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Ramallah Office

PRESS RELEASE
001/2017

Ramallah, 22 February 2017

TVET and Pre-School Education identified as high priority areas at the Education Sector Working Group





Ramallah – On 22 February 2017 the first Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) of the year took place at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). The ESWG is a national platform on education, chaired by the MoEHE, and co-chaired by Finland, with UNESCO as the technical advisor. The Working Group brings together the main international and national education stakeholders in Palestine to discuss developments and challenges in the education sector in Palestine. It is also the first ESWG with Finland as the co-chair, a position which was previously filled by Belgium and handed over during the last ESWG as part of the bi-annual rotation among the Joint Financing Partners (JFP's).

His Excellency, the **Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr. Sabri Saidam**, touched upon many topics currently influencing education in Palestine, such as the launch of the second part of the curricula from grade 1 to 4 in September, the formation of a TVET Higher Council, sustainable schools, the implementation of digitalization in schools, infrastructural issues of schools in the West Bank and Gaza, and the reform of examination in secondary education, namely the Tawjihi. The Tawjihi reform enables students to be "a *leader and an active contributor to their development process instead of passive recipients of knowledge.*" He further emphasized the decision made by the cabinet on making pre-school education binding and that the MoEHE is currenty working on developing curricula for this grade. He stated that in his vision for the next 3 years "*most kindergartens in the country will be free and compulsary.* Minister Saidam also talked about the free activity program which is launched in a number of schools. Such program is very important, and the students are encouraged to practice their talents including drama, music and art. A school needs to be attractive, and a student friendly place. For him, this is a priority taking into consideration that there are issues with male students' achievement. His Excellency thanked everyone

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"for choosing to be with us, at diffferent challenging locations such as khirbet *Thana and other threatened communities*. *I can't thank you one by one but you are all members of our education family."*

In his welcoming remarks, the **UNESCO Representative to Palestine, Dr. Lodovico Folin-Calabi**, commended the government for their dedication and efforts towards the education reform in Palestine, especially with regards to the launching of the sustainable schools project, introducing pre-school within compulsary education and adopting the new Tawjihi system. As the global lead on SDG4 among the Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO prioritizes linking education to the labour market needs within its strategy. Dr. Folin Calabi commended the MoEHE for the steps taken towards integrating TVET in general education. He announced the development by UNESCO of a skills forecasting model for Palestine, which will be launched in May this year and "*which shows an important projection of the skills needed in Palestine. We hope that this will contribute to bridging the gap between supply and demand in the labour market.*" Dr. Folin-Calabi further applauded the participatory approach efforts of the MoEHE in the preparation of the new Education Sector Strategy, and the government's budget increase to education which "*ensures its commitment ot the education reform in Palestine*". He concluded his remarks by reassuring *"UNESCO's commitment to support Palestinan government's endeavours towards achieving SDG4 by 2030."*

Ms. Karita Laisi, Head of Development Cooperation of the Representative office of Finland, speaking as the co-chair of the ESWG and on behalf of the Joing Financing Partners (JFP's), emphasised the importance of the ESWG for aid effectivenes and constructive policy dialogue "*which requires research, analysis, information and policy sharing among partners"* She further stated that "*our aim is to support the Ministry in enhancing education in Palestine and I hope to have a fruitful dialogue in a constructive spirit."*

During the event, the new Education Strategy for 2017-2022 was presented, followed by presentations of four Technical Working Groups, namely on inclusive edcuation, higher education, pre-school and secondary education followed by a group discussion. On the ministry's side ESWG meetings are arranged for and coordinated by Dr. Sakeena Elayan.

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visit www.unesco.org/ramallah and visit us on : Unesco Ramallah Office

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