



UNRWA

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITALY DOUBLES ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY

Jerusalem, 23 October, 2007: The Government of Italy has announced it will double its contribution to UNRWA, bringing to ten million euros its assistance to the Agency in 2008. The funds will support UNRWA's regular programmes, with a special emphasis on health projects. They will also be used to strengthen the Agency's internal management reform process, which improves the quality of services the UN Agency delivers.

The announcement comes in advance of the visit to Jerusalem and the West Bank of the Italian Deputy Foreign Minister, Ms. Patrizia Sentinelli, from October 22-24. While in the region, she will visit a refugee camp and see first hand the essential work carried out by UNRWA, which serves some four and a half million Palestine refugees.

"We are grateful to the people and government of Italy for this generous contribution," said UNRWA Commissioner General, Karen AbuZayd. "An investment in UNRWA is an investment in people, an investment in the next generation. Every day, we bring education to half a million Palestine refugee children. In addition, our micro-finance projects offer Palestine refugees self sufficiency and an exit from poverty. At a time when there is some momentum in the diplomatic process, an investment in UNRWA represents an investment in peace. By making Palestinians better educated, healthier and more self sufficient, UNRWA provides humanitarian space in which peace can take hold."

Deputy Commissioner General, Filippo Grandi added, "With the doubling of the Italian contribution in 2008, Italy will rank among UNRWA's top donors. We are also particularly grateful to the Italian government because these funds are being made available to UNRWA very early in our budget cycle. This is crucial because it helps us plan our activities in a timely and effective manner. And most importantly, at a time of increasing need this contribution sends a powerful signal of support from Italy to the Palestine refugees that we serve."

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