



Football Star and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Ronaldo to Visit UNDP Anti-poverty Projects in the West Bank

Ramallah, West Bank, 10 May 2005 -Ronaldo, the Brazilian soccer star, in his capacity as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will visit the West Bank city of Ramallah on 16 May for a first-hand look at UNDP youth and anti-poverty projects in the occupied Palestinian territory, announced UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP).

During his visit to Ramallah, Ronaldo will inaugurate a new Centre for Disadvantaged Youth and will visit several anti-poverty [UNDP projects](#), including UNDP's "Football Workshops," which have been designed to promote sport as a forum to teach leadership, confidence, and discipline, based on core principles of tolerance, cooperation, and respect.

"I am very eager to visit all of these important projects," Ronaldo said. "It has always been a dream for me to go to the region to contribute as much as I can, with a message of peace and hope."

The Centre for Disadvantaged Youth-an educational and vocational training centre that will have a direct, positive impact on the lives of disenfranchised and underprivileged youth-aims to provide young people with professional training and empower them to be more self-sufficient for the benefit of themselves and their communities. Plans include furnishing the centre with sports facilities for football and volleyball as well as schedule tournaments between the student teams and other clubs and centres. The Centre for Disadvantaged Youth is being established through a partnership between the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Social Affairs and PAPP.

Welcoming Ronaldo's visit, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmad Qurei said, "The Palestinian people are very grateful for this expression of solidarity from this star. In these trying times, Ronaldo is scoring a major goal against poverty."

UNDP launched PAPP in 1978, following a UN General Assembly resolution in support of the economic and social development of Palestinians. UNDP/PAPP has since implemented hundreds of projects throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which amount to an annual total of US\$65 million. These extensive efforts include generating employment and fighting poverty, which are essential given that 84 percent of the population in the Gaza Strip and 57 percent in the West Bank-almost 65 percent of the total population of the occupied Palestinian territory-live below the poverty line of \$2 per day.

"UNDP is honoured to have such a popular figure as Ronaldo as Goodwill Ambassador," said Mr. Timothy Rothermel, the UNDP Special Representative in Jerusalem. "His visit to



the occupied Palestinian territory will shine an international spotlight on the tremendous challenges that the Palestinians, particularly the youth, face on a daily basis."

"My colleagues and I have tremendous admiration for Ronaldo's steadfast commitment to improving the lot of humanity, here in the occupied Palestinian territory, and elsewhere in the world," Rothermel added.

At the invitation of the Peres Centre for Peace, Ronaldo will also visit the "Twinned Peace Soccer Schools" project in Herzilya, a suburb of Tel Aviv, later the same day. The Peres Centre schools project brings young Palestinians and Israelis together through sports.

Ronaldo is expected to meet with 800 young Palestinian and Israeli participants in this project, who will play in mixed teams in a tournament held in his honour.

The Peres Centre for Peace is an Israeli non-governmental organization which runs joint initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians in various fields, including health, commerce, and education.

During his trip, Ronaldo will also meet with Palestinian and Israeli officials.

Ronaldo was appointed as a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador in 2000 to rally people worldwide in the fight against poverty. Together with Zinédine Zidane, who was then a competitor, he launched the UNDP "Teams to End Poverty" global advertising drive, went to Kosovo where he helped reconstruct a school, and heralded the Millennium Development Goals to be reached by 2015 with specific focus on the goal of halving extreme poverty. Along with his Real Madrid teammate and fellow UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Zinédine Zidane, Ronaldo started organizing in 2003 the "Match Against Poverty," a yearly event that gathers the world's leading football stars to raise funds for anti-poverty projects on all continents.

One of the world's most recognizable athletes, Ronaldo began his career in his native Brazil, before moving on to a hugely successful career in European clubs. In addition to his club success, Ronaldo was also a member of the World Cup winning-Brazilian national teams in 1994 and 2002. He was awarded FIFA World Player of the Year in 1997 and currently plays for Spanish club Real Madrid.

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