



Press Release

UNDP inaugurates new office in Gaza

Gaza, November 11th, 2003— In a ceremony held today, Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi, Chairman of the Red Crescent Society for Gaza and the Gaza NGO Association, and Mr. Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of the United Nations Development Programme/ Programme of assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), inaugurated the new UNDP office in Gaza. The ceremony was held on the premises of the new UNDP office in Gaza.

Over three years of Intifada, Gaza has suffered extraordinary damage to its roads, public and private buildings, agricultural lands, factories, homes and utility supplies and water and sanitation installations. Yet, while this destruction has taken place, the capacity of UNDP/Gaza to implement its programmes has been unimpeded in spite of incursions, curfews, aerial bombings and other problems of access. Coming from all parts of Gaza, UNDP/Gaza's professional staff of engineers, programmers, and project planning experts, has been able to carry out an expanding workload of activities financed

"Throughout its existence in the Gaza strip and the occupied Palestinian territory, UNDP has carried a number of important initiatives and projects, all of which showed its deep commitment and friendship to the Palestinian people. I take this occasion to salute the efforts and dedication of the staff of the UNDP who have shown a special sensitivity and solidarity with our people in these trying times," said Haider Abdel Shafi, chairman of the Red Crescent Society.

"It has been the philosophy of PAPP during the past three years that, while repairs and the restoration of damaged infrastructure have high priority, institutional building for the future should be fully maintained and even enhanced. This new office is tangible evidence of UNDP's commitment for *partnership for the future*, which is the motto we selected to mark this important occasion," said Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP.

Throughout its nearly quarter of a century of involvement in providing technical and capital assistance to the Palestinian people in the opt, over half of UNDP/PAPP's activities, currently valued as nearly over half a billion dollars, have taken place in Gaza. With a new office in Gaza, building on over a decade of experience, PAPP/Gaza is uniquely situated to provide demand driven, flexible, rapid and transparent development services which have ranged from modern infrastructure such as apartment blocks and major roads to technical assistance for grass roots community based organizations and capacity for building institutions, both large and small.

"This year marks 25 years of UNDP's service the Palestinian people, a large part of which has been in the Gaza strip. The inauguration of this new facility is an embodiment of the importance UNDP places in Gaza Strip, and its recognition of the essential necessity to address the needs in this marginalized area," said Khaled Abdel Shafi, Head of UNDP-Gaza office.



In carrying out its work, UNDP/Gaza has relied on its knowledge of local conditions and capacities, its close working relationships with the Palestinian Authority, municipalities and communities throughout Gaza, and local institutions. The sustainability of projects carried out by UNDP/Gaza speaks for itself in the quality of the literally dozens of community centers, neighborhood improvement works, commercial installations, public buildings and infrastructure projects that it has implemented.

In light of the closures for Gaza workers which have taken place on a periodic basis since 1995, virtually all activities have been carried out utilizing labor intensive techniques. Furthermore, UNDP/Gaza a number of activities such as retraining of unemployed workers, facilitating the operations of local municipal councils, support to youth activities, information technology, serving needy residents, good governance (elections, rule of law, local governance), initiating intellectual endeavors and assistance to local cultural undertakings..

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