



**Remarks of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, James W. Rawley, on the occasion of
the Launch of OCHA 2013 Annual Humanitarian Review**

Gaza Strip, Monday, 7 April 2014

Good afternoon everyone. I am pleased to be with you today to launch OCHA's Annual Humanitarian Review.

This past year was one of striking contrasts. It saw the resumption of negotiations, offering hope for a final status agreement and the maintenance of a relative calm following the ceasefire agreement in the aftermath of the November 2012 hostilities in Gaza. Against this somewhat hopeful backdrop, the situation on the ground deteriorated, making the continued provision of humanitarian assistance an essential -if unfortunate - feature of the UN's work in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

In 2013, we saw a number of worrying developments in the humanitarian situation, including a significant deterioration in the Gaza Strip, or "de-development", despite the lowest level of conflict-related casualties in Gaza and southern Israel in a decade. We are reminded of the economic impact that the closure continues to have in restricting Gaza's once vibrant economy, and how without a flourishing economy we will continue to see a civilian population with considerable, indeed expanding, humanitarian needs. My colleagues will address this and other challenges in the West Bank in their comments, but let me say this: Gaza must return to the prosperity that it once enjoyed.

There is no doubt that this is a challenge, but it is possible for all concerned parties to take steps now to achieve this goal, starting with ensuring the much needed calm. But this must extend to other measures. Gaza's economy will flourish when it is able to trade – with Israel and other countries and resume commercial transfers to the West Bank. Gaza's fishermen must be able to fish in Gaza's coastal waters and its farmers must be able to work all arable land, including in the Access Restricted Area close to the fence.

Gazans must also be able to build – and we hope to see a resumption of the import of essential construction materials – aggregate iron bar and cement for the private sector. While the Government of Israel has decided to resume the transfer of construction materials for UN work in Gaza, a number of UN projects remained stalled. Moreover, as highlighted in our Gaza 2020 report, Gaza must enjoy sustainable access to clean water, through desalination and improved waste water treatment, neither of which is possible without sustainable access to energy. Finally, Egypt remains an essential actor as well - and we hope to see a return to previous levels of movement of people and medical supplies through the Rafah crossing.

As the UN we are committed to pursuing these goals and also addressing the humanitarian needs of Gaza's civilian population. In 2014 the humanitarian community is requesting \$390 million to implement programmes to benefit 1.9 million vulnerable Palestinians, mostly in Gaza, Area C, East Jerusalem and the Seam Zone.

Despite the increase in needs in oPt, other emergencies elsewhere, including in nearby Syria, are attracting increased attention. Indications so far point to a contraction of humanitarian funding for the occupied Palestinian territory, which may lead to gaps in assistance. But at this critical time, support to programming in the occupied Palestinian territory remains more important than ever. I, therefore, appeal to our partners to make every effort to continue this support, while we also work to enhance our developmental work and political engagement to address the root causes of vulnerability. Working together, we can help Palestinians realise their full potential, free from want and free from fear.

Thank you for coming today and I look forward to continuing our engagement with you.