



Press Release  
PR/29/2012  
Jerusalem

12 DECEMBER 2012

## **EU – PLO Joint Committee takes place in Ramallah: Taking stock of achievements; moving ahead with New Joint Action Plan**

**The Palestinian Authority (PA) and the European Union (EU) convened today in Ramallah for their annual Joint Committee session in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). At the meeting, the PA and the EU reviewed progress in bilateral relations over the past year and discussed plans afoot following the conclusions of negotiation of the new Joint Action Plan, which will guide the EU – PA relations for the next five years.**

Under the chairmanship of Mazen Jadallah, Advisor to Prime Minister Salam Fayyad on Institutions Performance Affairs, and Christian Berger, Director for North Africa and Middle East in the European External Action Service, around 30 officials from PA ministries and the European Union convened to exchange their views on all key political, economic and development sectors. This is the eighth time representatives from the two sides meet as part of this high-level policy meeting. This is also the first time the Joint Committee will take stock of the work done during the year on our expanded group of six separate policy dialogue forums on issues ranging from human rights to trade.

The EU Representative, John Gatt-Rutter, said at the opening of the session: *"During the past year we have had in-depth policy dialogue across a wide variety of sectors. The span of the topics covered today demonstrates that our bilateral partnership with the Palestinian Authority is both ambitious and comprehensive. This is the case because the PA itself has set the bar very high and has demonstrated its ability to be a full partner for the EU within our Neighbourhood Policy. We have of course very important steps coming up. The new EU PA Action Plan has been finalized and will become the guiding document of our bilateral relations from now on. The PA is the first partner in the Neighbourhood with whom we have concluded a new Action Plan. The real challenge will thus be to move ahead with our mutual commitments despite the difficult political and financial situation that the PA is in. The hard work must and will continue in the spirit of trust and openness, which guided all our discussions today".*

The successful holding of this Joint Committee and the increased PA ownership of the ENP process is testament to the strengthened institutional capacity of the PA. The EU has been instrumental in supporting the Palestinians in their state-building efforts. These efforts will continue following the Palestinian enhanced non-member observer State status at the United Nations.

### **Background:**

The Joint Committee is currently the highest level body bringing together officials from the EU and the PA. It takes place on an annual basis in Brussels and Ramallah in the context of the ENP and the EU – PA Joint Action Plan. The negotiations for the new Joint Action Plan have been finalised and the plan will guide bilateral relations for the next five years. The EU – PLO joint committee reviews the work done by a total of six policy dialogue forums, known as subcommittees, which cover – inter alia - : human rights, good governance, rule of law, trade, internal market, agriculture, education, culture, social affairs, energy and water issues.

#### **Contact:**

**The Office of the European Union Representative:**

Antonia Zafeiri, Tel: 02 5415 859, Mob: 0548 024 915; Shadi Othman, Mob: 0599 673 958

<http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/westbank/>