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EU launches mapping study on Civil Society Organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory

Yesterday in the Red Crescent Society Halls in Ramallah, the EU released its study on Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of CSOs in the oPt, including their capacity-building needs and recommendations for possible intervention areas to be supported by forthcoming cooperation programmes.

The launch was attended by representatives of the donor community and local organizations. In the opening speech, Ms Fabienne Besson, Head of the Social Affairs section of the EU Representative's Office said: *"This study does not only map the civil society in the oPt but also puts the civil society on the map for its critical impact at all levels of society and in a wide range of sectors."*

A presentation highlighting the main findings and recommendations was given by Mr. Jamal Atamneh, the Civil Society Expert of SOGES. Mr. Atamneh noted that the civil society organisations in the oPt appear to be a wide and vibrant set of actors, managing a large variety of activities (over 90% of social services in the oPt are managed by CSOs). CSOs appear to work in all sectors, maintain the most precious of Palestinian human resources and hold an important reservoir of information and knowledge, constituting a main bridge between the oPt and the rest of the world.

Nonetheless, there are a number of concerns and issues that CSOs in the oPt have to face which include – inter alia - : an unclear relation with the political field, the permanent condition of insecurity and emergency due to the political situation, the exclusive focus on service delivery, the lack of a common voice of Palestinian civil society and the lack of recognition of civil society out of the NGOs.

Background:

The study was completed in June 2011 and a total of 262 CSOs (including Community Based Organizations, NGOs, Charitable Societies, coalitions and platforms) were consulted so as to have an adequate representation of the dynamics and processes characterising Palestinian civil society at the national and local levels. The overall objective of the study is to strengthen the position of civil society in public debate and to further the implementation of development strategies, complementing the Palestinian Authority's strategy and actions. The study reflects some specific issues that emerge when dealing with East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

The study in both English and Arabic is available following link:

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/westbank/projects/overview/index_en.htm

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