

## United Nations Development Programme

Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People

برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي / برنامج مساعدة الشعب الفلسطيني



### PRESS RELEASE

## Ad Melkert, UN Under-Secretary General and Associate Administrator of UNDP visits the occupied Palestinian territory

**Jerusalem, November 20, 2007** – Ad Melkert, UN Under-Secretary General and Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ended a two-day visit to the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) yesterday.

At a very delicate time in the complex political process, Melkert met with key counterparts to understand the magnitude of the development challenges facing the people of the oPt. 64% of the population in oPt live in poverty and unemployment rates have reached alarming levels with approximately one quarter of the labour force in the West Bank and over a third in the Gaza strip not gainfully employed, with some of the highest levels in the youth population. As trade with Israel accounts for the majority of trade flows, restrictions on the movement and lack of effectiveness of products have deterred the growth of exports. In East Jerusalem, emerging figures point to increasing cracks in the social fabric of society, with around 35% plus dropout rate from schools, high levels of crime and a lack of adequate housing and access to water and health care.

The Palestinian Authority is developing a Palestinian Development and Reform Programme (PDRP) to cover capital and development investments, institution building, social services and recurrent costs, which will be presented to a donor pledging conference in December in Paris.

Accompanied by Special Representative of the UNDP Administrator, Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, Melkert met in Ramallah with the Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki, the Minister of Planning Dr. Samir Abdallah, and the Senior Presidential Advisor, Dr. Majdi Khaledy to discuss the PDRP. Melkert stated, "the success and impact of the Paris meeting will require strong international support to the proposals supporting reform and development in the oPt. It is particularly vital that new perspectives will be created to address the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, which are currently held hostage to the political situation."

Melkert also met with representatives of the Palestinian civil society and donors who expressed particular concern on the situation in Gaza. Many of UNDP's projects are currently on hold due to the severe restrictions on the movement of goods and people entering Gaza. Under normal circumstances, UNDP supports projects to the value of \$40 million in Gaza, enabling infrastructure in the areas of housing for the poor, water and sanitation, waste management, hospitals and health clinics.

Melkert also visited Jericho, accompanied by the Minister of Women's Affairs and Tourism and the Mayor and Governor of Jericho. He acquainted himself with the economic potential of the Jordan valley both in terms of agribusiness and tourism.

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*UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.*