



**Statement by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry, on UN Day in Gaza**

**Gaza, 24 October 2012**

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry, marked the annual United Nations Day, celebrated on 24 October around the world, by a visit to the UN Gaza office and an UNRWA project in Gaza.

"I am here to mark the United Nations Day with staff and beneficiaries. During my visit, there was another escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza, which I deeply deplore. I call on all parties to show maximum restraint and return to the calm", Mr. Serry said.

"I am concerned that with recurrent violence, as illustrated today, continued closures, and the persistent Palestinian divide, we will lose the race against time to preserve Gaza as a liveable place", Mr. Serry said.

Mr. Serry added that people in Gaza and in the West Bank expected their leaders to take tangible steps towards Palestinian reconciliation, and that the United Nations would continue to work with all parties to build confidence and find practical measures for the way forward.

The recent UN report "Gaza in 2020" highlights some of the dramatic challenges that face Gaza as the population is expected to grow by half a million people by 2020.

Mr. Serry stressed the vital role of the United Nations in Gaza, including in addressing chronic shortages of housing, education, water and sanitation and health facilities. He confirmed that the UN and its partners are implementing an estimated US\$1 billion of humanitarian assistance and development programming, including an estimated US\$ 400 million of reconstruction work.

Mr. Serry also visited the Rehabilitation Center for Visually Impaired in Gaza, run by UNRWA since 1962. "I met with many of the children and saw firsthand how the programme is making a meaningful difference in the lives of some of Gaza's most vulnerable. Gaza must remain a priority", Mr. Serry concluded.