approach. At the same time, the budget should reflect the amount of funding that UNRWA could realistically expect to receive. He was pleased that the General Fund had been given priority in the programme and resource mobilization strategies. The programme strategy should be regarded as a living document under constant development. A results-based logframe should be developed for the strategy.
200. The resource mobilization strategy, which was linked to the OD process and the programme strategy, required an action plan. The documentation on the programme and resource mobilization strategies provided tools for convincing legislators that UNRWA had improved its performance and that increased contributions would result in further improvements. While the current discussion seemed far removed from the dramatic realities on the ground in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, it was nonetheless essential for enabling the Agency to optimize its performance.

201. **Mr. Azayzeh** (Jordan) said that the programme strategy would not bear fruit unless the funding targets for the budget were met. In particular, he hoped that the Jordan Field Office's funding estimates for 2008-2009 would be met. Otherwise, UNRWA would have to scale back its services, forcing host Governments to increase their share of service provision. To avoid penalizing host countries in that manner, donors should fulfil their commitments. He agreed with the Syrian delegation that it was time to reassess and draw lessons from the implementation of the Geneva Conference recommendations.

202. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan), referring to the resource mobilization strategy, said that the General Fund was the financial backbone of UNRWA. Japan would continue to encourage the Agency to broaden its donor base so as to sustain its activities through increased contributions to the General Fund. Japan also encouraged UNRWA to seek ways of building more solid constituencies, in particular among parliamentarians and the media, in both donor and non-donor countries, as a way of mobilizing more resources.

203. Against the backdrop of declining official development assistance over the past decade, the impact of Japan's assistance must be more visible than ever. Japanese taxpayers wanted to know where their money was going. The Agency's activities were not very well known in Japan. Public information was, therefore, very important.
204. Lastly, multi-year funding, while helpful in terms of ensuring financial predictability, was not an option for Japan because of its financial regulations.

205. Mr. Christensen (Denmark) welcomed the efforts made in the interim programme strategy to define the conceptual framework of human development and its relevance to the Agency's work, including through human development indicators. There was still room for improvement in some areas, but overall it was a sound document. He assumed that the logframe to be inserted would include indicators for each programme and country.

206. He welcomed the elaboration of thematic areas, but felt that more work was needed on conceptual clarity. Terms such as "planning for inclusion", "incorporating protection strategies" and "caring for the vulnerable" sounded similar to each other and could, perhaps, be streamlined. He hoped that the logframe would also include indicators for the thematic areas mentioned.

207. Lastly, he welcomed the resource mobilization strategy, the format and clarity of which should serve as an inspiration for future strategic documents.

208. Mr. Al-Omari (Comptroller, UNRWA) said that the shortfall in funds received in response to the 2007 emergency appeal, initially estimated at 71 per cent, would actually be around 30 or 40 per cent, as it was still early in the year, and some $40 million was due to be received soon from the United States of America.

209. However, any funding shortfall, regardless of its size, would have a direct impact on emergency activities across the board. As in the past, UNRWA would be forced to reduce food distribution and slow down or even suspend its job creation programme. The impact on shelter reconstruction would be less drastic, as it enjoyed earmarked funding from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Shelters funded by non-earmarked contributions and requiring repairs would, however, be affected.
210. Responding to the representative of the Netherlands, he said that some people favoured a needs-based budget, while others wished to see an income-constrained budget. UNRWA sought to reach a compromise between the two, but it faced the same dilemma every time it prepared the budget. Clear guidance in that regard would be very welcome.

211. In response to the representative of Jordan, he said that UNRWA sought to prepare a budget that would meet refugee needs and take account of specific circumstances in each region. The budget always had to be reduced, however, owing to funding constraints.

212. Mr. McNeill (Deputy Director of External Relations, UNRWA) welcomed the term "living document". UNRWA fully expected that the documents would continue to be discussed and refined over the coming months.

213. Before the resource mobilization strategy could become operational, detailed work plans would need to be developed. That work was scheduled for the coming months. UNRWA intended to do more work on the impact of underfunding and emphasize in the document the importance of the General Fund, which everyone agreed must be the financial backbone of UNRWA.

214. He welcomed the suggestion that donor representatives could be used to create linkages. When UNRWA requested donor support, it was not just about the bottom line, but also about creating a partnership. Governments could use their contacts to help UNRWA make connections within Governments and beyond. That was one of the ideas that UNRWA would explore in the context of the resource mobilization strategy and when it discussed its bilateral relationship with each Government over the next few years.

215. UNRWA was delighted with the work of Spain's national UNRWA committee. However, it had not yet found a one-size-fits-all model for country associations; its experience elsewhere had been less successful. Before establishing any more national committees, UNRWA would therefore want to draw up a business case to make sure that it did not invest money in a project that would not produce the required return.
216. Regarding the UNRWA website, he said that postings had increased fivefold in the past year. UNRWA was now fully aware of the website's usefulness as a tool and was open to any suggestion aimed at streamlining its relationship with member States.

217. Lastly, in response to the representative of Japan, he said that UNRWA needed to have a better understanding of the linkages between public information, profile and fund-raising. He would be working on that issue with the newly appointed spokesperson, with a view to identifying synergies and linkages.

218. **Mr. Grandi** (Deputy Commissioner-General, UNRWA) agreed that the current discussion was somewhat incongruous, given that the situation on the ground was so bad; however, it was important to pursue work on all tracks. In that connection, UNRWA was not only discussing how to improve programme management and resource allocation, but was also conducting key reforms within its programmes, such as the special hardship cases reform and improvements to the health and education programmes.

219. Camp improvement had been highlighted in the interim programme strategy because it reflected many of the strategy's objectives. Just a few days previously, the Agency's Management Committee had discussed how that concept would be rolled out in each field of operation. Each field had taken a slightly different approach, reflecting its individual needs and situation. It was important not to lose sight of the practical work that was being done to improve service quality. Such work was a concrete consequence of the Geneva Conference.

220. The interim programme strategy paper was based on a logframe analysis. The logframe itself had not yet been prepared because it had been considered necessary to have the current discussion first. UNRWA agreed that work was needed in many areas, in particular on indicators and their link with the human development approach. The review of indicators initiated by the European Commission might be useful in that regard. In any case, UNRWA would need to review each programme carefully to ensure that indicators were consistent.
221. The presentation he had mentioned earlier would concern not the IUED findings themselves, but rather how the wealth of information generated by the IUED survey - and data from other sources, such as the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and national statistical institutes - could be used. Data collection and analysis was a weakness that needed to be addressed. He understood that some Governments or institutions had experts in the conduct of statistical audits; UNRWA would certainly be open to discussing any offers of expertise in that regard.

222. With respect to the comments of the representative of Denmark on the thematic areas, he felt that the areas themselves were not unclear; what was unclear was how they would be built into the implementation of the strategy.

223. With regard to the UNRWA website, he said that content on the Advisory Commission was being developed. He recalled that doubts had been expressed about the need to appoint a spokesperson when that post had been requested. He hoped that it was now clear how important public information was for all parties.

224. In his view, the linkage between the interim programme strategy and the OD process was sufficiently clear. One of the levers of OD was programme management. The interim programme strategy developed that area further.

225. Endorsing the comments made regarding the importance of continuity from the Geneva Conference, he reassured those present that its ambitions had not been forgotten. Indeed, the interim programme strategy derived directly from the decisions taken at the Conference. He agreed, however, that those ambitions needed to be brought to fruition.

226. The Chairperson, welcoming the Advisory Commission's broad endorsement of the interim programme strategy and resource mobilization strategy, said that UNRWA had taken note of all the comments made and would work on the documents further in the coming months.
The meeting was suspended for lunch at 12.25 p.m. and resumed at 1.30 p.m.

Reports and recommendations of the sub-committees

Report of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration

227. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration and introducing the report of the Sub-Committee, said that the Sub-Committee had discussed the resource mobilization strategy, the interim programme strategy 2008-2009, the external review of UNRWA emergency activities in the occupied Palestinian territories 2000-2005 and the follow-up to the implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations. The Sub-Committee's respective recommendations on those issues were contained in annexes to the report. The recommendations on the interim programme strategy had been produced jointly with the Sub-Committee on Programming. The Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration was pleased to note that its comments had been taken into account in the Agency's presentations on the issues at hand, which underlined the key role played by the Sub-Committee in framing the policy dialogue.

228. In recent months, the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration had worked closely with the Sub-Committee on Programming. It was becoming increasingly difficult to justify the separation of the two bodies, given the significant overlap between their agendas and their membership. The Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration was therefore recommending that the Advisory Commission should consider merging the two sub-committees. Since some preparatory work for such a merger would be required, it might be advisable to discuss the issue further at the Commission's November session.
229. The Chairperson suggested that the two Sub-Committees should discuss the issue of a merger, including the implications for the rules of procedure and the chairmanship of a merged body, with a view to producing a recommendation to be submitted to the Advisory Commission at its November session.

    It was so decided.

The report of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration was adopted.

Recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on the resource mobilization strategy

230. Ms. Cruden (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration and introducing the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on the resource mobilization strategy, noted that some of the questions to UNRWA set out in the document had been answered in the presentation given earlier in the meeting.

231. Mr. Hallam (United Kingdom) said that, while his delegation was sympathetic to the Agency's requests for additional staff, it would prefer the wording of the recommendation on that issue to be more neutral.

232. Ms. Cruden (Canada) proposed that the recommendation in question should read "reiterates its endorsement of UNRWA's staffing proposals as articulated in a letter dated 29 January 2007 from the Commission's Chairperson to the President of the General Assembly".
The recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on the resource mobilization strategy, as amended, were adopted.

Recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on the external review of UNRWA emergency activities in the occupied Palestinian territories 2000-2005

233. Ms. Cruden (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, drew attention to some amendments that had been made to the Sub-Committee's recommendations on the external review of UNRWA emergency activities in the occupied Palestinian territories following the Commission's discussion on that issue. In the last paragraph under the heading "General observations and comments", the phrase "the most effective incentive" had been amended to read "one of the incentives". Under the heading "Recommendations", the second recommendation, namely that UNRWA should produce a formal management response to the review, had been replaced with two recommendations. The first was that the matrix should be updated prior to each Advisory Commission session. The second was that UNRWA should, prior to the next Advisory Commission session, provide a brief written response to the issues in question.

The recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on the external review of UNRWA emergency activities in the occupied Palestinian territories 2000-2005 were adopted.

Recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on follow-up to the implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations
234. **Ms. Cruden** (Canada), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration, drew attention to the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on follow-up to the implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations.

235 **Ms. Ingraham** (United States of America) expressed her Government’s appreciation of the latest update provided by UNRWA on the implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations. Although the United States Congress still had significant concerns on the issue, some of its misgivings had been quelled by the document in question.

*The recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on follow-up to the implementation of the Board of Auditors recommendations were adopted.*

**Report of the Sub-Committee on Programming**

236. **Mr. Meritan** (Observer for the European Commission), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Programming, drew attention to the report of the Sub-Committee.

*The report of the Sub-Committee on Programming was adopted.*

**Joint recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration and the Sub-Committee on Programming on the interim programme strategy 2008-2009**

237. **Mr. Meritan** (Observer for the European Commission), speaking as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Programming and introducing the joint recommendations of that Sub-Committee and the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration on the interim
programme strategy 2008-2009, drew attention to an amendment that had already been incorporated into the text: in the section entitled "General comments", the third sentence of the fourth paragraph should now read "while recognizing the constraints facing the regular budget, the Sub-Committees suggest that UNRWA consider exploring the integration of this programme under the regular budget". That wording expressed the desirability of ensuring that General Fund resources were available for emergency infrastructure needs that could not be covered by earmarked allocations under the project budget, while recognizing the difficulties inherent in such a move.

The joint recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Financial Management and Administration and the Sub-Committee on Programming on the interim programme strategy 2008-2009 were adopted.

Concluding remarks by the Commissioner-General

238. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General of UNRWA) said that she appreciated the delegations' expressions of support for UNRWA and for Agency staff who were working in particularly difficult conditions. She was also heartened by the member States' support for the Agency's efforts to exercise its right to humanitarian access, at a time when increasing restrictions made such support more crucial than ever. As requested, UNRWA would continue to provide delegations with information on aspects of international humanitarian law that affected it.

239. She welcomed the substance of the letter from the Chairperson, which would provide a solid basis for the Fourth Committee's discussion of her annual report. She understood the letter's mention of "issues where the actual performance is below targets" as a reference to the limitations that structural underfunding placed on the implementation of the Agency's mandate. Among the unmet targets of particular concern, in fact, were the targets for the Agency's funding.
240. The OD process was a dauntingly large undertaking, but was well under way and was beginning to yield results, as the linkages between policies and resource allocation were becoming clearer. The Advisory Commission's endorsement of the current approach was appreciated, and the Agency would continue to keep it informed. She agreed that it would be desirable to reduce the volume of documentation for Advisory Commission sessions; subsequent meetings could well focus more on updates and follow-up and less on policy development.

Funding of the OD process was critical to its timely implementation. In that connection, she reiterated that it was vitally important for member Governments to support such funding in the budget debates to be held in the General Assembly's Fifth Committee.

241. Three years had passed since the 2004 Geneva Conference; it could be useful to take stock of the Conference's results in the coming months. Consultations could be held on how best to approach that exercise. Most of the issues discussed at the Conference had already become part of the fabric of the OD process.

242. While the Advisory Commission's two Sub-Committees had originally been conceived as small groupings, they had become committees of the whole. It might therefore be advisable to merge them. The type of advice they provided was already well suited to the Agency's needs. The Advisory Commission as a whole had evolved into a genuine advisory board, thanks to the delegations' active engagement.

243. She thanked the outgoing Chairperson for having skillfully guided the work of the Advisory Commission at a momentous time for its revitalization, which had had highly satisfactory results. Lastly, she thanked the Government of Jordan for hosting the session.

**Closing statement and summary by the Chairperson**

244. The Chairperson said that UNRWA and the Advisory Commission had gone through a transition process in the last year that had succeeded thanks to the commitment and participation
of all stakeholders. That process had increased the level of trust between the Agency and the Advisory Commission and between host and donor countries, and had sharpened their focus on working towards the common goal of assisting Palestine refugees.

245. The interim programme strategy represented the culmination of the work that had been done over the last year and a half, and would be constantly adjusted in light of circumstances. In addition, the Agency's improved reporting had facilitated the Advisory Commission's work, for example in following up the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. That more structured approach would enable the Advisory Commission to focus on its core tasks of discussing the Agency's budget and programme implementation. He expressed his appreciation to all the participants, especially outgoing members of delegations, and thanked the Government and people of Jordan for their hospitality in hosting the session.

Closure of the session


The meeting rose at 2.15 p.m.