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**For immediate release**

**11 June 2010**

**Bethlehem**

**EU-funded project brings together Palestinian judges and prosecutors in an unprecedented conference in Bethlehem**

An unprecedented conference began in Bethlehem today, bringing together judges and prosecutors with the aim of achieving practical solutions to the backlog of criminal cases before the courts – one of the major challenges facing the judicial system in the occupied Palestinian territory. The two-day conference for judges and public prosecutors on Criminal Case Management is being organized by the EU-funded **Seyada II project for Empowering the Palestinian Judicial System** and held under the auspices of Chief Justice Farid Jallad and Attorney General Ahmad AlMughani.

Expressing his appreciation for the EU and the Seyada II project, the Chief Justice highlighted the importance of this conference: *“The improvement of the case management system is one of our priorities. The Palestinian court records show clear achievements in closing down cases in the first four months of 2010. Despite this good news, a lot of work still needs to be done. Hopefully this conference will contribute to our efforts to improve handling penal cases within courts.”* From his side, the Attorney General emphasised the importance of such meetings between judges and prosecutors, and hoped the conference would result in a set of practical recommendations to develop a more efficient case flow and management of criminal cases.

*“Judges and prosecutors perform a central role in the judiciary with the highest level of responsibility and commitment with human rights and fundamental freedoms,”* said the Representative of the European Union Mr. Christian Berger. *“However, justice, fairness and proper proceedings cannot be achieved without the necessary tools. One is that courts need to*





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*be equipped with an efficient case management system. Your conference is an opportunity to discuss common concerns and try to further improve a swift and fair trail,” he explained, adding: “We will continue our support for a strong, transparent, and effective Palestinian judicial system that is one of the main pillars for the future Palestinian state.”*

Dr Feras Milhem of the Seyada II project stated that *“One of the activities of Seyada project is to support the improvements of the case management system. Together with the High Judicial Council and the Office of the Attorney General, Seyada will work on the implementation of the recommendations.”*

This conference is part of the activities of the EU-funded Seyada II project for Empowering the Palestinian Judicial System, which aims to contribute to a more independent, impartial, efficient, transparent and modern justice system. The implementing partners include ICON Institute Public Sector GmbH of Germany, the Belgian Technical Cooperation, and the Centre for International Legal Cooperation. The project started in August 2009 and lasts until August 2012.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Seyada II project activities

- Seyada II is supporting the **High Judicial Council**. This includes the Council's Inspection Office, which has overall responsibility for quality control, evaluating judges' work, and ensuring that the law and procedures are properly applied, and that judgments are properly executed. Seyada II is assisting the Council's Technical Office to facilitate access to information and legal resources for judges and the legal community. The project also supports the work of the Council's Media Department, and trains Court of Cassation judges concerning the preparation of judgments. Seyada II will help establish legal libraries throughout the West Bank, and help procure IT equipment required by the justice sector.
- Seyada II is assisting the **Palestinian Judicial Institute** to improve legal professionalism through initial and continuing professional training programmes, such as a judicial training system for judges and public prosecutors, the development of a two-year Judicial Studies Diploma Programme for future judges, training of trainers, and professional education for judicial staff.
- Seyada II is the first international donor-sponsored initiative to support the **Palestinian Bar Association**, through institutional and capacity building, and initial and continuing professional training for lawyers.
- Seyada II is helping design and develop a systematic and sustainable legal aid system in Palestine, through work with all key justice sector institutions working in this area.
- Seyada II aims to improve **Constitutional Review** by the High Court to help ensure the compatibility of laws and regulations with the Palestinian Basic Law. The project will review legislation, train judges in constitutional issues, and work to develop judges' knowledge and skills in judicial review.

### European Union activities supporting the Rule of Law in Palestine

The EU supports a number of important initiatives to improve Palestinian rule of law, investing more than €40 million in such programmes. Current programmes include:

- New Nablus Muqata complex, providing central infrastructure for the security services and detention facilities complying with international standards (€15 million).
- Construction of the Jenin Muqata (€8.5million).
- The EU is the single largest single donor to the Jericho Police Training Centre.
- The EU works closely with many local civil society organizations on rule of law projects.
- The EU will shortly deploy a team of experts in civil justice to work alongside EUPOL COPPS, which focuses on criminal justice.

END

