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P R E S S R E L E A S E

The EU pledged today more than €450 million euros for reconstructing Gaza

High Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton has announced today the EU's pledge of more than €450 million euros for the reconstruction of Gaza.

During the "Conference on Palestine, Reconstructing Gaza" in Cairo, HR/VP Ashton said "*The only durable solution to the situation in Gaza, which is in everyone's interest, is a political one. Our efforts for Gaza will be successful only if placed in the larger framework of our support to Palestine and our commitment to the peace process*".

The EU is the largest aid contributor to the Palestinians, with substantial support for the benefit of the Gaza population: in the last ten years the EU has spent more than €1.3bn in the Gaza Strip. Following the conflict in Gaza in 2009, the EU pledged €436 million and has delivered €524.40 million.

The EU reaffirmed its readiness to continue and expand its capacity-building efforts to the Palestinian Authority in view of its redeployment in Gaza and to support an effective and secure lifting of the closure through its presence at Gaza crossing points. Furthermore, the EU is also ready to explore ways to support the creation of a land link that would consolidate the political and economic links between the West Bank and Gaza. The EU is also analysing the feasibility of a maritime link which could open Gaza to Europe and allow the people of Gaza to unlock their socio-economic potential.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 584 9780- Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu @EUHighRepSpx
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu @AshtonSpx Maja

Sebastien Brabant +32 460 75 09 98 - Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu

Nabila Massrali +32 460 75 41 75 - Nabila.Massrali@ec.europa.eu

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The EU's ultimate objective remains a two-state solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. Only in this framework will Israelis and Palestinians, both from Gaza and from the West Bank, be able to find new hope and build a better future for them and their children.
