



Press release
For immediate release
Wednesday 30 March 2011

European Union and Palestinian Authority Sub-Committee Meeting on Human Rights, Good Governance and Rule of Law

Officials from the EU and the Palestinian Authority are meeting in Bethlehem today and tomorrow for their regular annual dialogue on human rights, good governance and the rule of law in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The third round of the EU-Palestinian human rights dialogue concludes on Thursday with a consultative forum in which civil society will be informed about the discussions and comment on progress made.

The Sub-Committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Justice, Mr Khalil Karaja Al-Rifai and Mr Ilkka Uusitalo, Head of the Middle East Division in the European External Action Service in Brussels. The meeting provided for a review of progress in regards to the Human Rights, Good Governance and Rule of Law situation measured against the jointly formulated priorities under the EU-PA ENP Action Plan. The dialogue was held in a frank and open atmosphere, with a productive exchange on issues of mutual interest and concern.

The human rights situation in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, equal opportunities for women, children's rights, freedom of the press, unlawful arrests and conditions in Palestinian detention centres were among the concerns addressed. The PA's progress in strengthening the rule of law through judiciary and security sector reforms was equally discussed. The EU commended the PA for maintaining the moratorium on the death penalty and called upon the PA to completely abolish it in the process of adopting a new penal code. The PA noted its measures to prohibit torture and to end the practice of trying civilians in front of military courts. The EU welcomed the development and insisted on the need to effectively implement them. Concrete follow-up has been agreed to address these concerns ahead of the next subcommittee meeting.

Christian Berger, the Representative of the European Union, in his opening remark commended the Palestinian Authority for its determination to respect human rights, enforce rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and underlined the importance of vigorously dealing with human rights violations: *"Prime Minister Fayyad has made enormous progress in preparing the Palestinian Authority for statehood based on the rule of law and in the spirit of good governance, even under the current difficult political environment. The EU is working in close partnership with the Palestinian Authority to assist its efforts in the field of human rights, good governance and the rule of law on the basis of jointly agreed objectives. This is a crucial part of our support to the Palestinian Authority in their endeavours to build the institutions of a future state."*

The PA has called for continuing the EU support to the PA policies intended to uphold human rights and good governance, especially in light of the draft penal code that is being currently developed. The draft legislation incorporates international human rights standards relating to children, women, abolishment of death penalty and protection of rights and freedoms, paving the way for September 2011.

The PA has reiterated its full commitment to the full implementation of the Goldstone Commission report recommendations. Furthermore, it has called on the EU to engage in the UN General

Assembly on the Goldstone report following the resolution adopted at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 25th March.

The PA also raised human rights issues affecting the lives of Palestinians, especially the lack of legal status of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, the impact of border closure in Gaza and restricted movement in the West Bank and the effect of settler violence.

Background:

The human rights dialogue with the Palestinian Authority takes place in the context of the ENP and the EU – PA Joint Action Plan. A new Joint Action Plan for the duration of three to five years is currently under preparation and due for endorsement in 2011. The third round of the human rights dialogue with the PA was preceded by consultations between the EU, the PA and civil society organisations.

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