



**Remarks of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator**  
**In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mr James W. Rawley**  
**(Gaza city, Sunday 25 November 2012)**

The United Nations is deeply saddened that it is the civilian population that has, once again, borne the brunt of violence in this region. In just eight days, at least 103 civilians were killed, including 33 children and 13 women; hundreds more were injured, many critically as a result of the recent hostilities in Gaza. About 700 families have been made homeless by the destruction of their homes and have been displaced. Bridges, schools, clinics, media offices and sports facilities were damaged. I wish to express sincere condolences to the families of those killed, and a quick recovery to those injured.

But that is not the whole picture – the latest round of hostilities has only compounded what was already a precarious humanitarian situation, with 80 per cent of Gazan families receiving aid. And it has further contributed to the “de-development” of Gaza.

Gaza was already facing tough challenges before the recent conflict. I am especially concerned about the water sector, where the aquifer – the main source of drinking water – may well be on the verge of collapse. Here we need to act at once to avoid devastating consequences for all people in Gaza, as highlighted in our recent report, "Gaza in 2020 – A Liveable Place?"

The violence has also exacerbated the vulnerabilities of some of Gaza’s poorest people and added to the psychological trauma that children in particular have suffered in recent years. I am particularly concerned about those who have been displaced from their homes and who are unable to return.

At this point in time, the key humanitarian priorities are:

- Reducing the risk of explosive remnants of war through risk awareness activities and the urgent removal of such remnants
- Ensuring treatment for the wounded and others in need of healthcare
- Addressing the psychological impact of the violence on families, especially children
- Ensuring the shelter needs of the hundreds of families whose homes have been destroyed or severely damaged are quickly addressed
- Replenishing food stocks

I am proud of our UN staff and our Gazan and international partners. Their courage and their commitment to humanity is humbling. I have spoken to many colleagues who feared for their families and their own lives but continued to work day and night throughout the conflict.

Throughout the recent hostilities, the UN and its partners continued working to ensure, to the extent possible, that people were able to receive the regular distributions of assistance and access essential services. We were also able to respond quickly to emergency needs of the almost 12,000 people who sought shelter in UNRWA and other schools. Since the ceasefire, we have focused on bringing pre-existing programs up to full speed, and I am pleased to report that these programmes are now fully up and running. Rehabilitating critical infrastructure will need to follow, such as schools or the coastal bridge, which has been destroyed.

Our teams are also working around the clock to assess the additional needs arising from this escalation and to respond quickly and effectively to families and communities that need shelter support, medical treatment and services, food and other assistance, in addition to the restocking of drugs and other supplies, and the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure. Mitigating the risk of explosive remnants of war and providing psycho-social support to the traumatized children and families are also high priorities over the coming days and weeks. We expect this assessment of needs will be completed in just a few days.

Meanwhile, the UN is already responding to some of these needs. For instance, today we started to repair windows, doors and other damage in 93 schools, many of which run double shifts. We are also making use of our emergency funding. In fact, we have already approved almost half a million dollars from a local Humanitarian Response Fund to provide fuel for generators so that they can continue to pump water and operate sewage plants.

While we will not have a precise figure on our financial requirements for a few days, what I can say at this point is that we need at least \$14 million this year to ensure that the UN and its partners can provide immediate relief, in addition to UNRWA's separate appeal and WHO's recent request for medical supplies. We are also working on revising the humanitarian appeal (CAP) for next year, to include assistance during the early months of 2013.

Of course, beyond addressing immediate humanitarian and early recovery needs arising from this latest round of hostilities we need to look ahead. We cannot accept an outcome where the people of Gaza merely revert to the situation as it was two weeks ago – one characterized by widespread chronic humanitarian needs, the lack of development, and the absence of a sustainable local economy that benefits all communities – indeed an absence of hope. This situation must change.

Like Mr. Serry, I also believe the terms of the recent ceasefire offer a window of opportunity. We must seize this opportunity – all efforts must now focus on opening the crossings for people and goods. I welcome the extension of the fishing limits from 3 to 6 nautical miles, but, frankly,

this is not enough. The fishing limit must be extended further to allow the Gazan fishing industry to get back on its feet. Palestinian farmers must be allowed to freely access their lands and crops in the border areas. Transfers of Gazan goods to the West Bank and exports must be permitted to support economic recovery. Gazan students must be allowed to access universities in the West Bank.

The people of Gaza have the capacity to develop their communities and to build a sustainable local economy. It is time that they are given the opportunity to do so. We in the humanitarian community call upon political actors in the region and beyond to take the necessary steps to ensure durable peace and stability in the region –and to allow hope to once again prevail for the people of Gaza and the region.

Thank you.