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3.5 million Euros from the European Union to fund infrastructure projects in Area C

The Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and the Director for South Neighbourhood at the European Commission Michael Köhler together with the EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter signed today in Ramallah a new financing agreement of €3.5 million to support Palestinians access to essential social and public infrastructure in Area C of the West Bank. This programme will be implemented by the Municipal Development and Lending Foundation (MDLF) and will benefit Palestinian communities across Area C in the West Bank.

The new programme *Access to Essential Social and Public Infrastructure* is complementing the EU's 2012 €7 million programme *Land Development and Access to Basic Infrastructure in Area C*. It aims at implementing essential public and social infrastructure projects identified and prioritized by the Palestinian communities in Area C during a participatory bottom-up planning process supported by the EU since 2012.

Speaking at the event, the Director for South Neighbourhood at the European Commission Michael Köhler said: "As we sign this new agreement, the European Union ensures the Palestinian people of its solid commitment to support the Palestinian government in various sectors toward building a future Palestinian state. Through this funding we are targeting Area C where the Palestinian Authority is facing serious limitations in promoting social and economic development of Palestinian communities there. We are aware that our support to Area C is relatively small, but it is just a beginning. More funds will be dedicated to it in the future. And we also hope, and have reasons to be optimistic in this regard, that more EU Member States will follow our approach."

From his side, the European Union Representative John Gatt-Rutter added: "Area C remains an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory and comprises crucial natural resources and land for a viable Palestinian State. Without this area, the two state solution –that we have invested in for years- will be impossible. We call again upon Israel to meet its obligations regarding the living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C, including by accelerated approval of Palestinian master plans, halting forced transfer of population and demolition of Palestinian housing and infrastructure, simplifying administrative procedures to obtain building permits, ensuring access to water and addressing humanitarian needs. Meanwhile we will continue to provide financial assistance for Palestinian development in Area C and expect such investment to be protected for future use. This support will be led by the

Palestinian Authority as it continues its efforts to bring better services for the Palestinian population there and enhance socio-economic development. ”

The EU has been supporting 36 communities in Area C in their planning exercise and this programme foresees the construction of small-scale infrastructure projects in some of those communities with a total budget of €3,5 million. The programme will be implemented by the Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF).

All infrastructure projects will be located within the boundaries of outline plans that were developed by the Palestinian communities in Area C and submitted to the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA). The selection of the infrastructural projects is based on the action plans and priority lists developed by the communities and is done jointly by the EU and the Palestinian Ministry of Local Governance (MoLG)

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