



## **Press Release**

### **UNDP and Luxembourg Provide Essential Water Trucks to Answer Emergency Need.**

Jerusalem, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003— In a ceremony held on Tuesday, August 26th, 13 new water tanker trucks, financed by the Government of Luxembourg, were handed over to the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) through the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) for emergency water supply.

Held on the premises of Palestine Resources Ltd in the industrial zone of Ramallah, the ceremony was attended by Mr. Fadel Ka'wash, Deputy Head of the PWA (on behalf of Mr. Nabil Al-Sharif, Chairman of the PWA) and Mr. Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP.

In its continued effort to improve water supply in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), UNDP/PAPP, in close co-operation with the PWA, launched a project funded by the Government of Luxembourg with a total budget of US\$ 1,080,000. The project will increase the supply of sufficient water – both in volume and quality - available to the population in areas suffering from acute water shortages. The PWA will be responsible for the management of the trucks and the monitoring of the distribution of drinking water at low prices in the Hebron, Tubas, Tulkarem, Nablus, Jenin, Ramallah and Gaza Governorates. One truck can provide drinking water to approximately 50,000 people, who might otherwise be deprived of adequate access to a permanent water source.

This project comes as part of a larger UNDP effort to improve water resources in the oPt, including the distribution of 28 water trucks in the past, funded by the Government of Japan.

The water resources available to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are very scarce, with an average per capita consumption amongst the lowest in the world. According to the Israeli non-governmental organization Btselem, the average Palestinian consumes only 65 percent of the World Health Organization recommended 100 litres of water per day. With the Palestinian population increasing and the entire region suffering from water shortages, there are indications that this already inadequate consumption figure will decrease.

Over the past years, prolonged drought seasons increased the water shortages in the region. Today, approximately 160 localities do not have access to piped water systems, or their piped water networks have been destroyed during the current crisis. Thus, villagers often heavily depend on water supplied by privately owned water trucks, which are providing very expensive water, often of poor quality and carrying waterborne diseases.

“The situation for many Palestinians is desperate,” said Nabil Al-Sharif, Chairman of the Palestinian Water Authority. “Some people have to rely on animals to fill tiny containers and transport them



back to their homes.” Even where localities have piped water systems in place, he says, the infrastructure is so poorly maintained that precious resources are wasted. “The problem has escalated in the past months as heavy army vehicles have damaged pipes and tanks, and strict curfews prevent repair. Military checkpoints cause difficulties for water delivery by truck, and the building of military and security infrastructure, such as the wall next to the West Bank town of Qalqilya, has cut off access to key drinking and agricultural water supplies” added Al-Sharif.

“We are very grateful to the government and people of Luxembourg for answering this call and providing this urgently needed and crucial assistance to the Palestinians” said Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP in Jerusalem. “Water is the spirit of life. Without adequate access to water, it is difficult to speak of sustainable development. In a society so dependant on agriculture as the Palestinian is, water assumes a profound meaning,” added Rothermel.

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