Education partners and policy makers in Palestine meet in Ramallah at the Education Sector Working Group

Ramallah - On 21 September 2016 the third Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) of the year took place in Ramallah at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). This Working Group brings together all education stakeholders in Palestine such as key officials of the MoEHE and all members of the education community, including local and international civil society and development partners.

His Excellency the **Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Sabri Saidam**, updated the Working Group on recent developments made such as the *curriculum* reform, the new "Tawjihi" system that is being implemented in the West Bank and Gaza and the inclusion of Technical and Vocational Training and Education (TVET) modules in grades from 7th to 9th in 158 schools since the beginning of the school year. The Minister stated that "*We hope to include more schools in the future, but this will happen gradually. The schools need to be equipped and more teachers need to receive the appropriate training*." Furthermore, he also referred to steps leading towards the approval of the new education law, to the situation of Education in East Jerusalem, and to the intention of making pre-school education compulsory. His Excellency expressed his gratitude for all the progress achieved and thanked the "*education family for its continuous support*."

UNESCO, as the technical advisor to the Education Sector Working Group, commended the MoEHE and its commitment towards the implementation of the Agenda 2030 -with the establishment of a National Committee on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4[1]- and for its effective contribution to the preparation of the Government's National Policy Agenda setting out the vision for Palestine over the period 2017-2022. **UNESCO Representative to Palestine, Dr. Lodovico Folin Calabi**, recalled that "*We find ourselves at a crossroads, both in the global development agenda of Education and in the setting of the national vision for Palestine over the next years, with the Government's National Policy Agenda 2017-2022".* He reiterated that *"the Education Sector Working Group is the natural platform for discussing and designing the most updated policies needed for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all Palestinian children and youth".*

Both **UNESCO** and the **Consulate General of Belgium**, in its capacity as Co-Chair of ESWG congratulated the Ministry for the inclusion of Vocational and Technical Education modules in grades from 7th to 9th. **Ms. Florence Duvieusart, Consul and Head of Development Cooperation at the Consulate General of Belgium,** speaking on behalf of the Joint Funding Partners (JFPs) and as co-chair of the Education Sector Working Group, mentioned that the ESWG meeting today is "*an opportunity to commend the revitalization of the Higher Council for TVET. It is a crucial and promising breakthrough in the concerted efforts to upgrade and upscale Vocational education in Palestine. High quality vocational education remains the most important vehicle for reducing youth unemployment and contributing to economic growth*." Furthermore, she briefly highlighted some of the key outcomes from the M&E report such as the low illiteracy rate in Palestine and significant progress obtained both at primary and at secondary level education in terms of providing qualified teachers.

Moreover, the MoEHE presented the Monitoring and Evaluation report from school districts and the indicators from East-Jerusalem schools. The event was closed by updates from the Technical Working Groups on progress made in the past three months.

[1] SDG 4 Goal: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

In preparation of the ESWG, representatives of the Ministry, UNESCO and the main partners in the education sector, had visited on Monday 19 September three different schools in Gaza, implementing TVET programme and inclusive education programmes and located in Access Restricted Area.

The Education Sector Working Group is held every three months to assess and discuss achievements, challenges and ways forward in the education sector, also in a view of a better coordination of international aid cooperation towards the advancement of Education in Palestine. The MoEHE's regular meetings with the donor community are prepared for and coordinated by Dr. Sakeena Elayan, the academic advisor of the Minister of Education and Higher Education.

For more information on this event, please contact: Majd Beltaji, Public Information Officer of the UNESCO Ramallah Office, at m.beltaji@unesco.org

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visit http://www.unesco.org/ramallah