

**Remarks by Humanitarian Coordinator**

**James W. Rawley, on the occasion of the opening of workshop “Palestine International Assistance Awareness Workshop”**

**Ramallah, 17 June 2013**

Sabah el kheir!

Brigadier Mohammed Issa

Representatives from the Ministries

Representatives of the donor countries and organizations, including Red Crescent and Red Cross Movement committed to the preparedness agenda

Colleagues from the HCT and from OCHA Geneva, Cairo and MSB (Swedish Civil Contingency Agencies)

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to start by paying tribute to the Palestinian Civil Defense and its more than 14 years of service to the Palestinian people. Its 1000 dedicated people are at the front line of response when a disaster or an emergency affects the communities of Palestine. We met also in Ramallah few months ago at the occasion of the visit of the SRSG on DRR, Margareta Walstrom, to launch a Disaster Losses Database to be host by the Palestinian Civil Defense.

This workshop represents another important step toward achieving better preparedness and I want to acknowledge the initiative by OCHA and its partners (MSB) in supporting the effort of the Palestinian authorities to continue furthering the Hyogo Framework agenda.

In Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), strengthening preparedness for response at all levels, the HFA highlighted the essential role that disaster preparedness can play in saving lives and livelihoods particularly when integrated into an overall disaster risk reduction approach. The High Council of Civil Defence and the Palestinian Civil Defense as its coordinator play a critical role in achieving this priority. For its part, the international community, NGOs, the Red Crescent and Red Cross Movement and particularly the United Nations, play a key complementary role to national actors in strengthening disaster preparedness.

In recent years, global trends have highlighted the need for a greater emphasis on prevention and preparedness, and Member State resolutions have repeatedly called for increased UN capacity-building to support governments in emergency preparedness and response. It covers the essential measures needed to ensure sound and effective risk analysis, contingency planning, information management, resource mobilization coordination mechanisms and structures, and institutional and legislative frameworks.

There are a group of UN agencies in Palestine collaborating to support relevant Palestinian entities. To that end, a DRR Working Group was established in August 2012 with the

participation of UNDP, OCHA, UNOPS, WFP, UNWRA, UNICEF and FAO, which, given its importance, I am chairing. There is also an incipient, but interesting work, of some INGOs and the IFRC in promoting DRR approaches at the community level with an aim to work towards building resilience and reducing risks. DRR is included in our new UNDAF and preparedness (referred to contingency planning) is a key area of work of the HCT.

The experience of the storm earlier this year was a good test that highlighted both the strengths and the challenges that the system faces to reduce risks, mitigate vulnerabilities and respond when the disaster strikes.

Some of the issues that we need to continue working on to push forward the DRR agenda, which are really key to the preparedness portfolio are:

- Strengthened coordination and information between the national and the international system of response; and in particular, a stronger coordinated approach in terms of defining roles and responsibilities, information gathering and sharing, reducing disaster risk and coordinating the provision of humanitarian response.
- Better use of the international capacities: There is need to enhance collaboration among the national players to develop a national coordination mechanism to fully leverage the humanitarian community's capacities.
- A systematic approach with the Government of Israel to facilitate access – in case of natural calamities - to all areas in oPt including areas behind the Wall, East Jerusalem and connecting West Bank with Gaza Strip.
- Provide greater support to communities and local governments to face the challenges associated with disaster risk reduction and response, to enhance resilience to cope with these types of natural events.

I believe that this workshop is a great opportunity to further discussions in those areas. As the HC I stand ready to support your efforts in this regard.

Shukran.