Press Release
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EU marks the World Water Day with children in Gaza

The EU marked World Water Day this year in Gaza with over 500 Palestinian students. This activity comes only few days after the EU organized the Gaza water desalination plant pledging conference. During the conference, the EU and the international community pledged €456 million for the plant that will provide Gazans with safe and clean drinking water.

The EU in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Education organized an open day at Al-Buraq School in Gaza to celebrate the day. The event introduced 500 students from 1st to 6th grade to a series of interactive and educational water based games, activities, and competitions. The school was decorated with water themed foam sculptures and a photo frame for fun photo opportunities. 150 students from the 5th and 6th grades then cleaned part of the Gaza beach front in keeping with the 2018 global theme of “Nature for Water”. The students, whose access to clean and safe drinking water is deeply impaired, gathered on the beach to send a message to the world for the urgent need to resolve Gaza’s water crisis.

"Less than 4% of fresh *water in Gaza* is drinkable, and the surrounding sea is polluted by sewage. This is a real challenge for Gaza’s population of which half are children. It adds to a long list of difficulties that the people of Gaza are facing," said the **Deputy EU Representative Tomas Niklasson**. "Therefore water is one of the focal sectors of EU assistance to the Palestinians. In the last five years, the EU and its Member States have provided more than €230 million Euros to support the water sector in Gaza," he added

Gaza suffers from an acute shortage of good quality, safe drinking water. The destruction of significant WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) infrastructure in the past ten years, together with shortages in fuel and electricity has made sewage treatment projects impossible. Ongoing contamination of aquifer water further increases hygiene risks. Without significant and urgent interventions, the situation will further deteriorate, increasing health risks especially to the children of the most vulnerable communities in Gaza.

To deal with this crisis, the EU is supporting the implementation of a series of strategic interventions by the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA). The EU is investing in a range of desalination and solid waste management programmes, including the construction of desalination facilities that will provide safe water to thousands of Gazans.

In the West Bank the EU is supporting the PWA ensure sustainable access to and management of water resources, constructing and repairing water and sewage networks, developing wastewater treatment plants in areas where water supply is scarce.

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