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With Commissioner General of UNRWA about Palestinian refugees and Syrian crisis

The situation of the Palestinian refugees in the context of the Syrian crisis was the main topic discussed by Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA Filippo Grandi during their meeting in Brussels today.

Commissioner Füle acknowledged the work done by UNRWA in supporting the Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and stressed the continuing support of the EU for its activities. "We have great appreciation for the UNRWA working under increasingly difficult circumstances especially in Syria, in addition to the long-standing crises in both the Gaza Strip and Lebanon," he said and added: "The European Commission, and the EU as a whole, will continue to support UNRWA in its work."

Commissioner Füle spoke with Mr Grandi about the latest developments on the ground in the context of the humanitarian situation of Palestine refugees in Syria and discussed the experiences of Commissioner-General from his latest trip to Syria.

Commissioner Füle also recalled his visit to the headquarters of UNRWA in Beirut this March and his contacts with the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and coming from Syria: "I am aware that whatever we do to help these refugees in their current situation is just not enough and it does not deal with the root causes of the problems of the Palestinian people in the refugee camps in Lebanon and elsewhere," Commissioner said.

The European Union is the biggest single donor of UNRWA, which was established to look after the health, education and social protection requirements of nearly 5 million Palestine refugees and operates in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In the Joint Declarations the European Commission has committed to paying UNWRA €80 million annually for the period 2011-13 through a Joint Declaration. Last year the overall commitment amounted to €136.5 million.