



SPEECH
For UNDP/PAPP Special Representative
Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen

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| Speaking event: | Olive Oil Festival |
| Date and time: | Monday, 30.04.2007; 10:30 |
| Venue: | Assira Alshamaliah / Tulkarem |
| Participants/audience: | Ministry of Agriculture, IFAD, NEF, Paltrade, PARC, UAWC, local community* |
| Length of speech: | 5 minutes |
| Context of speech: | opening remarks, no question and answer session |
| Draft prepared by: | Communications Unit |

Dear friends, ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to be here this morning on behalf of UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People in this beautiful and breathtaking mountain town, to honor the farmers who worked diligently on the oil development project in Assira Al Shamaliah,

UNDP and the residents of Assira Al Shamaliah have a long history of cooperation in a number of projects that were implemented here through various UNDP infrastructure and capacity building programmes.

The existence of the olive tree can be traced back to prehistoric times. Both the olive tree and its products, mainly olive oil, have since penetrated every aspect of life and have provided a source of economic wealth and employment in otherwise poor and less endowed areas.

Olives have oiled the wheels of the Palestinian Agricultural Industry, with an estimated nine million olive trees planted on over 45% of Palestinian agricultural land. The trees constitute the vital source of livelihood for thousands of Palestinian families.

The olive harvest season is a time of togetherness that brings young and old together for the common good of the family and community. Through this important annual event, olive stock is produced for the year and some is sold for family income. Despite the growing demand for olive oil as a result of the changing consumer preferences, high levels of aid is still needed in order for Palestinian olive oil to meet the quality standards for acceptable trade requirements.



The olive oil component of the Participatory Natural Resource Management Programme was adopted by PAPP because of its importance in addressing the shortcomings of the olive oil sector through an integrated and sustainable framework of agricultural development.

Although this pilot project only targeted 453 farmer households, it will, in the long run, increase the income and living standards of small farmers in the West Bank where few alternative income generating possibilities exist.

Providing the Palestinian farmers with the tools necessary to help them not only improve the quality of the olive, but to be able to package and market it so that Palestinian communities can compete in the international arena.

The groves on our way to Assira Al Shamaliah looked classically beautiful, rambling down the hillside and looking as if they have been there since antiquity. Some of them, I was told date back as far as 1000 years, to the time of the Roman Empire.

The Olive tree has always symbolized peace and continuity. These trees are a testament of the resilient life, and in some way mirror the resiliency of many Palestinians. Each year, the UN provides more than one million dollars in assistance to support the Palestinian olive economy.

We, at UNDP, recognize the significance of the olive sector for the Palestinian economy, in reducing poverty and the industry's potential impact on the overall humanitarian situation.

Our partnership and collaboration are key for successful development.

Finally I want to acknowledge the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, IFAD, Paltrade, PARC, UAWAC, NEF and thank all the participants for their help and cooperation in making this project and festival a success.

* International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
Near East Foundation (NEF)
Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC)
Palestine Centre for Trade (Paltrade)
Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UWAC)