

occupied Palestinian territory: The Government of Japan, Palestinian Water Authority and UNDP/PAPP sign a 6.2 million dollar agreement to manage wastewater in the oPt

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Ramallah, March 16th, 2009 - The Government of Japan, in partnership with the Palestinian Water Authority and the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People signed a US\$6.2 million agreement on Monday, 16th March 2009, to launch the cross boundary wastewater management project in the occupied Palestinian territory. Mr. Kondo, Head of the Japan Representative Office, Mr. Ahmad Hindi, Director General of Water Council, and Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator attended the ceremony.

The purpose of the project is to contribute to peace building between Palestinian and Israeli Authorities through joint management of wastewater in order to safeguard the shared environment and protect water resources. The project will include the construction of three wastewater collection systems in the Jenin, Tulkarem and Qalqyia Governorates, in addition to building the capacities of the service providers and the Palestinian Water Authority regarding waste management issues.

"Through this collaboration of efforts, both sides could create mutual understanding for dealing with the shortage of water resources and ensuring the consumption of safe and clean water for the people who stand to benefit from this project." Mr. Kondo, Head of the Japan Representative Office.

This project aims to enhance the quality of life and improve the wellbeing of over 16,500 Palestinians, who will for the first time have an efficient wastewater collection system connected to their homes. It will also bring new jobs to the Qalqyia, Jenin, and Tulkarem areas and create a platform for cross boundary cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli municipalities on environmental problems.

Noting the long-standing relationship between UNDP/PAPP and the Japanese Government, the Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP, Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen stated "This project is a clear manifestation of how cooperation and coordination at the local and international level can bring about change". "This project will not only improve waste water management but it will contribute 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" he added.

"The Palestinian Water Authority has put in place with the Israeli Authorities a coordination mechanism where the wastewater generated by these three governorates is treated by Israeli water systems inside the Green Line and are following up on it with the Joint Water Committee". Said Mr. Ahmad Al Hindi, Director General of Water Council.

It is worth noting that approximately 35% of the population of the West Bank has access to wastewater network collection systems and there are only three treatment plants located in the Ramallah, Jenin, and Tulkarem districts. Due to old existing collection systems, sewage leakage reaches up to 50% in the areas of Tulkarem and Qalqyia. Poor wastewater management and lack of infrastructure development are one of the leading causes for environmental pollution and degradation of natural resources in the oPt.

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