Press release
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WB, EU, France and the Palestinian Government inaugurate Al-Fukhari sanitary landfill site in Gaza

The World Bank, European Union, France, and the Palestinian Government celebrated today the inauguration of Al-Fukhari (Sofa) sanitary landfill site near the city of Khan Younis. This strategic infrastructure project is the second largest landfill in the Gaza Strip and will benefit almost half of Gaza population and will have major positive environmental implications there.

Ralph Tarraf, the EU Representative in Jerusalem, with Pierre Cochard, the Consul General of France in Jerusalem, Catherine Bonnaud, AFD Country Director, and Bjorn Philipp the Program Leader for Sustainable Development at the World Bank joined Majdi Al-Saleh, the Palestinian Minister of Local Governance, Tawfiq Budeiri, the Director General of the Municipal Development and Lending Fund, and officials from the Joint Service Council in Southern Gaza and representatives of the local communities, to celebrate the completion of the construction works at Al-Fukhari (Sofa) sanitary landfill site.

The works at Al-Fukhari (Sofa) sanitary landfill were part of the Gaza Solid Waste Management Project (GSWMP) and were funded by the European Union (EU), the French Development Agency (AFD), and the World Bank. The project will serve the southern region of Gaza which covers 64% of Gaza Strip's total geographic area and is inhabited by 834,000 people who form 46% of its total population. The works at site started in 2016 and were carried by a consortium of local and international construction companies at a cost of 9.4 million Euros.

In his opening statement, H.E. Majdi Al-Saleh highlighted the strong commitment from the Palestinian Government to the people in Gaza. This project that serves half of the population in Gaza Strip is evidence of this commitment. H.E. Al-Saleh expressed the Palestinian Government's appreciation for the assistance of the EU, AFD, and the World Bank Group to alleviate the dire situation in Gaza Strip. With this new facility, a major step has been taken towards improving environmental protection and public health.

H.E. Mr. Pierre Cochard congratulated H.E. the Minister of Local Government for the implementation of this ambitious project, seen as "*as an efficient cooperation between the Palestinian Government, the French Development Agency, the European Union, and the World Bank Group for the benefit of the people in Gaza".* Referring to the waste pickers that

have been accompanied in their pursuit of generation activities in cooperation as well with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), he said that "*Compliance with social and environmental standards has been exemplary"*. He concluded that "*France (via the French Development Agency) will continue to support the efforts of the Palestinian Government in Gaza, noting the urgent need to work toward finding a lasting political solution for Gaza and to respond effectively to the humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian population, which requires the lifting of the blockade of the one hand and the achievement of inter-Palestinian reconciliation, on the other"*.

The EU Representative Ralph Tarraf said: "*For more than a decade, Gaza is facing unbearable and exceptional challenges. The Israeli closure and the failures to reach intra Palestinian internal reconciliation have affected every aspect of life here. Yet despite all the obstacles, we will continue to support the Palestinian Government in various sectors in Gaza: from providing clean water to solid waste management, business development, and strengthening of civil society. These projects give hope in the midst of a very bleak reality which has to end. We believe that Gazans deserve a better future and definitely a better present. It is a time to bring about a fundamental change to the political, economic and security situation in Gaza including through ending the closure and allowing the Palestinian Government to resume its full responsibilities in Gaza.*"

The landfill covers in this first phase an area of 100 dunum and will eventually reach 235 dunum under the Palestinian Government's full ownership, at the final stage. The construction works, which included major excavation, lining systems, leachate collection systems, storm water management system and the related services, were implemented over a period of two years in accordance with the highest international standards.

The Gaza Solid Waste Management Project (GSWMP) also included a system of solid waste transfer stations and a comprehensive capacity building programme aiming to improve service provision at the different stages of solid waste management. The project ensured active involvement of local communities through a broad public outreach and public awareness and consultation activities.