The Government of Italy, UN Women, and ILO launch a half-a-million Euro initiative to provide equal and decent work opportunities for women in Palestine

Ramallah, May 31, 2018 – Yesterday, the Italian Development Cooperation, UN Women and International Labour Organization (ILO) launched a new programme, "**Promoting Women's Equal Access to Economic Opportunities and Decent Work in Palestine**" (The ***Decent Work for Women*** Programme) at the Grand Park Hotel in Ramallah, West Bank. More than 80 guests representing the Palestinian ministries, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, civil society organizations, academia, private sector, and other development partners, attended the ceremony to celebrate the beginning of the joint programme.

The Decent Work for Women programme is a one-year, EUR 500,000 initiative, which aims to promote equal and decent work opportunities for women in Palestine and to protect their labour rights through reinforcement of relevant laws, policies, and market practices. While the programme focuses on enhancing technical skills and financial assistance of women entrepreneurs, it also helps the exchange and transfer of these skills from these entrepreneurs to other women, so more women will have higher potential of getting decent work opportunities. The targeted women will be linked to investors and private sectors so that they can sustain their current business, while investing in future business opportunities.

Mr. Bassam Al Khateeb, the Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs, noted that *"We welcome the innovative approach that the Decent Work for Women programme brings to the overall national efforts to support women's economic empowerment, by increasing the employment opportunities for the marginalized women across Palestine."*

Mr. Abdel Kareem Daraghmeh, the Deputy Assistant for tripartite partnership and social dialogue in the Ministry of Labour, highlighted that *"the unemployment rate among women was 47.4%, while 65.8% of youth females aged between 15-29 years were unemployed. Women's overall labour force participation rate stood at only 19%."*

Mr. Fabio Sokolowicz, the Consul General of Italy in Jerusalem, stated that "*Italy has a long and strong partnership with UN Women and ILO in Palestine, and in 2 weeks, we will already sign the agreement for the second phase of the Decent Work for Women programme."*

Ms. Cristina Natoli, Representative of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, underlined that "*it is through economic independence that women can set their direction upon their lives and give their contribution to the society for a real development*."

The two heads of agencies of UN Women and ILO, Ms. Ulziisuren Jamsran and Mr. Mounir Kleibo reaffirmed the comparative advantage of joining forces of both UN agencies in the framework of this joint programme to strengthen the role of women in policy dialogue and enhance women's equal access to economic opportunities and decent work conditions.

The programme will be implemented in partnership between UN Women and ILO. Key partners include the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Labour, local NGO partners, various private sector institutions as well as the community.

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