PRESS RELEASE

The Real Madrid Foundation Travels to the occupied Palestinian territory to Strengthen Its Social Sports Schools in the Area Together with UNRWA

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The Real Madrid Foundation and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continue with their project, 'Social Sports Schools in the ocupied Palestinian territory (Gaza and West Bank)'.

Under this project, which both organizations have developed together since 2011, the Real Madrid Foundation renews its committment to the Palestine refugee children attending UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

This social and sports activities are even more valuable now due to the dramatic situation that children in the Gaza Strip face after the 2014 summer hostilities. The activities promoted by the Foundation and UNRWA will help Palestine refugee children overcome the trauma caused by the last military offensive, the third in five years.

Staff from the Real Madrid Foundation will travel to the West Bank from 23 to 25 April to carry out a training for more than 15 UNRWA teachers from Gaza and the West Bank, who will later act as coaches in UNRWA schools. The knowledge and skills aquired will be applied over the academic year.

This third edition of Social Sports Schools has welcomed 1,182 students – 602 in the West Bank and 580 in Gaza – expanding its impact on some children who do not have out-of school activities, giving them an alternative leisure activity, and creating a space where they can escape the reality of poverty and violence in which they live.

The training course will take place in the Kalandia Training Centre in Ramallah and will consist of theoretical and practical sessions, in which a group of around 40 students will participate. The practical sessions will be open to the media on 25 April from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.

A Long-Lasting Commitment

These activities take place within the framework of an agreement signed in 2011 between the Real Madrid Foundation and UNRWA, in Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA at the time, Filippo Grandi, and Real Madrid president, Florentino Perez.

So far, around 1,182 refugee children have benefited from the programme, taking part in the training and activities organized as part of football academies that promote education in values, teamwork, gender equality and leadership among Palestine refugee children.

A Haven for Children

The project, which is being implemented in 12 schools in the Gaza Strip and 17 schools in the West Bank, means for many refugee children living in refugee camps in the occupied Palestinian territory a safe haven where they can regain their status as children, far from a routine marked by violence. They find in these schools a shelter where they can continue dreaming of becoming great athletes, like their Real Madrid idols. Whether they get to follow in their footsteps or not, values learned through the games will become an asset in the future.

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Background information

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall, projected for 2016

to stand at US$ 81 million. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance .

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