*Joint Business Forum Italy-Palestine*
*19-21 February 2017*

**Press Release**

The first Italian-Palestinian Joint Business Forum (JBF) was launched in Ramallah on February 19th 2017, signed by Marco Gay, President of Young Entrepreneurs of Confindustria and Samir Zraiq, President of the Palestinian Federation of Business Associations. The Palestinian Minister of National Economy, H.E. Abeer Odeh, the Consul General of Italy Fabio Sokolowicz and the President of Bank of Palestine Hashim Shawa (co-chairman of the Forum together with Marco Gay) attended the ceremony.

The JBF aims at creating a business forum that encourages the increase of trade and investment flows between Italy and Palestine, promoting business missions as well as joint ventures and exchange of information on business opportunities. The JBF stems from intergovernmental agreements reached in the first and second Italian-Palestinian Joint Ministerial Committee held, respectively, in Rome in 2012 and in Ramallah in 2015.

On the occasion of the JBF, an Italian businessmen delegation, composed of 11 companies and led by Marco Gay, arrived to Ramallah for the event.
The signing ceremony was followed by technical presentations on business opportunities, incentives for investment – made by Paltrade and Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency -, on the credit lines of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and the services offered by the Italian Trade Agency (ICE) in Amman, which is also responsible for Palestine.
After the presentations, the Italian businessmen and the Palestinian counterparts held B2B meetings. The delegation then moved to Nablus where they met with the business community of Northern Palestine at the Nablus Business Forum.

In the following days they will visit the industrial areas of Bethlehem and Jericho and then participate in networking meetings.
In addition, the delegation will visit Palestinian sites important for their historical and cultural heritage and where Italy has contributed to renovation works, namely the Nativity Church in Bethlehem and Hisham Palace in Jericho, places that were also visited by President Mattarella during his visit to Palestine in November 2016.

The inaugural event was greeted by a message from the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E. Angelino Alfano. In the message, read by the Consul General of Italy Fabio Sokolowicz, H.E. Alfano underlined the opportunities offered by JBF to create a business-network, increase economic and trade exchange and investments between the two parties, further revitalize bilateral economic relations and support the development of the Palestinian economy. Minister Alfano lastly said that economic diplomacy represents one of the main priorities of Italian foreign policy.