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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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Ramallah Office

PRESS RELEASE
2018/10
Ramallah,26 September 2018

Education actors meet at the quarterly Education Sector Working Group to discuss challenges and interventions for the new scholastic year



Ramallah – On 26 September, the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) in Palestine took place at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). The quarterly ESWG meeting, cho-chaired by the Ministry and by Finland, with UNESCO as the technical adviser, is a platform for constructive dialogue among the main education actors in Palestine to assess the achievements made since the last working group meeting, discuss current challenges in the delivery of education and develop recommendations on policies and sector strategies for the future.

In his opening remarks, the Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr. Sabri Saidam highlighted the comprehensive educational achievements the Ministry has made and stressed the importance of commitment and progress towards the National Policy Agenda, which focuses on *improving the quality of education, developing the capacities of education workers, supporting talents and encouraging participation in local, regional, international and other competitions*. He also referred to the crisis experienced by UNRWA, emphasizing the *need to stand by the Agency in order to continue providing its great humanitarian services*.

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Ms. Anna-Kaisa Heikkinen, Ambassador of Finland, speaking as the co-chair and on behalf of the Joint Financing Partners highlighted the challenges of the children that still remain excluded from education and emphasized that *increased efforts towards inclusive, focused and flexible solutions need to be found to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities or those in detention, for example, can exercise their fundamental right to education. Equal opportunities to pre-school education for all children must also be enhanced.*

Dr. Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO Representative to Palestine, highlighted the achievements in key reform areas – *such as inclusive education policies, life-skills and citizenship programmes, support to pre-school, technical and vocational education streams* – despite recurrent and new challenges. He particularly emphasized the critical situation in Gaza, with its *acute shortage of teachers* and stressed *the need for effective and coordinated governance of education services in both Gaza and the West Bank.* He referred to the financial challenges that UNRWA is confronted with and joined his voice to the calls to all involved donors and partners to continue supporting its work. He then commended the Ministry's work towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and its associated targets.

During the event, Dr. Basri Saleh, Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Education, presented a general overview of issues the education sector is facing in the new scholastic year, especially with regards to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, the financial crisis of UNRWA and the risk of scaling back its activities in the West Bank and Gaza, and ongoing issues in East Jerusalem and Area C. The Ministry also presented the annual budget and workplan for 2019, focusing on the priorty areas of quality education, development of insfrastructures (construction of new schools and refurbishment of existing premises), digitization and smart learning, early childhood development, TVET)

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