



PRESS RELEASE

UNDP calls for immediate action to address emergency needs of Palestinian communities affected by Israeli Separation Wall

Jerusalem, August 5, 2003—The UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian people has issued a call to the international community for US\$18 million in emergency assistance to address the humanitarian needs of the communities most affected by the construction of a barrier (commonly described as the "separation wall") in the West Bank by the government of Israel.

The UNDP's proposed emergency assistance programme is a multi-faceted project that addresses immediate employment needs and will improve vital social, municipal and agricultural infrastructure necessary for sustaining the livelihoods of Palestinian residing in areas affected by the wall.

In addition to the generation of over 200 thousand employment opportunities in the affected areas, the UNDP's proposed intervention includes land reclamation projects, the construction of agricultural roads, improving the water infrastructure, revamping the health care and education systems, building the capacity of the municipalities and village councils, as well as a multitude of infrastructure projects developed in consultation with stakeholders.



"Immediate action is required to meet the needs of those affected by the construction of this barrier," said Timothy Rothermel, the Special Representative of UNDP in Jerusalem. "After consulting numerous community leaders and farmers who lost their land in the various municipalities, UNDP has developed a comprehensive emergency action plan."

The Government of Israel began construction of the barrier a year ago, composed of a complex series of walls, barriers, trenches, and fences within the western border of the occupied West Bank. The wall has encircled and isolated many Palestinian cities and villages.

The "footprint" of the first phase of construction has been estimated at 11,500 dunums (2,875 acres, or 11.5 sq. km). When completed, this first phase of the wall will cut across roads and water networks and will form a barrier between Palestinians living on each side and their agricultural lands, water wells, urban markets and public services.

The impact of the wall on agriculture is of particular concern in the governorates of Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqiliya, where the first phase is being constructed. The wall could severely



constrain the delivery of basic social services and commercial exchange, especially the movements of agricultural products, Palestinian officials have said.

"While we recognize that this is a political problem that requires a political solution, we have a moral duty to respond to the emergency needs of the many farmers who lost their only source of living," said Rafiq El-Natsheh, the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Agriculture.

Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya account for just 18 percent of the West Bank's overall territory, but produced 45 percent of the West Bank's total agricultural output, with an estimated value of \$220 million in 2000.]

It is estimated that the direct damage to the agricultural sector in these governorates from the barrier construction to date includes the destruction of some 83,000 olive and other fruit trees, 615 dunums of irrigated land (including greenhouses), 37 km of water networks and 15 km of agricultural roads. In addition, a total of 238,350 dunums of land (238.3 sq km) are being isolated between the Green Line and the Wall, 57 percent of which is cultivated, mostly with olive trees and field crops.



Marouf Zahran, the Mayor of Qalqilya, stated: "We are trying very hard to combat the rising poverty that is the direct result of the encirclement of Qalqilya. So far, many visitors have come to Qalqilya and have been shocked by seeing the wall, but the UNDP deserves the credit for actually pursuing an innovative and comprehensive approach to overcome its explosive and devastating effects."

Jamal Shobaki, the Palestinian Authority Minister of Local Government, stated: "There is a sense of despair at the further isolation of Palestinian towns and villages. The wall is encircling many villages and towns, especially in the Qalqilya and Tulkarm districts, confiscating thousands of dunums of some of the best agricultural land, disrupting basic social and health services and threatening the viability of a future Palestinian state."

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, when asked to comment about the wall, said: "I know that it is conventional wisdom that fences make good neighbors. But that is if you build a fence on your own land and you do not disrupt your neighbor's life."