
UN humanitarian envoy wraps up Middle East visit

19 August – Catherine Bertini, the Personal Humanitarian Envoy of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, wrapped up her trip to the Middle East today, visiting with shopkeepers in Bethlehem whose businesses have been affected by the closures.

On her last day in the region, Ms. Bertini also visited stores involved in a pilot project run by the International Committee for the Red Cross, which provides monthly vouchers for some 30,000 needy Palestinian families, a UN spokesman said in New York. The vouchers, valued at \$90 each, can be redeemed for essential food and non-food items.

Yesterday, Ms. Bertini met separately with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer. According to a UN spokesman, during those meetings she discussed the humanitarian plight of the Palestinians and practical steps that could be taken to alleviate that situation.

On Saturday, the UN envoy and her team travelled to Nablus, in the northern West Bank, to visit additional Palestinian humanitarian projects.