European Commission - Press release

Brussels, 1 March 2016

EU renews its support to Palestinian Authority and Palestinian refugees with a first 2016 assistance package totalling €252.5 million

Today, the European Commission has approved a €252.5 million assistance package supporting the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian refugees. It is the first part of the EU's 2016 annual support package in favour of Palestine[1].

High Representative/ Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**, said: "*The European Union renews its concrete commitment to the Palestinians. Through this package, the EU supports the daily lives of Palestinians in the fields of education and health, protecting the poorest families and also providing the Palestinian refugees across the country with access to essential services. These are tangible steps on the ground that can improve the lives of Palestinian people. But these steps are not enough; Palestinian institutions must continue to grow stronger, become more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. Viable and inclusive institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights, are crucial in view of the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State. Because what we want to achieve is the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State living side by side, in peace and security, with the State of Israel and other neighbours.*"

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, said: *"The EU remains firm in its commitment to Palestinians and actively supports a two-state solution. Our assistance to ensure the functioning of the Palestinian Authority and to support vulnerable Palestinian groups, including Palestinian refugees is a concrete example of this commitment. Let me also thank*

all EU Member States for their continued backing of EU programmes for this troubled region, which have proved effective.''

Within today's package, €170.5 million will be channelled directly to the Palestinian Authority, through the PEGASE mechanism (*Mécanisme Palestino-Européen de Gestion de l'Aide Socio-Economique*). Through these funds the EU will support the Palestinian Authority in delivering health and education services, protecting the poorest families and providing financial assistance to the hospitals in East Jerusalem.

The remaining €82 million will be a contribution to the Programme Budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides essential services for Palestinian refugees across the region. This support aims at offering improved access to essential public services and increased livelihood opportunities to the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees.

A second package of measures in favour of the Palestinians will be announced later in the year.

Background

PEGASE (*Mécanisme Palestino-Européen de Gestion de l'Aide Socio-Economique*) is the mechanism through which the EU helps the Palestinian Authority build the institutions of a future independent Palestinian state. Through the payment of pensions and civil servants' salaries, it ensures that essential public services keep operating. PEGASE also provides social allowances to Palestinian households living in extreme poverty and a contribution to pay the Palestinian Authority's bills due to East Jerusalem hospitals.

UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) provides essential services for Palestine refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The EU is the largest multilateral donor of international assistance to Palestinian refugees. Between 2007 and 2014, the EU contributed over €1 billion to UNRWA, including €809 million to the Programme Budget. In addition, the EU has generously contributed to UNRWA humanitarian emergency appeals and projects in response to various crises and specific needs across the region. EU Member States provide additional crucial support to the Agency. The partnership between the EU and UNRWA has allowed millions of Palestinian refugees to be better educated, live healthier lives, access

employment opportunities and improve their living conditions, thus contributing to the development of the entire region.

Further information on EU assistance to Palestine1:

European Commission:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/palestine/index_en.htm
EU Delegation: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/westbank/index_en.htm
UNRWA: http://www.unrwa.org/

[1] This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

Press contacts:

Maja KOCIJANCIC (+32 2 298 65 70)
Alceo SMERILLI (+ 32 2 296 48 87)
Nabila MASSRALI (+ 32 2 296 92 18)
General public inquiries: Europe Direct by phone 00 800 67 89 10 11 or by email