



## PRESS RELEASE

# Japan Provides Emergency Grant Aid to the Palestinians

**Jerusalem, February 18, 2005** — Following the UN Consolidated Appeal (CAP) for the occupied Palestinian territories, issued on 11 November 2004; the Government of Japan announced that it will support a number of UNDP emergency initiatives in the West Bank and Gaza totaling US\$15 million. This generous effort is part of a larger response to the 2005 CAP totaling US\$60 million, which also includes support to other initiatives of UNRWA and the Palestinian Authorities.

The selected UNDP projects will help combat the rising levels of poverty and unemployment as well as improve overall social and economic conditions of the Palestinian People. The Japanese Government will finance five UNDP/PAPP projects, worth US\$15 million, to be implemented in 2005. These are 1. Rehabilitation of municipal infrastructure in Beit Hanoun and Rafah in the Gaza strip 2. Rehabilitation of destroyed agricultural sector in northern Gaza 3. Paving of internal roads in the WB 4. Upgrading of water supply and distribution systems in the rural communities in the WB 5. Construction of new schools and additional classrooms in the WB. In addition to the direct benefits deriving from the implementation of the above projects, it is expected that approximately 2600 working days for Palestinian workers will be generated in a period of up to 10 months.

The economic, social and humanitarian conditions of the Palestinians have witnessed serious deterioration since the beginning of the second 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 population 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 disappointing: 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 as a result of the current crisis.

Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP highlighted that UNDP is very thankful to the Japanese authorities for responding so generously to the appeal of the Palestinian People and for extending their assistance through UNDP. "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," declared Mr. Rothermel.

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