Joint Press Release
Funded by the Government of Japan
UNDP Concludes Female Ping Pong and Volleyball Tournaments in Gaza

Gaza, 26 October 2017- Aiming at empowering youth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan, in partnership with the Palestinian Olympic Committee, celebrated the end of the Female Ping Pong and Volleyball tournaments in Gaza. Both female tournaments were organized as part of the Tamkeen- Emergency Response to Palestinian Youth through Sport Initiative project, funded by the Government of Japan for the amount of USD 386,000. Around 5000 male and female youth participated in Tamkeen’s various sport activities.

H.E. Takeshi Okubo, Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to Palestine, stressed the importance of Japan’s support for the young women and men in Palestine, saying: “We are gathered here today to witness and celebrate another achievement for the young Gazan women, “Female Ping Pong and Volleyball tournaments”, which is funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNDP to support the youth and sports in Gaza”. And he added: “Both female tournaments grew out of our strong belief in the importance of empowering women in the Palestinian society, especially in light of the positive national reconciliation climate in Palestine”.

The participation of 90 females in the volleyball tournament, and another 48 in the Ping Pong tournament, has enhanced female participation in sport activities in Palestinian universities. Female students, aging between 18 – 23, participated in the two tournaments over three days of competition at Al Aqsa University in Khan Younis. The participants represented six universities across all Gaza governorates.

During the ceremony, Dr Assaad Al Majdlawi, Deputy Head of the Palestinian Olympic Committee thanked the Government of Japan for supporting the sports sector especially for females in Gaza. “The event today marks a special day in the history of women sports. It comes as we believe of the necessity of female participation in sports and we hope the activities of the Tokyo league will go on next year, prioritizing the importance of renovation and rehabilitation of female sport halls,” he added.

The final game for the Ping Pong tournament hosted Al Azhar University and the Islamic University teams as finalists, with 16 students competing; Al Azhar University team was crowned as the champion. As for the volleyball tournament, 30 students participated in the final game representing Al Aqsa University and the University College of Applied Sciences teams, with Al Aqsa team winning the final match and being crowned as well. Female players who participated in the different tournaments proved their determination and physical fitness, especially with the limited number of tournaments conducted for female players in Gaza.
Basil Nasser, Head of UNDP office in Gaza said that he was extremely happy to see the young faces of girls playing sports, especially under the difficult situation in the Gaza Strip. “We thank the Government of Japan for their support. Without it, the teams would not have had the opportunity to practice sports, which is one of their basic rights. I also call on everyone here to continue working to give more opportunities for women,” he added.

It is worth noting that the Government of Japan is considered one of UNDP’s strongest partners. The Government of Japan has provided more than USD 344 million to UNDP/PAPP since 1993 for project implementation in the areas of infrastructure, rubble removal, health, education, agriculture, access to justice, and others. The Government of Japan has been providing over USD 1.8 billion worth of assistance to Palestine since 1993, contributing to improving the lives of the Palestinian people.

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