

JAPAN

Press Release

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AT THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
ON AGENDA ITEM 30:
UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY
FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

2 November 2005
New York

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ms. Karen AbuZayd on her appointment as the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I would also like to express my gratitude for her statement as well as for the work of preparing the report of the Agency. At the same time, allow me to extend our sincere appreciation to Mr. Hansen, for his contributions as the former Commissioner-General. In addition, I offer my deepest respect and praise to all UNRWA staff for their efforts to continue to provide precious and valuable humanitarian assistance on the ground in especially difficult circumstances.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Japan, under the recognition that there is now an

opportunity to advance the Middle East peace process, has actively engaged itself in that undertaking.

In January 2005, Foreign Minister Machimura visited the Israeli and Palestinian leaders upon the election of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas as President of the Palestinian Authority, in an effort to build a bridge between the two parties. Japan also extended invitations to both Prime Minister Sharon and President Abbas to visit Japan, which led to a visit by Mr. Abbas and his meeting with Prime Minister Koizumi in Japan in May. Taking this opportunity, Prime Minister Koizumi expressed Japan's support for President Abbas' efforts for peace and requested that he continue to take steps to control extremists. On the same occasion, Prime Minister Koizumi announced the intention of the Japanese government to implement approximately 100 million US dollars in additional assistance for the immediate future, half of which has already been decided to assist the projects of UNRWA and other UN organizations, as emergency assistance for activities following the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the northern part of the West Bank.

Japan intends to continue its active role in the Middle East peace process, from both the political and the financial perspectives.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan regards the assistance being provided to Palestinian refugees through UNRWA, as well as the assistance to Palestinian non-refugees, as an important part of its efforts for the Middle East peace process. In fact, Japan's assistance to the Palestinian people through UNRWA, which began in 1953, amounts to 500 million US dollars to date. Moreover, Japan's total assistance to the Palestinians since 1993 amounts to 760 million dollars, and approximately 30 percent of that contribution has been implemented through UNRWA.

In response to the launching of the 2005 UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for the Occupied Palestinian Territory last November, Japan promptly decided additional assistance of 60 million dollars, of which 15 million

US dollars is being delivered through UNRWA. This assistance is aimed at supporting such projects as “Re-housing of Refugees in Rafah” and “Emergency Employment Creation” to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and address the urgent issue of unemployment.

Japan attaches great importance to the welfare of the young Palestinians who represent the future of Palestine. To this end, Japan is contributing in the area of education and vocational training, in order to realize self-reliance in refugees through reinvigoration of the economy in tandem with the capacity building of UNRWA. We consider this assistance important from the perspective of “human security”, which embraces the necessity of protection and empowerment of people.

Mr. Chairman,

As one of the major donors to UNRWA, Japan is paying close attention to UNRWA's management of its budget and operations. Japan expects UNRWA to ensure transparency in its management and administration and the most efficient possible utilization of its resources. We believe that the reform of UNRWA will lead to confidence building between UNRWA and donor countries, and thus enhance the understanding of donor countries regarding their future voluntary contributions.

Mr. Chairman,

In light of the situation in the Middle East, UNRWA continues to play a vital role in the region. Japan therefore reiterates its strong commitment to and support for the activities of UNRWA, and hopes that the international community as a whole will remain committed to supporting those activities as well.

Thank you very much.