



Speech for UNDP/PAPP Special Representative – Jens Toyberg-Frandzen

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It's a pleasure to be here in Ramallah today to sign this agreement which will start the process of turning the concept of this important project into reality.

It is often said that water has the potential to be the cause of war. At UNDP we see it slightly differently. Water can be the cause of peace.

Recognition that environmental issues know no borders or affiliations should foster dialogue rather than conflict. Rivers, lakes, seas and particularly aquifers do not stop at checkpoints.

The recent dry winter has emphasized that efficient management of water resources is vital for the well-being of all the residents of the region.

This project is an important step towards improving waste water management for the benefit of both Palestinians and Israelis.

The impact of sewage on the environment cannot be underestimated. It can turn beauty spots into no-go areas, it can contaminate farmlands and it can seep into the ground, polluting drinking water and causing sickness and disease.

Improved waste water management benefits individuals who can look forward to better sanitation and an enhanced environment. But equally important, it will benefit millions who rely on the Western Aquifer for their water.

We have worked with the Palestinian Water Authority and local municipalities on a series of waste water management projects. At the moment we are in the process of building a waste water treatment plant in Khan Yunis, also in co-operation with the Government of Japan.

UNDP works on water governance issues all over the world and last year, it was one of the organizations that promoted the International Year of Sanitation to highlight the importance of these issues to public health and the protection of the environment.

This is a good project because it responds to five of our shared concerns.

1. It will improve the lives of 16,500 Palestinians, who will be connected to an efficient wastewater collection system. Valleys and hills need no longer be used as dumping grounds for sewage.
2. Waste water management will improve the environment by directing the sewage for treatment where the water can be reclaimed and used for agriculture.
3. The project has required and will continue to require cross border co-operation. Palestinian and Israeli national and local authorities will play an important role. We hope the success of this project will lead to others.

4. Operation and maintenance of the waste water system will bring new jobs and skills to the Qalqiliya, Tulkarem, and Jenin areas. Hopefully the expertise that will be acquired will also benefit other areas of the West Bank.
5. The projects also contributes to the achievement of one of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, to "halve by 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and, in particular, sanitation."

This project is a good start to addressing the problems of waste water management in the West Bank but there is much to be done. There are only around 35 per cent of Palestinian homes connected to functional sewage collections systems. This should be a major concern to everyone.

We look forward to continuing to support the PWA in their efforts to manage Palestinian water resources.

I would like to thank the PWA and the Ministry of Local Government for their hard work on this project and the Government of Japan for their generous support. I would also like to thank the municipalities of Habla, Bartaa Sharqieh Baqa Sharqieh, the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities and the Municipal Alliance for Peace for their assistance in fostering relations between Palestinian and Israeli communities. Finally I would like to thank everyone else who has contributed to getting this project this far. I look forward to its successful completion.