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Drinking Water in Gaza and rule of law: EU supports the PA in two focal sectors of intervention

The European Union (EU) announced today its latest contribution in two major sectors of support to the Palestinian Authority (PA): the sustainable management of natural resources and the rule of law. Namely, it launched a €10 million water desalination facility project in the Gaza Strip and the establishment of the Diploma Programme of the Palestinian Judicial Institute.

The Acting EU Representative signed today a Memorandum of Understanding with the Head of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) as well as representatives of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) and UNICEF to note the agreement for the Short Term-Low Volume Desalination facility that will be constructed in the Gaza Strip over the coming three years. As identified in the Study of comparative options for water resources (June 2011), this medium-term intervention responds to the humanitarian water crisis in Gaza and once completed it will provide safe water for drinking and domestic use to about 75,000 inhabitants in Khan Younis and Rafah Governorates in the Strip.

"I am very pleased to be signing today an agreement with the Palestinian Authority to launch an infrastructure project in Gaza. As the EU has reiterated in the past, the continued policy of closure in Gaza has damaged the natural environment, notably water and other natural resources. I hope that this intervention can bring real change for some Palestinians living under unsustainable conditions in the Strip", said the Acting EU Representative, Mr. John Gatt-Rutter. *"I want to thank the PWA and the CMWU for their cooperation and commitment in making this project a quality one and in securing that the operation and maintenance of the plant will be sustainable. I also want to thank UNICEF for its important role in making the implementation of our support possible in Gaza",* he added.

Today the EU also marked the onset of a two-year project establishing the first Diploma for Judicial Studies in the Palestinian Judicial system. Through a €1,5 million grant the EU supports the Palestinian Judicial Institute in carrying out all preparatory work towards an initial training programme for future judges and prosecutors. The project will also upgrade the available training resources by setting-up an Information Resource Centre with a specialised library to provide support to both trainers and trainees.

In the launch ceremony today the Acting EU Representative thanked the Palestinian Judicial Institute and all main institutions of the Justice sector – Ministry of Justice, High Judicial Council and Office of the Attorney General - for their support to this project and for continuing to address the education needs of the judicial system; enhancing this way the judicial institutions of the future Palestinian state with competent, effective and professional judges and prosecutors.

Background:

Since 2011, the European Union in agreement with the Palestinian Authority directed its support to three focal sectors: sustainable management of natural resources, the rule of law and the development of the private-sector.

In the water sector the EU supports the PA in improving water supply, sewage connection and wastewater treatment across the West Bank and Gaza. Over the last

few years, the EU has given Tulkarem and Jenin governorates €1.3 million for infrastructural developments to ease water supply constraints, €2 million for water networks in Hebron governorate and is now preparing a waste water treatment plant worth €18 million to be implemented in Tubas until 2015. In Gaza, the EU – inter alia – contributes with €6million to the emergency sewage treatment developed in northern Gaza and €3.5 million for water sanitation in Rafah and Deir Al Balah governorates. On the policy level, the EU is supporting the PA in its institutional reform of the water sector and is fostering cooperation between water management authorities in Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

The EU supports a number of important interventions to improve the Palestinian rule of law and especially the capacity of its judicial institutions. The support ranges from contributing to the infrastructure such as the building of Courthouses, the Headquarters of the Palestinian Judicial Institute and Palestinian Bar Association to supporting specific programs of the Palestinian Authority. These include Legal Aid and Juvenile Justice Programs, capacity building and training programs such as the Seyada Program as well as the provision of specific expertise within institutions.

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