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From the People of Japan

PRESS RELEASE

JAPAN ANNOUNCES JPY 630M CONTRIBUTION TO FOOD AID FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES

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East Jerusalem

Japanese Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative to the Palestinian Authority Junya Matsuura and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl today signed an agreement whereby Japan will contribute an additional JPY 630 million (approx. US\$ 5.8 million) for food aid to Palestine refugees.

This generous contribution will benefit almost 300,000 of the most vulnerable Palestine refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Food insecurity is pervasive in all five UNRWA fields of operation – driven by growing poverty, political instability and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, such as the blockade on Gaza and the West Bank Barrier.

Junya Matsuura, Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to the Palestinian Authority, reiterated the commitment of Japan to supporting the Palestine refugee community. He said: "This year, Japan announced 200 million US dollars as a new pledge, which we reaffirmed on the occasion of the Conference on the Reconstruction of Gaza in Cairo last month. 5.8 million US dollars of this food aid is a part of it. We are very proud of our relationship with UNRWA. By working together, we are able to provide important support to Palestine refugees – in Gaza and other fields."

UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl said, "We are grateful for the support from Japan, one of our strongest partners. The present donation will be used to assist all the areas where we work across the Middle East. We also greatly appreciate Japan's rapid response, as the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate and the people are waiting for the pledges made by the international community in Cairo to materialize."

The new donation follows a US\$ 4.5 million contribution from Japan to UNRWA in August 2014, which is funding food, non-food items and medicine. Japan has contributed a total US\$ 28.7 million to UNRWA in 2014 so far. This follows contributions of US\$ 28.8 million in 2013.

- Ends -

Background information

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some five million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance.

Financial support to UNRWA has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees, expanding need, and deepening poverty. As a result, the Agency's General Fund (GF), supporting UNRWA's core activities and 97 per cent reliant on voluntary contributions, has begun each year with a large projected deficit. Currently the deficit stands at US\$ 70.5 million.

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