Statement by United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, on the electricity crisis in Gaza

Jerusalem, 19 April 2017

"I am following with great concern the tense situation in Gaza, where a new energy crisis is now unfolding.

Reform of the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) is essential to improve revenue collection and transparency in line with international standards. The *defacto* authorities in Gaza must ensure that collection rates are improved and that revenue collected in Gaza is returned to the legitimate Palestinian authorities in order to keep fuel and electricity supply flowing. All in Gaza must share the burden by paying their bills. It is the poorest Palestinians in Gaza who pay the price for exceptions and privileges that others enjoy.

This reform, as well as the necessary investments in reducing electricity losses and upgrading the grid in Gaza, should be financed and supported by the international community but it cannot do it alone. It must go hand-in-hand with the Palestinian Government facilitating the purchase of fuel for the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) under conditions that temporarily alleviate or substantially reduce relevant fuel taxes.

Israel also has a significant responsibility to assist by facilitating the entry of materials for repairs and maintenance of the grid and power plant. Egyptian power lines to Gaza also need to be repaired and upgraded.

The social, economic and political consequences of this impending energy crisis should not be underestimated. Palestinians in Gaza, who live in a protracted humanitarian crisis, can no longer be held hostage by disagreements, divisions and closures.

I call on all parties, including the international community, to come together and ensure this vital issue of energy for Gaza is resolved once and for all. The United Nations stands ready to provide its support in achieving this vital goal."

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