Office of the Quartet

Gaza Central Desalination Plant & Associated Works Pledging Conference
European Union Headquarters, Brussels

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Head of Mission

Commissioner Hahn, Minister Ghunaim, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As previous speakers have already noted; the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate; with electricity restricted to 4-6 hours a day, and 90 percent of water available remaining un-potable.

The Gaza Desalination Programme represents an essential component in addressing this crisis and offers a solution for the necessary supply and transmission of potable water. It is also a means of addressing financial viability relevant to wastewater treatment through its Non-Revenue Water component.

While we are all familiar with the challenges of working in the water sector in the Gaza Strip, the past year has seen **four** particularly important developments which offer greater confidence in the water sector as a whole and in the Desalination Programme in particular.

First, the completion of the European Union funded UNICEF implemented **Short Term Low Volume Desalination Plant** which, once running at full capacity, will supply 75,000 people in Rafah and Khan Younis with potable water. Although it is currently working at one third of its capacity, due to the limited supply of electricity, a recent agreement between GEDCO and the PWA will enable the provision of electricity for 22 hours a day, thus enabling the full output of **six thousand cubic meters** of water per day.

Second, the completion of the Northern Gaza Emergency Sewage Treatment plant (commonly referred to as NGEST), will allow for the treatment of approximately one third of all wastewater generated in Gaza and will be a source of water for agriculture. The PWA and the World Bank, in particular, are to be congratulated for ensuring the smooth operations and sustainability of this important project.

Third, the parties have worked to translate expressions of support for the Desalination Program into clearer operational terms. Thus, in a letter dated 12 September 2017, the Israeli Coordinator

of Government Activities in the Territories, Major General Yoav Mordechai, set out specific timelines for the entry of materials for the construction and operation of the plant. Based on that letter, we have been working with the parties to reach agreement on the procedures for the timely and predictable entry of those materials. These procedures are based and build upon the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. We will continue to support the parties in finalizing this mechanism in the coming weeks.

Fourth and finally, as has already been summarized by other speakers, the **PWA has made considerable progress** in a range of areas relevant to the Desalination Programme, including in the allocation of **land** needed for the desalination and solar plants, the development of a roadmap for the establishment of the **National Water Company** to manage the Programme facilities once completed, and in working with PENRA to ensure the **availability of the energy** to run the plant, including through the availability of natural gas by **2021,** which will offer predictable and cost effective energy.

A great deal remains to be done, but this donor conference comes at a time when the potential to realize this important project is greater than ever. We look forward to continuing our support to all actors in order to bring this important programme to fruition.