



PRESS RELEASE

Japan Provides Urgently Required \$6 Million in Emergency Assistance to Palestinians

Jerusalem, 22 January 2004—As part of its continuing effort to ease the acute humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Government of Japan announced its intention to extend an emergency grant aid of approximately US \$6 million to UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP).

“In both times of peace and volatility, the Government and people of Japan have shown extraordinary leadership in heeding calls to support the development of the Palestinian people. As such they are a true partner for the future,” said Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP in Jerusalem.

A statement released by the Japanese Foreign Ministry stated that “Japan is committed to continue to actively extend assistance to the Palestinian people in the recognition that the resolution of the Palestinian issue is the key for bringing about peace to the Middle East.”

On 18 November 2003, UN agencies issued a consolidated appeal to the international community for approximately \$300 million to meet urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinians (details of the appeal are available at: <http://www.un.org/depts/ocha/cap/opt.html>). As part of its comprehensive emergency response programme, UNDP's component of this appeal was \$46 million.

The new \$6 million contribution from Japan to UNDP's Palestinian programme will cover three important areas of work contained in the consolidated appeal: (1) emergency employment generation through upgrading of educational and vocational training facilities in the West Bank; (2) construction of municipal facilities and community centres in rural areas of the West Bank; and (3) humanitarian relief through shelter construction for poor families in the Gaza Strip.

The economic, social and humanitarian conditions of the Palestinians have witnessed serious deterioration since the beginning of the uprising (*Intifada*) in September 2000. Particularly alarming are the levels of unemployment and poverty, as well as the deterioration in basic social services such as: education, medical care and infrastructure. The ratio of populations per employed person has climbed by more than 50 percent since the start of the *Intifada*. Whereas in the third quarter of 2000, one worker supported 4.3 persons in the West Bank and 5.9 in the Gaza Strip, the ratios are now 6.9 and 9.4 respectively. The statistics are grim: 66.5 percent of Palestinian households are living below the poverty line—57.8 percent in the West Bank and 84.6 in Gaza. And 56.5 percent of the Palestinian households overall—58 percent in the West Bank and 53.6 percent in Gaza—have lost over half of their usual income during the current crisis.



One-fifth of Palestinian children can now be classified as moderately to severely anemic, a condition brought about by malnutrition. In Gaza, the rate reached 13.2 percent, a comparable rate to that in Zimbabwe (13 percent) and the Congo (13.9 percent).

Noting the long-standing relationship between PAPP and the Japanese Government, the Head of Palestinian Affairs at the Japanese Embassy in Tel Aviv, Mr. Izuru Shimmura stated: “We hope that this emergency assistance will help alleviate the severe humanitarian crisis for the Palestinians, emphasize to them our deep commitment to help, and to let them know that they are not alone.”

For further information, please contact:

In Jerusalem: Ehab Shanti, Communications Officer, Tel. +972-2-6268229 – e-mail:

ehab.shanti@undp.org; or Dania Darwish, Tel. +972-2-626-8200 – e-mail: dania.darwish@undp.org. In

Gaza: Hashim Hussaini, Assistant Communications Officer, Tel 972-8-2822167 -- e-mail:

hashim.hussaini@undp.org. In New York: Nadine Shamounki, Communications Officer, Tel. +1 (212)

906-5171 – e-mail: nadine.shamounki@undp.org; or William Orme, Media Section Chief, Tel. +1 (212)

906-5382 – e-mail: william.orme@undp.org.

For more information on UNDP/PAPP see <http://www.papp.undp.org>.

*** **

UNDP is the global development network of the United Nations system. It advocates for change, and links countries to the knowledge, experience and resources their people need to improve their lives.

To receive more UNDP news bulletins about development issues and projects around the world, please subscribe here: <http://www.undp.org/dpa/journalists/subscribe.html>.