PRESS RELEASE

Japan Contributes JPY 420 Million to Support Food Assistance for Palestine Refugees in Gaza

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East Jerusalem

Earlier today, the Japanese Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to the Palestinian Authority, Takeshi Okubo, and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl signed an agreement for a JPY 420 million (approximately US$ 4 million) contribution from Japan to support the Agency's Gaza food assistance programme for the fifth year in a row.

Given the ongoing blockade, now in its tenth year, and the overall dire socioeconomic conditions in the coastal enclave, food insecurity remains a critical issue in Gaza, and many Palestine refugee families face difficulties in meeting their minimum food needs. This latest contribution will benefit nearly 100,000 Palestine refugees in Gaza by allowing for food distributions in 2017 and 2018 that will provide families with basic necessities, such as wheat flour, pulses and sunflower oil.

"Japan remains a generous and highly valued partner of UNRWA, and we are truly grateful for their continued partnership and solidarity ," said UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl, who will be visiting Japan later this month. "This support will help ensure that UNRWA continues providing critical food assistance to Palestine refugees, as part of our broader efforts to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable in Gaza ."

Takeshi Okubo, Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to the Palestinian Authority, reiterated the commitment of Japan to supporting UNRWA. He said: "We are very proud of our relationship with UNRWA. By working together, we are able to provide important support to Palestinian refugees, especially in Gaza, many of whom are facing food insecurity in such terrible challenges and growing difficulties."

Japan continues to be a reliable and consistent supporter of UNRWA; in 2015, Japan was among the top five donors to the Agency's core programmes and services. This latest commitment brings the total of Japan's contributions to UNRWA in 2016 to approximately US$ 44 million.

– Ends –

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. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency's Programme Budget. 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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