International Youth Day Press Release by the UN Resident Coordinator in the State of Palestine

Jerusalem, 12 August 2016

"Youth can pave the Road to 2030" Says UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Robert Piper on International Youth Day

On 12 August 2016, the United Nations in Palestine is celebrating International Youth Day with the theme: "The Road to 2030: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Production and Consumption".

What does this mean in the context of Palestine?

Youth in Palestine face substantial challenges resulting from their social, economic and political marginalization. High poverty rates, shrinking economic opportunities and an uncertain future, are all leading to an alarming sense of hopelessness among young people today.

Yet Palestinian youth are also blessed with possibility. Palestine's large youth population, around 1.44 million people, represents a historic demographic opportunity; if these 1.44 million youth are given access to quality education and productive employment, if they are empowered as active citizens, there is a powerful cohort of future Palestinian leaders in the making. Investing in youth also brings innovation and fresh ideas, and potentially new solutions to ignite change and development.

"The recently adopted UN Security Council Resolution 2250 recognizes that youth should be actively engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation, and that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place", said Anders Thomsen, UNFPA Representative in the State of Palestine.

Essential to harnessing this demographic opportunity is the realization of youth's right to participate in their communities - politically, economically and socially - to build a brighter path to the 2030 goals. Robert Piper, UN Resident Coordinator, agrees; "Palestine needs an inter-generational compact in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" says Piper. "Today's youth are tomorrow's critical thinkers, change makers, innovators, communicators and leaders". "Investing in the country's vibrant youth and ensuring they are part of decision making is essential if we are to harness the extraordinary talent pool that this country has access to" he added.

With almost a third of the population aged between 15 and 29, Palestinian youth are essential to the collective response needed to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable consumption and production. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics report that youth aged 15-29 make up almost 30 percent of the Palestinian population. In the last quarter of 2015, youth unemployment reached 37.9 percent. Poverty is also increasing. According to the World Bank, 25 percent of Palestinians live in poverty, while the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that 27 percent of youth live under the poverty line.

Yet poverty is not just about income or consumption, it is rooted in a lack of opportunity, marginalization and powerlessness. "Addressing youth's access to their basic rights and opportunities is a must if we are to see a real shift in Palestine's trajectory toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals" Mr. Piper concluded." "We must ensure that youth are at the core of our efforts for Palestine and are given the tools they need to lead the way. In Palestine like everywhere elsewhere in the world, there is no road to peace and stability without engaging youth to help chart the course."

ENDS