



## *Representative Office of Japan to the P.A.*

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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#### ***Opening Ceremony of Rafah Desalination Unit funded by the generous contribution of the Government of Japan***

On Thursday May 13, 2010, Mr. Hideaki Yamamoto, Deputy Representative of Japan, and Mr. Douglas Higgins, Deputy Special Representative of UNICEF-oPt, together with Mr. Munzer Shublak, Director of CMWU and other professional staff, participated in the opening ceremony of the desalination unit in Rafah which comes under the project for the “Emergency Assistance to the Severely Affected Children and Women in the Gaza Strip” funded in January 2009 and implemented by UNICEF.

The contribution of 3 million US dollars funded by the Government of Japan was utilized to respond immediately to the devastating effects on the health and water and sanitation sectors of Operation “Cast Lead” on Gaza early 2009. This contribution benefited 4,000 newborns; 7,500 high-risk pregnant women; 250,000 children under the age of five; and 1,200 severely malnourished children. It also improved access to safe drinking water for 300,000 people affected or displaced by the military operations in Gaza.

The desalination Unit in Rafah is one of two 50 m<sup>3</sup>/hr – capacity machines installed this year in Rafah and Khan Yonis that will each provide at least 15,000 people with expanded access to safe water. In addition, six small desalination units each benefitting 5,000 people with safe drinking water (is/will be) established. The units will reduce water borne diseases and household expenses incurred through purchasing water from private vendors.

The Government of Japan has extended its official development assistance since 1993 for more than USD 1 billion to the Palestinian people, ranging from economic and social development to humanitarian assistance.

(End)