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**PRESS RELEASE**
2018/16
**Ramallah, 21 November 2018**

**Key challenges in East-Jerusalem central area of focus at the Education Sector Working Group meeting**




Ramallah, 21 November 2018 – Today the last Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) of the year, established within the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat, took place at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in Ramallah. As with every ESWG meeting, all main education stakeholders present reviewed, discussed and set collective efforts on key issues and achievements in the education sector in Palestine since the last meeting in September. Today's ESWG meeting had a special focus session on the situation of education in East-Jerusalem.

During his welcoming remarks, the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Sabri Saidam, recalled that the MoEHE had declared the 2018 school-year *as the year of education in Jerusalem* and further emphasized *the increased financial and technical support that the MoEHE will be giving to support access to quality education and safe learning environments for schools in East-Jerusalem*. He further emphasized the MoEHE's efforts on Early Childhood Development to make pre-school education mandatory and referred to the preliminary findings of a joint World Bank-MoEHE costing scenario for the increase of kindergardens in Palestine.

Dr. Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO Representative to Palestine, emphasized that *it is imperative that we all work together to support the MoEHE towards improving access, retention and quality of education for boys and girls in East Jerusalem as well as in other*

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*vulnerable areas*. He also referred to the situation in Gaza, which gives *a clear signal that despite all of our collective efforts, we are still not able to fully reach the unreached*. He mentioned the United Nations' intensified efforts to alleviate Gaza's deepening humanitarian and economic crisis and further stated that UNESCO, as part of the UN Country Team, renews its support and commitment towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal – SDG4 ("To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"), *ensuring that all Palestinian Children are receiving quality education within the overall framework of the Education 2030 agenda*.

Ms. Paula Malan, Head of Development Cooperation of the Representative Office of Finland, speaking as the co-chair and on behalf of the Joint Financing Partners, stated that all partners "*should be proud of the partnership and the development of the Palestinian education system over the years*" and that next year marks 20 years since the first Education Sector Working Group was held. She further expressed her hope that "*we will be able to mark the 20 years of partnership by renewing our mutual commitment to these partnership principles*."

The ESWG is a platform consisting of MoEHE representatives, donor agencies, UN representatives, representatives of relevant line ministries, private sector and civil society contributing to the education sector. The ESWG holds quarterly meetings, to which the defined members of the ESWG participate.

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