من الشعب الياباني
From the People of Japan

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Joint Press Release
Funded by the Government of Japan
UNDP Kicks off Tokyo Football League II in Gaza

Gaza, 10 July 2017 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan, in partnership with the Palestinian Football Association, kicked off the Tokyo Football League II in the Gaza Strip. The project is part of their shared commitment to empowering youth in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank through the "Tamkeen- Emergence Response to Palestinian Youth through Sports Initiatives" project, funded by the Government of Japan for the amount of USD 386,000.

H.E. Takeshi Okubo, Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to Palestine, expressed gratitude to all partners for making the project successful, including UNDP, the Palestinian Football Association and the Palestinian Olympic Committee. "As we are well aware, youth is the pillar of the future of Palestine as they represent 30% of the total Palestinian population". "We believe that the Tokyo League II will help tackle the despair the Palestinian youth, both males and females, are feeling due to the severe political and economic situation," he added.

Building on the success of the 2016 Tokyo League under 18 soccer tournaments in Gaza, as well as the Palestinian Youth Sports League initiatives, the project will be a catalyst to transform youth participation in sports from its current minimal level to increased level through multiple sporting events and a piloted structured league rooted in the spirit of the Tokyo League initiative implemented the year before.

Mr Roberto Valent, UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator thanked the Government of Japan for their continuous support and highlighted that this project is part of UNDP's response to youth needs in the Gaza Strip. "No other time is more urgent than now to alleviate considerable stress and frustration among youth through their participation in a wider range of sports activities, thereby engaging and connecting them with the society". "The first League was highly welcomed by the players. It gave them hope, developed their skills and raised their sense of competition," he added.

The Tokyo League is organized by the Palestinian Football Association for youth under the age of 19. The League includes 56 teams, from different refugee camps as well as various towns and cities, in the Gaza Strip. The project will be a continuation of the work started in 2016, where 111 soccer games took place, focusing on immediate as well as longer term sustainable programmes for sports that will provide youth who have been affected psychologically and physically by the protracted conflict and blockade with something to aim for that can be transformative in the way they and others see life. The strategy is to build up the foundation of sports for both males and females in various areas that will be a future feeding ground for the clubs, federations, and even national teams.

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It is worth noting that the Government of Japan is considered one of UNDP's strongest partners. The Government of Japan has provided more than **USD 344 million** to UNDP/PAPP since 1993 for project implementation in the areas of infrastructure, rubble removal, health, education, agriculture, access to justice, and others. The Government of Japan has been providing over USD 1.8 billion worth of assistance to Palestine since 1993, contributing to improving the lives of the Palestinian people.

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UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.