

January 11, 2009

Japan's Emergency Assistance to mitigate the humanitarian situation in Gaza

1. On January 9 (Fri), the Government of Japan decided to extend Emergency Grant Aid of 3 million US dollars to UNRWA in response to the organization's Emergency Appeal for Gaza. This assistance is part of a package of 10 million US dollars aid, which was announced on January 3 by Prime Minister Mr. Taro Aso.

2. The assistance which is mainly consisted of food commodities, is to help to improve aggravated humanitarian situation in Gaza. According to the size of family, a food basket (including flour, rice, sugar, oil and milk) and other necessary commodities will be distributed to the most needy.

3. Japan's political efforts

(1) On December 31, 2008, Prime Minister Aso discussed over the phone with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert concerning Gaza situation, Prime Minister Aso urged for immediate cease of military operations and stressed that causing many civilian casualties would affect the image of the State of Israel in the international community and would also bring the negative impact on the prospect of Arab-Israeli peace process. Furthermore, Prime Minister Aso requested that Israel take necessary measures for allowing relief aid to enter, referring to the necessity of humanitarian emergency assistance in Gaza.

(2) On January 3, Prime Minister Aso discussed with President Abbas over the phone, and stressed for immediate ceasefire and resumption of his efforts to move forward peace process with Israel.

(3) Following the start of ground attack by Israel on January 4, Japan strongly urges both Israel and Palestinian militants to immediately halt the use of force and achieve a durable cessation of violence, especially to prevent a further increase in civilian casualties.

(4) The Government of Japan highly appreciates the mediation efforts by Egypt, France and other parties for ceasefire. On the other hand, Japan deplors the increasing number of civilian casualties, including those caused by the Israeli attack on UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip.

(5) Japan, as Non-Permanent Member for UN Security Council, continues to work for materializing the immediate ceasefire agreement.