



*Remarks delivered on behalf of Robert Piper, Coordinator for Humanitarian and UN
Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian territory*

Launch of the 2016 Humanitarian Response Appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory

Ramallah, 10 February 2016

Good morning everyone. On behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory, I want to thank each of you for coming today.

In particular, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to His Excellency, the Minister, and to the Government of the State of Palestine, especially the line Ministries, for their active participation in this year's humanitarian appeal. This is a critical step to ensure that humanitarian operations are fully in-line with government plans and priorities.

I would also like to thank the donors present for your support to last year's Response Plan for which we raised \$356 million - a little over 50% of what we asked for. This allowed us to provide: food assistance to more than a million people across the oPt; cash assistance to almost 17,000 IDP families in Gaza; emergency assistance to over 180 households affected by demolition of their homes in the West Bank; monitor and document over 2,300 incidents of grave violations affecting almost 40,000 children, improve services for gender based violence as well as interventions in many other areas.

This is the 14th humanitarian appeal in the oPt. The humanitarian operation in the occupied Palestinian territory is unique from other operations around the world. It originates from the impact of nearly 50 years of Israeli occupation, the main driver of humanitarian needs.

Israel's occupation has left many Palestinians highly vulnerable. Whether they find themselves in 'Area C' - that 60 per cent of the West Bank still under Israeli civil and military control - or in a village or an East Jerusalem neighborhood isolated between the Barrier and the 'Green Line', or in Gaza, locked-in by a land, air and sea blockade, theirs is a precarious existence.

Overview of Needs in the oPt

With the major driver of humanitarian vulnerability in the occupied Palestinian territory unchanged again this year, striking humanitarian needs remain:

- Overall, 1.6 million people are what we call moderately to severely 'food insecure', which means they are not consuming enough nutritious and varied food to meet

recommended, international standards, despite spending in many cases more than half of their household income on food. In the oPt this is a result of high unemployment especially amongst women and youth, low household incomes, the high cost of living (particularly for food) and the erosion of livelihoods.

- Approximately 92,000 Palestinians remain displaced from the 2014 hostilities in Gaza. We know that some 90% of this group remains in search of permanent solutions, even though
 - many have found temporary housing solutions. But vulnerability is about more than not having an actual home to live in – it is about people’s ability to access basic services, their ability to continue to go to school and work, to provide food to their families, to remove the challenges of living with disability, to feel safe and to deal with symptoms of psychosocial distress.
 - Some 8,000 people in the West Bank are at high risk of forcible transfer. These Palestinians not only risk losing their homes, they risk being forced to leave their communities;
 - Over 200,000 children across the oPt are in need of psychosocial support and interventions. These are children who have been the victim of violence, or have witnessed traumatic events, like the killing of a family member;
 - And hundreds of thousands of people throughout the oPt still have restricted access to essential services including around 300,000 women in need of services to address domestic and other forms of violence.
 - These are just a few of the needs identified by humanitarian agencies this year.

Protection: at the Heart of the HRP

In our programming, we talk a lot about numbers: numbers of *affected*; numbers of people in *need*; numbers of people *receiving assistance*. But, of course, the Palestinians we serve in the oPt are not numbers. They are *people*; fathers and mothers, sons and daughters.

They are people, who have needs, yes, but they also have rights. And, as a population living under occupation, they are entitled to additional protection, such as not being punished for acts they did not commit individually, or not being pressured to leave their communities. According to our assessments, some 1.8 million Palestinians today are in need of immediate protection.

Because of this, our key priority in the provision of humanitarian assistance in the oPt is protecting the rights of Palestinians under occupation, in accordance with international law. This objective underpins our entire humanitarian appeal along with our commitment to ensuring gender sensitive, equitable response to the most vulnerable .

Protection can take many forms. It ranges from indirect measures, including the monitoring of home demolitions, negotiating access of humanitarian staff and materials, and advocating for accountability for IHL violations, to more direct measures like accompanying students exposed to settler violence on their way to school, providing psycho-social assistance to the children of Gaza, or the removal of unexploded ordnance after the last Gaza hostilities. Through the Response Plan we hope to reach some 23,000 people with legal aid following alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law or conflict in Gaza; to support almost 300,000 children who need psychosocial and child protection responses; and to provide 225 communities with protective presence.

The protection imperative permeates all of our work and remains our main priority.

Access to Basic Services and Supporting Coping Mechanisms

Our humanitarian appeal centers around two other key priorities:

The first of these is to provide basic services, particularly water, health, housing and education – to those highly vulnerable Palestinians currently denied this right by the occupying power. This is particularly the case for Palestinians in Area C and East Jerusalem of the West Bank, and, especially, in Gaza, where the blockade, recurrent outbreaks of hostilities and the internal Palestinian political divide have also led to a serious deterioration in basic services. This means we will be providing emergency support to more than 250,000 children who have lost access to education; or supporting access to drinking water for 518,000 people; and providing mobile health care services to 170,000 people, mostly in Area C, who face obstacles in accessing basic health care.

Our final priority is to support the ability of households to cope with repeated “shocks”, like demolitions, loss of livelihoods, and outbreaks of violence. Increasingly we are seeing families using negative ways of meeting their basic needs, for example, taking their children out of school because they can no longer afford fees or encouraging the early the marriage of their daughters. Interventions under this objective aim to support the most vulnerable households until there is a political solution.

The 2016 Request

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan requests US\$571 million from the international community to implement 206 projects to address the most urgent humanitarian needs in the oPt. These projects, if supported, will be implemented by 79 humanitarian organizations, including 67 national and international NGOs and 12 UN agencies. Almost US\$323 million of the funding sought is to enhance food security and some US\$112 million is for shelter for vulnerable Palestinians and US\$6.6 for addressing gender based vulnerabilities.

At least 65% per cent of the requested funds target needs in Gaza, where the suffering resulting from 2014’s 51-day hostilities are compounded by the effects of an eight year blockade and by internal Palestinian divisions that have generated their own set of shocks and stresses.

This year's requirements are 19 per cent lower compared to 2015, primarily due to a significant reduction in the shelter request for Gaza, due to issues addressed through reconstruction and recovery channels. The quicker Gaza's recovery and reconstruction efforts go, the quicker the residual humanitarian needs will reduce.

Given the needs we are discussing today, it is imperative that we have strong international support for this appeal. But that support must come with the knowledge that addressing the root causes of this crisis, through a *political solution*, is vital to moving forward so that we no longer need to be producing humanitarian appeals like the one being launched today.

Thank you very much.