



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Japan and UNDP Inaugurate Border Crossing for Palestinians**

The Government of Japan and the UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People inaugurated the new facilities for the only border crossing for Palestinians traveling to Jordan in an effort to ease the suffering of thousands of Palestinians. The ceremony, which was held on Friday, February 27, 2004 at the facility, was attended by Dr. Saeb Erekat, Minister of Negotiation Affairs, Mr. Abdel Kareem Sider, Mayor of Jericho, Mr. Izuru Shimura, Head of the Japanese Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority, and Mr. Timothy Rothermel, Special representative of UNDP/PAPP and boarder crossing officials.

Virtually the only facility serving over 2,500 Palestinian travelers to Jordan from the occupied Palestinian territory every day, the Karamah Crossing is a central life line for Palestinian travel. In recent years, especially since the outbreak of the Intifada, travelers have experienced acute hardship and unusual delays, sometimes reaching two or three days of waiting for a permission to exit. The hardship was further aggravated by the poor facilities available to host such a large number of travelers which in peak seasons reached 6,800 per day.

"This border crossing is one of the most important arteries for Palestinian travel abroad, which has lately witnessed unusual distress and cries for help by travelers due to delays and poor facilities" said Dr. Eirekat. "Once again the Government of Japan and UNDP affirm their partnership to the people and heed our call" added Eirekat.

The Head of the Representative Office of Japan to the PA, Mr. Izuru Shimura said "this is an important humanitarian concern and we are happy to assist in alleviating the unnecessary hardship."

"The construction of these new facilities through over \$US800,000 in support from Japan will not only have a long term benefit for the thousands of Palestinian travelers who pass here everyday, but also in fact has already benefited hundreds of Palestinians who gained employment in the construction and rehabilitation of the buildings" said Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of the UNDP in Jerusalem.

**For further information, please contact:**

In Jerusalem: Ehab Shanti, Communications Officer, Tel. +972-2-6268229 - [ehab.shanti@undp.org](mailto:ehab.shanti@undp.org); or Dania Darwish, Tel. +972-2-626-8290 - [danial.darwish@undp.org](mailto:danial.darwish@undp.org) In Gaza: Hashim Hussaini, Assistant Communications Officer, Tel 972-8-2822167. In New York: Nadine Shamounki, Communications Officer, Tel. +1 (212) 906-5171 - [Nadine.Shamounki@undp.org](mailto:Nadine.Shamounki@undp.org); or William Orme, Media Section Chief, Tel. +1 (212) 906-5382 - [William.Orme@undp.org](mailto:William.Orme@undp.org) - For more information on UNDP/PAPP see <http://www.papp.undp.org>.