Press release
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EU support to Gaza: Inauguration the first phase of seawater desalination plant and launching the works at Sufa landfill site

The Director for the Neighbourhood South at the European Commission, Michael Köhler, visited today a number of EU-funded projects in Gaza. During his visit, Director Köhler and the Head of the Palestinian Water Authority Mazen Ghuneim inaugurated the first phase of the new desalination plant in Khan Younis that will provide immediately fresh water to 75,000 Palestinians in Gaza. Director Köhler also attended the first digging at Sufa (Al-Fukhari) landfill site. This strategic infrastructure project will benefit almost half of Gaza population and will have major positive environmental implications for the Gaza strip.

The desalination plant in Khan Younis is the largest being built so far in Gaza. The EU invested EUR 10 million in the first phase which will produce immediately 6,000 m3 of potable water daily. This will provide over 75,000 Palestinians with safe drinking water—approximately 35,000 people in Khan Younis and 40,000 people in Rafah, in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. An additional funding of around EUR 10 Million for the second phase of the desalination plant was committed by the EU few months ago. The works for the second phase already started and are expected to be completed by mid-2019. Once the two phases are completed, the plant will produce of a total of 14,000 m3 of safe drinkable water daily to 150,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Another additional 9.7 million dedicated to a third phase will be soon provided by the EU. This brings the total EU-funding to this plant to around 30 million EUR and raises the plant's total daily production of safe drinkable water to 20,000 m3. The construction of the plant is carried out in partnership with UNICEF, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and Gaza's Coastal Municipalities Water Utilities (CMWU). This is one of the strategic projects in Gaza where 95% of the water extracted from the coastal aquifer is not fit for human consumption.

At the inauguration event**, Director Köhler** said: "*It is almost ten years since Gaza was first subjected to closure – a policy which has affected every aspect of life here. We are here to say that Gaza will always be at the top of our agenda in Palestine. Our support covers various sectors from helping to provide clean water to solid waste management, business development, and strengthening of civil society. These projects give hope in the midst of a very bleak reality which has to end. It is a time to bring about a fundamental change to the political, economic and security situation in Gaza including through ending the closure and allowing the Palestinian Authority to resume its full responsibilities in Gaza.*"

Director Köhler, the Consul General of France in Jerusalem Pierre Cochard, Björn Philipp the Program Leader of Infrastructure and Local services at the World Bank, and the Solid Waste Management Project Manager at the Municipal Development and Lending Fund Nour Eddin

al-Madhoun, and the Joint Service Council as the main beneficiary represented by its Executive Director Dr. Ali Barhoum**,** launched at Sufa (Al Fukhari) the civil works contract for the construction of the sanitary landfill for the Southern Gaza. This contract is part of the strategic Gaza Solid Waste Management Project (GSWM) and is funded by the European Union (EU), the French Development Agency (AFD), the World Bank. The project will serve the southern region of Gaza which covers 64% of Gaza Strip's total geographic area and is inhabited by 800,000 people who form 46% of its total population. The landfill contract was awarded in October 2016 to a Consortium of local and international construction companies for an amount of 7.7 million EUR. The landfill will cover in this first phase an area of 235 donums. The construction works, which includes major excavation, lining systems, and leachate collection systems, will be implemented within a 22 months period and responds to the highest international standards.

Director Köhler also visited the Gaza Industrial Estate (GIE), where the EU has allocated EUR 10 million to support industrial development. In addition to its contribution to the rehabilitation of the GIE infrastructure, the EU will also support a programme of incentives set up by the Palestinian Authority to attract new tenants in the GIE. The GIE is intended to work as a catalyst for economic development in Gaza.

For more information:

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