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LARGEST EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN APPEAL FOR PALESTINIANS

Jerusalem, 22 January 2008 The UN and humanitarian partner agencies are launching today their largest ever appeal for Palestinians - \$462 million - as the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is forced into greater dependency on humanitarian assistance in 2008.

According to Maxwell Gaylard, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, “*Closures not only hurt the economic well-being of families and communities in the occupied Palestinian territory, they also erode the basic human dignity of the Palestinian population. It is for this reason that we call for continuing support for our efforts in bringing real and meaningful assistance where it is most needed in the West Bank and Gaza. The current lockdown of Gaza is of mounting concern*”

Despite welcome developments on the political horizon, if the closures continue, living conditions for 3.8 million Palestinians are expected to further deteriorate

Restrictions on the freedom of movement of goods and people are already stifling the economy and quality of life in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). In addition, the UN and other humanitarian organisations are also facing new obstacles, increased costs and restrictions in delivering aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the closure regime becomes more entrenched.

Twelve UN agencies together with 28 nongovernmental organizations (15 international and 13 national) are launching a joint appeal for US \$461.9 million to meet the basic human needs of the Palestinian population in 2008. It is the largest appeal for emergency humanitarian assistance ever launched in the oPt and the third biggest in the world, after Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“The situation in the West Bank and Gaza is dire and getting worse. With the total shut down of Gaza, the vast majority of people there are now dependent on UN assistance, which is now in serious jeopardy”, said Filippo Grandi, the Deputy Commissioner General of UNRWA, *“In the West Bank, hundreds of physical obstacles are destroying the economy and hindering aid delivery at a time when the international community is trying to put new life into efforts to get the peace process back on track and build capacity and institutions.”*

According to the most recent figures, 57 per cent of Palestinian households are living in poverty, with about 49 per cent in the West Bank and 79 per cent in the Gaza Strip.¹

The funding sought in 2008 will alleviate suffering by feeding the vulnerable, educating children, creating jobs and self-reliance, providing healthcare and sanitation and protecting human rights.

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¹ PCBS, *Poverty in the oPt in 2006*, August 2007