



## engaging youth

palestine refugees in a changing middle east

### UNRWA stakeholder conference

Brussels – 19 and 20 March 2012

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is proud to announce “Engaging Youth: Palestine refugees in a changing Middle East”, a high-level stakeholder gathering to be held at the Egmont Palace in Brussels on 19 and 20 March 2012.

The conference will focus on youth, its untapped potential and aspirations. Palestine refugee youth are a significant constituency for change in the Middle East. Currently, UNRWA serves nearly 5 million Palestine refugees in the region, 50 per cent of whom are youth.

It is in the interest of the international community including states in the Middle East region to connect with youth and provide enabling environments to address their humanitarian and developmental needs. Events in 2011 have underlined the importance of youth in the region as well as the importance of ensuring their future.

The goal of the conference is to engage stakeholders on the issue of Palestinian refugee youth in forward-looking debates. It will help sharpen UNRWA's youth focus in its programmes and facilitate the identification of new partnerships.

The conference will be held over the course of one and a half days. The first half-day (afternoon of 19 March 2012) will offer a platform for high-level speakers to engage on the subject. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton, will be delivering the leading keynote address.

The second day (20 March 2012) will be a set of high-level panel discussions on issues related to Palestinian refugee youth:

- Youth participation – engaging and listening to Palestinian youth
- Economically empowering refugee youth – preparing them for modern labour markets
- Building and investing in human capital – new approaches to education in the Middle East
- Youth confront marginalization – working towards inclusion and social cohesion

These discussions and contributions will open avenues of cooperation and partnership with Palestinian youth and UNRWA. They will also influence the further formulation of the Agency's youth policy.

This conference will take a forward-looking perspective. It will highlight the need to respond to the concerns of youth and stress the urgency of creating opportunities for the younger generation of Palestine refugees. The fundamental fact remains, however, that a just and lasting solution must be found to the refugee question in the context of peace negotiations. This solution must be the just result of a political agreement between the parties in line with UN resolutions, with the support of the international community, and in consultation with refugees themselves.