Statement by the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance, Robert Piper, on behalf of the UN Country Team, on the occasion of International Women's Day

Jerusalem, 8 March 2016

On International Women's Day, the United Nations joins in the celebration of the accomplishments of women across the world and closer to home, we salute the Government of Palestine and civil society for their hard work and dedication towards the advancement of women's rights and empowerment.

This year, we recognize in particular the significant efforts of both the Government of Palestine and civil society to work together to ensure that women enjoy rights according to international human rights standards, including their representation and participation in the political, economic, social and security spheres.

While we celebrate these achievements, we remain aware that Palestinian women and girls are still subject to Israel's prolonged occupation, now nearing 50 years. Of particularly concern is the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip as a result of the ongoing Israeli blockade since 2007 and the recurrent rounds of hostilities. One and a half years after the end of the Gaza war, living conditions of internally displaced persons, of whom more than half are women and girls, are deplorable. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, forced displacement of Palestinians through building restrictions, destruction and confiscation of property, along with settler violence, remain a prominent protection concern. Insecurity and poverty exacerbate gender discrimination and inequality, and prevent Palestinian women and girls to access equal opportunities. For example, the gap in labor force participation remains wide with women's participation at only 18.8 per cent as compared to 72.1 per cent of males[1] . Similarly, around one third of female-headed households are food insecure, compared to around one fourth of male-headed households.

We stand ready to help lift all obstacles to meaningful opportunities for women's participation and leadership rather than reinforcing gender inequality.

As we come together today to celebrate Palestinian women and the realization of their rights, we renew our commitment to assist the Government of Palestine and civil society to enable women to fully participate in all walks of life in the State of Palestine and to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against them. We strongly believe in the importance of empowerment of Palestinian women to build a strong Palestinian

[1] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). Labour Market Data from Q3 2015.

society. We join the Secretary-General in his call to continue working for gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first-century.

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