



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

*Public Affairs and Communications Office*

**MEDIA INFORMATION:** No. 29/2009

ISSUED ON: 25.06.2009

RELEASE: *immediate all media*

**“PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY HAS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS” –**

*Filippo Grandi, UNRWA Deputy Commissioner General*

Mr Filippo Grandi, Deputy Commissioner General for UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) was the key speaker at the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 1<sup>st</sup> Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, which convened in Lisbon at the invitation of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal. The 1<sup>st</sup> Standing Committee deals with Political and Security- related Cooperation.

The UNWRA Deputy Commissioner General illustrated the challenges that the Agency faces in the region and what the prospects for the future are. He also reminded that the Agency was set up 60 years ago, and with 30 thousand staff it currently offers public services (health, education, poverty alleviation, micro-financing) to circa 4.5 million refugees living in 58 camps throughout the region, in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the West Bank and Gaza.

With reference to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, Mr. Grandi commented that there is only one solution, i.e. to make progress in the political processes. He sustained that thanks to the new US Administration’s approach to the issue there is a new impetus, and since the speech in Cairo by US President Barak Obama, once again there is a sense of expectation in spite of the skepticism and pessimism of many.

While UNWRA places itself with other actors as a factor of social stability and a partner for peace-makers there is a crucial role to be played by parliamentary diplomacy. It is important that constituencies are kept informed together with all other stakeholders because the Middle East issue is the most talked about question in the world but the least known.

In his speech Mr Grandi also put forward five proposals that could help move forward towards a solution to the conflict.

- Restart the Peace Process
- Remind parties that international Law must be observed
- Address access constraints in the West Bank and Gaza
- Refugee issue must be kept on the peace agenda
- Support to UNRWA

Mr. Grandi concluded his intervention by reminding that now is the time for action because there is a renewed opportunity which should not be missed otherwise. “Those who do not want peace will prevail, and it will take long to reassemble positive conditions again: Too long, for sure, for us to ever see peace in the Middle East.”

Ends//mm

For further information please contact:

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**  
**ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE**

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

Martin Micallef  
Public Affairs & Communications  
email: [info@apm.org.mt](mailto:info@apm.org.mt)  
[www.apm.org.mt](http://www.apm.org.mt)  
tel: + 356 22484218

or

Courtney White  
Research and Communications  
Email: [white@apm.org.mt](mailto:white@apm.org.mt)  
Tel: +356 22484222