

Press release

Brussels, 08th of February 2018

S&Ds welcome the strong support of European Parliament for UNRWA

The S&D Group strongly welcomes the resolution supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as adopted by the European Parliament with an overwhelming majority today.

S&D Group Vice-President Elena Valenciano said:

"We continue to applaud and support UNRWA in its extraordinary efforts to provide vital services to millions of Palestinians who have been living as refugees for decades across the Middle East. We condemn the decision of the Trump administration to politicise humanitarian aid through the freezing of a part of its funding to the agency. We reiterate our solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugee families waiting for a just and lasting solution to the conflict. At stake is the emergency food assistance to 1,7 million and primary health care to 3 million Palestinians as well as access to education of more than 500,000 children in 702 UNRWA schools, including almost 50,000 of them in Syria. Their future cannot be destroyed for political reasons."

S&D Group negotiator Arne Lietz said:

"We welcome the decision of the European Union and of several Member States to fast-track their pledged funding to UNRWA, and we urge other donors to follow this example. We also call for additional funding for the Agency in order to meet its short-term financial needs, and we urge the United States to honour its promises to UNRWA. However, any long-term solution to the recurrent financial shortages of the agency can only be achieved through a sustainable funding scheme in a global multilateral framework. We encourage the EU to play a leading role in the international community to establish such a mechanism in the spirit of the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General. UNRWA is playing a crucial role in the Middle East. Undermining the agency means undermining regional stability and playing at the hands of extremists."