Press Release

UNRWA Press Release: Japan Contributes US$ 23 million to UNRWA in Support of Palestine Refugees


JAPAN

The Japanese Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to Palestine, H.E. Mr. Takeshi Okubo, and UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl pictured here at the signing ceremony. © UNRWA 2019 Photo

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East Jerusalem

The Government of Japan has contributed US$ 23 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The agreement was signed by the Japanese Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to Palestine, Mr. Takeshi Okubo, and UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl.

Of this very generous and crucial contribution, US$ 17.7 million will go towards the Agency's core programmes of education, health care and improved living conditions for 5.4 million Palestine refugees across all five fields of UNRWA operation. This support from Japan will have a direct positive impact on the well-being of some of the most vulnerable refugees in the Middle East. An additional US$ 4.5 million will be used to improve the quality of UNRWA health services in the occupied Palestinian territory, Lebanon and Syria and another US$ 800,000 will contribute to the education of Palestine refugee children affected by the conflict in Syria.

Ambassador Okubo said: "I'm also pleased to announce to you that the Government of Japan has decided to provide supplementary budget for a new assistance of about US$ 23 million to UNRWA. We are determined more than ever to send a message to Palestine refugees through the assistance that: A friend in need is a friend indeed. Japan will be there with you. At a time when UNRWA suffers from the financial crisis since last year, and especially Gaza is experiencing humanitarian crisis. With this new assistance, the total value of Japanese assistance to the Palestinian people will exceed US 1.9 billion since 1993."

Commissioner-General Krähenbühl expressed his deep gratitude and recognition of the sustained support that Japan has extended to UNRWA over the years: "We are extremely grateful for the generous support provided by Japan and deeply impressed by the strength of the country's commitment to our work. This substantial contribution - so early in the year - protects our service delivery and provides assurance to Palestine refugees. It also represents a contribution towards stability for Palestine refugees and the Middle East region."

The Government of Japan is a dedicated donor to UNRWA, having supported the Agency since 1953. In 2018, the Government of Japan was the 10th largest contributor to the Agency, playing a critical role at a time when UNRWA faced an existential crisis. It is thanks to the enduring support of donors like the Government of Japan that the Agency is able to provide vital services to Palestine refugees across the Middle East, even in the face of its continuing financial challenges.

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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. 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 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem 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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