

A major United Nations inter-agency in Jerusalem today set the stage for an emergency \$300 million appeal next week for the humanitarian catastrophe in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The meeting, hosted by Terje Roed-Larsen, the Secretary-General's Middle East Envoy, introduced a UN report that recommends strategies for immediately addressing the expanding crisis among Palestinians, who are suffering unprecedented poverty and unemployment rates.

The conference was attended by 15 UN agencies, key donor countries, and major international NGOs. In addition, envoys from the Quartet (the diplomatic group that includes the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the UN) participated the day after a crucial diplomatic meeting to refine a comprehensive roadmap for Middle East peace, due to be completed next month. Mr. Roed-Larsen warned that the current international attempts to help the Palestinian population have had little impact on the spiraling crisis. "There have been inputs, but no impact. In short, the patient is dying," said Mr. Roed-Larsen.

A key concern of the participants is that while the meeting centred on humanitarian aid, such assistance is not the answer to the deepening crisis. They stressed that the crisis is fundamentally political and will continue to worsen unless political decisions are taken to lift closures, curfews and other restrictions on the civilian population. "Humanitarian aid has an important part to play in alleviating suffering, but there should be no illusions about the limits that even the most generous assistance can achieve in the current environment," said Mr. Ross Mountain, UN's Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator, who headed the delegation that prepared the report.

The \$300 million humanitarian appeal for 2003, to be launched by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette 19 November in Bern, Switzerland, is for emergency funds in addition to current UN expenditures on development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The money will be directed toward critical needs of the civilian population, including food and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, emergency employment and income generation, and psycho-social counseling.

Jerusalem, November 12, 2002.