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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3rd Annual East Jerusalem Hospitals Conference "Maintaining Our Existence"

The East Jerusalem Hospitals Network (EJHN) is holding its third annual conference on January 29, 2014 in Jerusalem. The aim of the conference is to serve as a forum for Palestinian healthcare leaders to present and discuss key issues facing the hospitals in East Jerusalem. Areas of focus include financial sustainability in Jerusalem, protection of Palestinian society in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem as a vital part of Palestine.

The conference is organized by WHO and the EJHN as part of the EU-funded project "East Jerusalem Hospitals: Network for Quality". Participants include leaders from the local and international community, and staff from the East Jerusalem hospitals, as well as staff from the hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza. Mr. Abdel Qader Hussein, chair of the EJHN, will open the conference. Other keynote speakers include H.E. Dr. Jawad Awad, Minister of Health, H.E. Adnan Hussein, Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, and Ms. Lamees Al Alami, former minister of education. Hospital leaders will present on a variety of topics including referrals to East Jerusalem Hospitals and the financial situation within the Palestinian Authority, social issues within the Palestinian community in Jerusalem including drug utilization, access to secondary and tertiary health care services, and inclusive education models.

"The East Jerusalem Hospitals face endemic cash flow problems which put in jeopardy their operations. The EU was among the donors who responded in 2012 and 2013 with a generous contribution through its PEGASE direct financial support instrument. This mechanism is available free of charge to all other donors wanting to provide financial support to the East Jerusalem Hospitals. Our response reflects the great importance we place on the services provided by the East Jerusalem Hospitals to all Palestinian people, including from Gaza and the West Bank. The hospitals are an integral part of the Palestinian healthcare system providing specialized services that cannot be found elsewhere. I want to pay tribute to the medical and support staff that provide quality service in the hospitals despite the many challenges they face. It's increasingly important that all members of the Network continue working closely together to ensure an increasingly effective and efficient delivery of services to Palestinians", said the EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter.

The EJHN was established in 1997 under the leadership and guidance of the late Feisal Hussein, with the aim of unifying the health facilities in East Jerusalem and emphasizing

their critical role within the Palestinian health system. Their work has focused on developing its institutions, improving the quality of the services provided and assuring a continuum of care.

The EJHN includes six facilities: Princess Basma Rehabilitation Center, August Victoria Hospital, Maqassed Hospital, St. John Eye Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society Hospital. The East Jerusalem Hospitals serve as the main centers for specialized care within the Palestinian health system. Patients needing services and procedures that are not available in the West Bank and Gaza are referred for treatment in the EJHN facilities by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Over half of the EJHN workload comes from referred patients from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As such, the EJHN plays a critical role in providing health services to the Palestinian people.

The EJHN and its six facilities have been supported by the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO) for the last several years. Through the latest phase of this programme (2010-2014) the EU provided EUR2,4 million which allowed the hospitals to improve the quality of their health services, upgrade their status to the highest international standards (ISO certification and most recently, Joint Commission International¹ accreditation) and engage in joint initiatives and activities (e.g.: risk management, legal representation).

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¹ The JCI is a US based organization that has established patient safety and quality service standards and goals for health service facilities