Remarks to the Gaza Central Desalination Programme Meeting
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Those of you who are familiar with the work of the Office of the Quartet already know that I am typically the least knowledgeable member of the OQ team on the issues which we are here to discuss – and so I will be brief in order to allow sufficient time for the presentations of my colleagues Enas Abu Laban who leads the OQs engagement in the water sector and who will brief on progress in enabling the entry of material for the Gaza Central Desalination Programme as well as Ariel Ezrahi who leads on energy and will brief on the Gas for Gaza initiative, one of the key efforts we are pursuing to increase the supply of electricity into the Gaza Strip.

Before handing over to them, however, I wish to make two brief observations.

First, a number of speakers have already identified the longer term impact of the project – but elements of the associated works also have the potential to improve the situation in the immediate term: the Kuwaiti contribution to the Associated Works and the North South Carrier are essential for this project but also by 2020 will enable the import of an additional 10 MCM of water which, when mixed with groundwater will yield a total of 20 MCM which we know is desperately needed. Similarly the Monthar mixing facility for which the EU has pledged support, will double the quantity of water available form 10 to 20 MCM by mixing sweet water with groundwater. These changes will make a material difference in the lives of Gazans and help alleviate the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Strip.

Second, when last we met, we referred at some length to the September 2017 letter from Major General Yoav Mordechai which for the first time outlined the parametres and timelines for the entry of material into the Gaza Strip. At that time we referred to the need to move quickly to transform that letter into an operational process- and I'm pleased to say that to the credit of both the Palestinian Water Authority and the Government of Israel, including our colleagues here today, that the process for approval is now well underway through a transparent process that includes minutes of meetings that are signed by the Palestinian Water Authority, the Government of Israel and the Office of the Quartet which serves as the conveyor of the task force. This is a significant step forward for which our colleagues deserve credit.

In short, while there will undoubtedly be further challenges as we proceed to implementation, I believe that the last year has seen major progress in realizing this essential project. Thank you for convening this meeting and I would now like to offer the floor to my colleague Enas Abu Laban.

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