

Press Release

UNDP warns that Gaza violence will have long-term impacts on Palestinians

Jerusalem, January 17, 2009 – Following the Secretary General's call for an immediate halt in the violence and destruction, the United Nations, in cooperation with national and international partners, is preparing to ensure an early recovery and reconstruction response, immediately after the end of the military operations in Gaza. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its capacity as the facilitator of the UN early recovery team, will work with the Palestinian Authority to assess damages and needs, and devise plans for rebuilding. Immediate responses will include the removal of unexploded ordnance and the clearing of rubble so that social and economic reconstruction may begin.

Security Council Resolution 1860 calls on the international community to alleviate the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza.

Nearly three weeks of intense conflict in the Gaza Strip has killed more than 1,000 people and injured thousands more. Damage to vital infrastructure, including many roads, bridges, hospitals and power stations, has severely limited local capacity to care for the injured and displaced. In addition, pre-crisis stocks of basic medications and fuel were already very low due to the long blockade and closure regime on Gaza. Clean water is also in short supply, threatening the health of at least a million people. UNDP is deeply concerned about this deteriorating humanitarian situation and its medium and long-term impact on human development.

The immediate safety and needs of women, children, and men in Gaza is paramount, but concerns about the long-term implications of this most recent conflict, in terms of recovery and development, are mounting as well. For example, the livelihoods and assets of tens of thousands of civilians are being systematically undermined through the destruction of productive resources such as fruit orchards, fisheries, and basic industries.

The resulting damage goes far beyond physical destruction. The immediate suffering of children, women, and men and their exposure to prolonged violence, will have consequences for years to come. The immediate psychological impact of this war is heightened for those families displaced from their homes, coping with the loss of loved ones or struggling with severe injuries.



The rebuilding process will be occurring in a society that is already enduring particularly difficult financial and social conditions. Prior to recent events, some 70 per cent of people in the Gaza Strip were living below the poverty line. After 18 months of blockades that restricted the free movement of both people and commodities, including fuel, unemployment has soared and government capacity to provide and maintain basic public services has been significantly reduced.

When the conflict ends, Gaza needs an immediate, multi-dimensional early recovery strategy focused on the restoration of access and movement, the restitution and reconstruction of basic services and infrastructure and the reduction of additional risks and vulnerabilities, as well as additional investments in livelihoods, shelter, governance systems, security and rule of law and environmental sustainability.

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