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Press release

The Government of Italy announces a €1.0 million contribution to support East Jerusalem Hospitals

The Italian Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Honourable Lapo Pistelli announced today, in a meeting with the representatives of the six East Jerusalem Hospitals (Makassed Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), St. John Eye Hospital, Augusta Victoria Hospital, Jerusalem Princess Basma Center for Disabled Children) Italy's intention to respond with a contribution of €1.0 to the cashflow problems of these hospitals.

The announcement took place in the presence of Hugues Mingarelli, Managing Director for North Africa, Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq of the European External Action Service (EEAS), EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter and the Consul General of Italy Davide La Cecilia.

"Italy has a long history of cooperation with the Palestinian population in the health sector and our country has been for many years the lead donor for health in Palestine, and still holds this responsibility among the European Union Member States. Therefore we are strongly committed to providing continuing support for the development of the Palestinian health system" said the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Honourable Lapo Pistelli.

The contribution is part of the Italian commitment to the health sector and will thus help to cover part of outstanding costs of referrals of patients for treatment to East Jerusalem Hospitals by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

With an overall contribution of almost €40 million since 2012, the EU and its Member States have supported referral costs for patients referred for treatment in East Jerusalem Hospitals by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. By addressing this severe debt problem, hospital facilities remained open and medical staff continued working to provide much-needed specialized health services to patients not only from Jerusalem but also from across West Bank and Gaza.

The contribution will be channeled through the ad hoc PEGASE mechanism in close coordination with the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and in line with the jointly agreed upon criteria.

"The objective of the support announced today is to help the Palestinian Authority meet its obligations towards the East Jerusalem Hospitals and ultimately ensure the provision of essential services to the Palestinian people. Hundreds of patients from the West Bank and even Gaza are benefiting from the services provided by the six facilities of the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network. The Network is providing quality specialized health services which are not available elsewhere in Palestine", said the EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter. *"I would like to thank Italy for its generous contribution through the EU's PEGASE mechanism. This demonstrates once again the fruitful cooperation between the EU and its Member States in supporting the Palestinian people".*

Background:

Most of the European Union's assistance to the Palestinian Authority is channelled through PEGASE, the financial mechanism launched in 2008 to support the PA Reform and Development Plan (2008-2010) and the subsequent Palestinian national plans. As well as helping to meet a substantial proportion of its running costs, European funds support major reform and development programmes in key ministries, to help prepare the PA for statehood. Since February 2008, almost €1.8 billion have been disbursed through the PEGASE Direct Financial Support programmes. In addition, the EU has provided assistance to the Palestinian people through UNRWA and a wide range of cooperation projects. The East Jerusalem Hospitals serve as the main centres for specialized care within the Palestinian health system. Patients needing services and procedures that are not available in the West Bank and Gaza – such as specialist oncology, renal care and cardiac surgeries - are referred for treatment in the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network facilities by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. There are six health institutions in East Jerusalem: Augusta Victoria Hospital, Makassed Hospital, St Joseph Hospital, St John Eye Hospital, Palestinian Red Crescent Maternity Hospital and Princess Basma Rehabilitation Centre. The EU is supporting all of these six institutions through a programme with World Health Organization.

^[1] *Mécanisme Palestino-Européen de Gestion de l'Aide Socio-Economique (PEGASE)*

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