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## Joint News Release

### **JAPAN'S REPRESENTATIVE VISITS WFP FOOD ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN GAZA**

**GAZA** – Representative of Japan to the Palestinian Authority H.E. Takeshi Okubo attended on Tuesday a food distribution in Gaza City carried out by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Ministry of Social Affairs. During his visit, Mr. Okubo reiterated the commitment of the the Government of Japan to continue to support food assistance to food-insecure Palestinians.

At the distribution site people received Japan-funded food, such as fortified wheat flour and Japanese-produced canned tuna. Mr. Okubo also visited a local shop that participates in WFP's electronic voucher programme. Participating shops use a terminal, similar to a debit card reader, where beneficiaries swipe their *Sahtein* food e-cards to purchase locally-produced food from a pre-selected list. These foods include dairy products, eggs, frozen vegetables and other commodities; giving people the freedom to create their own shopping list according to their preferences. WFP reaches 75,000 people with food e-cards in Gaza through a network of 75 local shops.

Ambassador Okubo said: "Over the last decades, the Government of Japan has spearheaded the international efforts in combatting hunger and poverty in the world, and so did in the Palestinian territory in particular from the perspective of human security. Japan will remain committed to supporting the Palestinian people's effort to establish a viable independent Palestinian state living in peace, security and prosperity with neighbors".

The e-cards are an innovative way to provide access to healthy foods, while supporting the development of small businesses and boosting the local economy. Since 2011, WFP has injected more than US\$170 million into the Palestinian economy through its local food purchases and food e-cards.

The visit in Gaza also included a tour of a dairy factory, which increased its production substantially since 2011 after it had started providing products for the food e-cards programme. Moreover, Mr. Okubo joined in on a Nutrition Awareness session that are offered to families who receive e-cards. Through presentations on healthy diets, hygiene, cooking and eating healthily on a budget, households learn how to improve their diets without necessarily spending more money.

“We hope that with Japan’s support we can continue to secure the food needs of poorer families and also support the local economy and small businesses through the innovative food e-cards,” said WFP Representative and Country Director Daniela Owen.

Japan has donated more than US\$40 million to WFP’s programmes in Palestine over the last ten years, making Japan one of the top three donors there as well as one of WFP’s largest donors globally.

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### **About WFP**

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. Each year, WFP assists some 80 million people in around 80 countries.

For more information, please visit: [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org) or [Facebook](#)

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