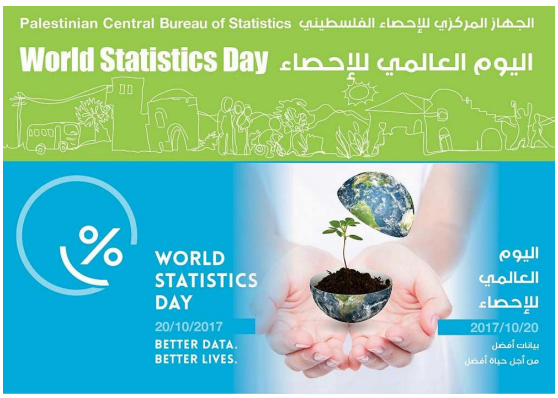


World Statistics Day 20/10/2017



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The world is celebrating today the World Statistics Day. This day flags the work of thousands of women and me working mainly at statistical bureaus striving for providing the world, the communities, researchers and individuals with reliable data and information on all aspects of life.

In Palestine, today has special attributes. It is coming while the PCBS staff are working hard implementing the third Population, Housing and Establishments Census 2017. Such work continues as a cornerstone not only in the statistical field but also for national policy making process.
11,000 employees more than half of them young females, are exerting exceptional efforts to make this project a success. A word of gratitude and appreciation must be extended to them on this occasion in recognition of the importance of their work.

This day invites me to address the progress and development process of PCBS. Besides proving to be a solid national body that base its operations of set of ethical, professional and managerial competencies, PCBS has preserved a solid position among the international arena.

Besides ending my role as president of the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS), PCBS is hosting the 9th High Level Group for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; such hosting carries several important messages among of which highlighting the pivotal role of statistics on the international level and a recognition of the importance of statistics as a tool for formulating sustainable development strategies as well as monitoring the development achieved by Palestine in achieving its development goals, especially those have to do with the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would take this opportunity to demonstrate certain statistical data and challenges that reflect the economic, social and demographic conditions of the Palestinian people, where there are many challenges imposed on us by the Israeli occupation targeting most of our basic resources that are considered the vital basis for making a real development of the Palestinian economy. There are also internal challenges that couldn't be overcome except through implementing sectoral strategic plans in an integrated and efficient manner since, on the ground, the Israeli occupation exploits more than 85% of the total area of the Historical Palestine, leaving less than 15% for the Palestinians though they represent 48% of the total population in the Historical Palestine. In addition to that, the Israeli occupation authorities impose all the obstacles and tighten the screws on the urban expansion of the Palestinians, especially in Jerusalem and areas called (C), which exceed 60% of the area of the West Bank. While in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation has established a buffer zone along the border with a width of more than 1,500 meters along the Eastern border of Gaza Strip, where the Israeli occupation controls 24% of the area, which is one of the most densely populated areas in the world with about 5,000 persons/Km^2. In West Bank Israeli occupation controls more than 90% of the Jordan Valley, which constitutes 29% of the total area of the West Bank, as well as the annexation and expansion wall, which isolated more than 12% of the West Bank.

The number of Israeli settlements and military bases in the West Bank is 413 sites, of which 150 settlements and 119 settlement nucleuses. The settler population in the West Bank is about 21 for every 100 Palestinians, while the settler population in Jerusalem is about 69 settlers for every 100 Palestinians (Judaization of Jerusalem). In addition, the Israeli occupation controls 85% of the water flowing from the aquifers. The Israeli occupation also controls most of the renewable water resources in Palestine, amounting to about 750 million m3 annually, and the Palestinians receive only about 110 million m3 (15%), forcing the Palestinians to purchase water from the Israeli water company "Mekorot", where the amount of water purchased reached 70.2 million m3 where the Israeli occupation sell water to the Palestinians, although the share of Palestinians from the aquifers according to the Oslo Accords begins from 118 million m3 and was supposed to become 200 million m3 by the year 2000 if the interim agreement was implemented, while the Palestinian per capita was 82.2 liters/day of water in Palestine, ranging between 84.3 liters/day in the West Bank, and 79.2 liters/day in Gaza Strip, taking into consideration that more than 97% of the water of Gaza Strip does not apply to the World Health Organization drinking water standards, and in terms of quantity it is less than the minimum recommended amount by the organization itself, which is (100 liters/person/day) at the minimum. (The per capita share in Israel is 5 times that of the allowed water for the Palestinians) and the poor basic resource of life in the Gaza Strip of drinking water in addition to the demographic pressure on the land there, which is reflected by the high population density, where about 2 million people are living in an area of about 365 km2, most of them are refugees, on the one hand. On the other hand, the last three wars in Gaza Strip led to the destruction of almost the most basic elements of life for the Palestinian individual there and escalated unemployment, poverty and malnutrition, which would lead to an imminent environmental and humanitarian disaster.

As a result, the Palestinian economy suffers from a structural deformity in the productive structure and the growth rates are variant and fluctuating constantly. This reflects the weakness and fragility of this economy and its dependence on the Israeli occupation as a dependent economy. And the economy has passed through several stages clearly during the period 1995-2015, where the growth rate from 1995 to 1999 reached about 9%, while during the second Intifada 2000-2002 the growth rate fall to reach 10% and in 2006 suffocating siege on Palestine led to a dramatic decline to reach 4%, especially in Gaza by 18%, followed by the recent Israeli attacks on Gaza Strip in 2008, 2012 and the end of 2014. In 2014, the growth rate in Palestine decreased by 0.2% and in 2015 and 2016, it increased by 3.4% and 4% respectively, but this increase if it is linked to the natural increase of the population to demonstrate the per capita GDP of the Palestinian population, we note that per capita income didn't exceed the growth rate of 1% in 2015, 2016, where we find a high variation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip to see that per capita in Gaza is half of the per capita in the West Bank. In addition, the Palestinian economy suffers

from a structural sectoral imbalance in the sense that there is a distortion in the structure of the Palestinian structural economy, where services constitute about 66% of the gross domestic product at the expense of the productive sectors. Agriculture constitutes about 3%, industry 13% and construction 8%, this leads to conclude that that the Palestinian economy doesn't generate labor because most of it is concentrated in non-productive sectors.

As for the human being, the main resource in Palestine, especially the youth group, which constitutes one-third of the Palestinian society, we find that the population structure in Palestine is a hierarchical structure where the young people constitute its base. About 70% of the Palestinian society is young. And as we know that there is about 5 million Palestinians living Palestine distributed by 3 million in the West Bank and 2 million in Gaza Strip, with a population growth rate of 2.8%. The statistical figures indicate that illiteracy rate in Palestine is law compared with the rates worldwide as it is about 3%. The percentage of young people aged 15-29 who attend school is 38% for 2016 of the total youth in this age group (71%) of the age group 15-19 years, against 19% in the age group 20-29 age group. (Thus, there is a social, cultural and intellectual consensus among families in Palestine on the importance of education as a basic weapon for their children)

This leads us to the fact that the Palestinian society faces a number of challenges related to the human resource and empowering it to live in dignity on the Palestinian land. Unemployment and poverty are the most prominent challenges. Unemployment rate in Palestine reached about 27%, with a clear variation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as it reached about 40% in Gaza Strip in addition to the widening gap between the outputs of the Palestinian education system and the opportunities for employment. The statistical figures show that the total number of people who participated in the labor force from the young graduates with a diploma qualification average and above was about 182 thousand participants, about 98 thousand graduates are unemployed with an average of more than 50%, where we find that the Palestinian universities graduate an average of about 35-40 thousand graduates annually, while it is estimated that the Palestinian local market accommodates approximately 8,000 jobs at the maximum, despite the need of the market for specializations that do not exist among the Palestinian youth. On the other hand, the rate of unemployment increases with the rise of academic achievement of the youth, finding that the highest unemployment rate was recorded among those with a university degree by 42%, while the unemployment rate for vocational secondary education is about 21%. The decline in academic achievement for the required skills in the technical professions is the greatest challenge for the youth working in Palestine, where the results indicate that more than 65% of the young people working in the technical professions their academic achievement is less than required. It is worth mentioning that the culture and trends of the Palestinian women are still focused on the health and education sectors. In addition, it is noticeable that the young Palestinians tend continue their academic higher education as a temporary alternative to address the period of unemployment.

The creation of an actual economic development is highly dependent on the sectorial view of the Palestinian reality towards resolving both escalating issues of unemployment and poverty in line with the national policy agenda 2017-2022 which was endorsed by the Palestinian government under the name "Citizens First", this was done through:

- Integrating the roles between various governmental, civil society and private institutions in order to reduce the gap which resulted from the imbalance between local market demands and the type of education outputs, by focusing on developing the sector of vocational education and raising the quality of education,
- Boosting the economic linkage between area (C) and other areas in the agricultural sector through the use of agricultural lands in Area (C) for the production of citrus (as in Qalqilya for example) which can be an essential input for the beverage industry, in addition vegetables crops in (the

Jordan Valley area) can be an input in the manufacture of pickles and frozen products. The 2004 supply and use tables indicated that manufactured imports are the main input in industrial production, so it is necessary to make this integration between the different economic sectors, mainly to form basic inputs of the manufacturing sector to be outputs from the agricultural sector.

- Enhancing the role of the governmental and private sectors to achieve the goal of increasing the agricultural lands by encouraging the cultivation of uncultivated and arable land especially in the rain-fed areas; thus, contributing to food security on the one hand and improving the income of the Palestinian families on the other. In addition to policies that encourage such investment in the agricultural sectors including renting and selling unused lands.
- Protecting the Palestinian agricultural products from the competition with the protected Israeli products as well as the other exported products. The promotional problem of many agricultural products was solved through the organization of the production process (both in terms of quantity and quality) and the establishing projects of processed agricultural products. The development of the idea of integrating small sized agricultural holdings with large holdings to take advantage from the economies of scale.
- Formulating a clear strategy to overcome all obstacles facing the local economy including the inability of the production of some types of goods required locally, which is the main role of all institutions to integrate efforts to achieve this goal. For example, the imports of the Palestinian goods constitute about 45% of GDP. The observer of the structure of imports notices that a large amount of imported goods with a relatively high importance can be produced locally. For example, we annually import (USD 160 million) of fodder and (USD 85 million) of flour, Juice, soft drinks and cleaning supplies, which we import for almost (USD 60 million), we also need to produce dairy products, as the local production of dairy products does not cover domestic demand.
- Supporting the Palestinian tourism sector by both the private and government sectors to enhance their role in the growth and development of this sector, especially in the field of media and promotion of tourist places in Palestine and providing suitable facilities for visitors coming from abroad. For example: the Palestinian economy loses more than 75% of returns on tourism services from tourists who visit Palestinian tourist attractions such as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and Monastery of Temptation (Deir Quruntel) in Jericho, where Israeli companies manipulate and prearrange their stay inside “Israel” unlawfully.
- Investing in the information technology sector (ICT) and raising awareness on supporting entrepreneurial projects in the field of programming services.