



Press Release
**Humanitarian Situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate
six months after Israeli redeployment**

Jerusalem, 4 May 2006 – A group of 36 international aid agencies working in the Palestinian territories held a press conference today to warn against the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza six months after the Israeli redeployment.

They stated that the administrative, management and coordination responsibilities of public sector institutions cannot be replaced by non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and the United Nations. The participants also sent recommendations to the donor community to continue to provide essential humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people.

In addition, the group recommended that Israel and the Palestinian Authority uphold the *Agreement on Movement and Access* signed in November 2005 to ease the movement of people and goods through the main crossing points. They urged both sides to respect international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Jan Coffey, Save the Children UK Programme Manager, said: “The situation in Gaza is very bleak with 78% of the population living under the poverty line of less than US\$ 2.1 per person per day, and 10% of children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition.”

She cited the World Bank and UN agency reports, which identify the Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods, the withholding of tax revenues, and the cutting of aid to public sector as the reasons why the situation is declining so rapidly especially after Israeli redeployment and may deteriorate even further if current and additional humanitarian and development activities are jeopardized.

David Shearer, Head of the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) pointed out that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated and is likely to worsen substantially if the PA salaries are not paid.

He said: “All the international aid agencies put together will not be able to replace the services that the Palestinian Authority provides to the people in the Gaza Strip.”

Both speakers stressed that the need for humanitarian assistance would be greatly reduced if economic activity were revived through the lifting of the restrictions on the movement of people and goods.