



Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

866 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017 Phone: (212) 223-4300 · www.un.int/japan/

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STATEMENT BY MR. AKIRA ENDO
REPRESENTATIVE OF JAPAN
AT THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
ON AGENDA ITEM 31:
UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY
FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

1 November 2006

New York

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Karen AbuZayd, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), for her statement as well as for preparing the report of the Agency. At the same time, I offer my deepest respect and praise to all UNRWA staff for their efforts to continue to provide precious humanitarian assistance on the ground in especially difficult circumstances.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan regards the assistance that it is providing to Palestinian refugees through UNRWA, as well as its assistance to Palestinian non-refugees, as an important part of its efforts for the Middle East peace process. Japan's assistance to the Palestinian people

through UNRWA, which began in 1953, has amounted to more than 520 million US dollars to date. Moreover, we have been actively extending assistance to the Palestinians in such areas as humanitarian assistance, assistance for reforms, confidence-building and assistance for a self-sustainable Palestinian economy in view of state-building efforts by the Palestinians. Japan's total assistance to the Palestinians since 1993 amounts to more than 870 million dollars, and approximately 30 percent of that contribution has been implemented through UNRWA.

Last July, on the occasion of a visit by former Prime Minister Koizumi to Palestine and Israel, Japan decided to implement humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 25 million US dollars to improve medical care and public health and to create jobs. These projects included an emergency health project in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (3.5 million US dollars) and a public health improvement and employment generation project in the West Bank (1.9 million US dollars) through UNRWA.

In addition, Japan regards UNRWA as an important partner for promoting human security. Last January, Japan decided to extend assistance of more than 5 million US dollars through the Trust Fund for Human Security for a project entitled "Isolated and Disenfranchised Communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". The goal of this project is to support Palestinian communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through their empowerment with a view to improving the quality of social life for vulnerable people as well as to contribute to peace in Palestine. Japan anticipates further cooperation with UNRWA in the area of human security.

Mr. Chairman,

As one of the major donors to UNRWA, Japan is paying attention to UNRWA's efforts for management reform. Japan expects UNRWA to ensure transparency as well as accountability in its management, and to improve efficiency and effectiveness in 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,

Although international assistance is important in order to improve the humanitarian situation for the Palestinians, it is more important in the first instance to establish a lasting peace. Given the political reality that among the Palestinians as well as among the Israelis a significant majority supports the peace-process, it is incumbent upon the political leaders on both sides to rededicate themselves to their joint pursuit of peace. We look forward to the early resumption of the direct dialogue between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert. Japan strongly expects that the Palestinians overcome their difference of opinions, and that the PA pursue to achieve co-existence and co-prosperity with Israel again. In case the PA as a whole makes it clear and sends a strong message that it will pursue peace through dialogue with Israel, the international community should not wait to support actively such a policy and mutual prosperity with Israel. Japan also expects that the Government of Israel will support and positively respond President Abbas' efforts for breaking the current impasse.

As part of its mid- and long-term efforts to generate hope for the peoples in the region for co-existence and mutual prosperity, Japan proposed a concept called the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity", which is aimed at creating a prosperous region through regional cooperation in the Jordan River rift valley. Japan is making efforts to initiate an official level consultation with Israel, PA and Jordan. Japan intends to continue its active role in the Middle East peace process, from both the political and the financial perspectives.

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.