

## **4<sup>th</sup> German- Palestinian Steering Committee**

**October 26, Berlin**

### **Joint Statement**

The German- Palestinian Steering Committee met on October 26, 2016 in Berlin for the fourth time under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Prof. Dr. Rami Hamdallah and Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Both underlined their commitment to a two-state solution, on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and of the Arab Peace Initiative. A negotiated peace that will lead to an end of the occupation, an agreement on all final status issues and fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis. An independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State will live in recognized borders, side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition with Israel and all its neighbours.

They agreed that the continuing policy of settlement expansion and denial of Palestinian development is steadily eroding the viability of the two-state solution. Therefore, they agreed to cooperate with a view to advancing the two-state solution on the ground and demonstrate, through policies and actions, their genuine commitment to the two-state solution. The Prime Minister expressed the urgency and willingness of the Palestinian side of expediting the development of a practical path towards the two-state solution. He presented the Palestinian ideas for a Palestine Statehood Strategy as a means to promote sovereignty and prepare Palestine for the exercise of its rights and duties as a sovereign State.

They welcomed the ministerial meeting on the Middle East peace initiative, held in Paris on 3 June 2016, and agreed to work in this framework on taking stock of work done so far and identifying concrete proposals on consolidating Palestinian State capacities.

Both sides agreed to deepen their existing cooperation in the fields of development, local governance, education, science, research, sport and culture, energy, water and sanitation, police and security cooperation.

## **1. Political Dialogue:**

Both sides agreed to continue their established high-level, political, close and trusting political dialogue, as demonstrated by the recent visit of President Abbas to Berlin in April 2016. The Prime Minister presented the Palestinian vision of Palestine as a stable, democratic state with a pluralistic political system that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms and guarantees equal rights and duties for all its citizens, safeguarded by law and an independent judiciary system.

They agreed that political dialogue benefits from contacts on all levels and in all areas, between government bodies, parliamentarians, political parties, political foundations, academic research institutes, as well as civil society. They agreed to establish political consultations between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

## **2. State Building:**

Prime Minister Hamdallah presented the Palestine Statehood Strategy which describes a vision for an independent, sovereign State of Palestine within recognized borders and which identifies areas in which Palestine takes preparation to assume the rights and duties of a sovereign State.

Both sides appreciate the results of their cooperative partnership with regard to reinforcing of Palestinian state institutions and underline their intention to continue their cooperative partnership in the future in a constructive manner and to extend it to other areas.

In agreement with the Palestinian partners the German government will continue its support for structurally weak areas, including in Area C. Both sides agreed about the urgent need to improve the situation in Gaza.

## **3. Security:**

Both partners commend the results of their cooperation in building Palestinian governance institutions and underline their willingness to continue and expand their joint constructive work also in the future.

Cooperation will continue in the field of security. Germany will further support its Palestinian partners in the fields of policing, crime statistics, electronic

archiving, physical protection and advice on developing basic and advanced training. In particular, supporting executive staff is an important component of a functioning police force.

Germany is interested in a continuous cooperation with Palestine in order to further establish and strengthen security structures. In the framework of a German program on education and supply of equipment for police officers starting in 2017 the German support of Palestinian Civil Police in terms of training and equipment supply will be intensified.

Both sides support cooperation in the field of civil protection and disaster management. In this context, existing measures and projects of international organizations and regional partners should be used, if possible.

#### **4. Economic Sector and Energy:**

Both sides are convinced that additional economic momentum within Palestine can be generated by strengthening the bilateral economic relations between Palestine and Germany. This will significantly contribute to the Middle East Peace Process.

Both sides, in the spirit of the previous meetings of the German-Palestinian Steering Committee, reiterate their determination to expand their trade in goods and services.

Both sides will provide their respective instruments designed to promote foreign trade and investment in order to further consolidate and expand their relations. The German government will continue to make available export credit guarantees (Hermes) to support German exports to private companies in Palestine.

Both sides express their content about the successful Palestine Roadshow in 2015 where more than thirty companies from West Bank and Gaza travelled to Berlin and Frankfurt and met representatives of politics and business. The kick-off meeting took place in the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. This might serve as a model for further activities of the private sector in order to consolidate business relations between the two sides.

Both sides share the view that cooperation between small and medium-sized companies is especially important when it comes to improving trade relations,

and want to promote such cooperation. In this context both sides agreed on supporting the work of the European Palestinian Credit Guarantee Fund.

With regard to the ambitious Palestinian plans on enhancing electricity supply, the German side pointed its experience in energy transition and the expertise of German companies which are willing to share their know-how with Palestinian partners.

The German side underlined its commitment to contribute to Palestinian private sector development, job creation and improved access to finance in the framework of German-Palestinian development cooperation. Both sides confirmed their commitment to the project of an Industrial Park in Jenin.

## **5. Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid:**

Both sides agreed that the German-Palestinian development cooperation remains an important pillar of the bilateral relations and contributes to state-building and development. The overarching goals of the development cooperation are the support of the establishment of a future Palestinian State and the creation of conditions for peaceful and inclusive development in the West Bank, in Gaza and in East Jerusalem. The key concern of German-Palestinian development cooperation is to contribute towards the establishment of a future Palestinian state. To this end the joint development projects contribute to strengthening social cohesion, stopping the widening of regional and social disparities and halting territorial disintegration. German-Palestinian development cooperation improves the possibilities for political and social participation for the entire Palestinian population and contributes to the improvement of social and economic living conditions, specifically concerning the vulnerable population in Gaza, in East Jerusalem, in Area C and in refugee camps. The support for women's participation in the development process is an important cross-sectorial topic.

2016 the German side committed funds of 85,72 Mio. EUR in bilateral government negotiations for German-Palestinian development projects in the water/waste water sector, the economic sector (including vocational training) and in the governance sector, including the support of local government units.

The German side invites Palestinian diplomats for a diplomatic training course in continuation of the successful training of Palestinian diplomats in 2014.

The German side declared to provide the operations of the International Red Cross in Palestine with 1,5 million EUR in addition to 6 million EUR already committed in order to increase the living conditions of vulnerable parts of the population.

## **6. Education, Science, Research, Sport and Culture**

Both sides recognize the progress made with regard to schools and universities.

### **Primary and Secondary Education/Technical and Vocational Training**

Both sides welcome the progress made in the education sector, where Germany is the biggest external donor, and agreed to continue joint efforts in strengthening the sector to improve access to schools and quality of education. The German side underlined its continued commitment to support the sector-wide approach in the education sector which ensures the implementation of the Education Development Strategic Plan III (EDSP III), including in the field of technical and vocational training. The Palestinian side commended German support in the development of the national strategy for education for adults, which aims at financing technical programs to support the education of young people, especially females, dropouts and people with disabilities. The German side urges the Palestinian side to maintain the pace of implementing key reforms as outlined and committed by the Ministry of Education in the EDSP III. The German side is committed to contribute to further improve the access to education for Palestinians in Area C.

### **Science and Research**

Both Sides wish to build on the success achieved so far in the area of science and research. During its second meeting in Bonn on 18/19 July 2016, the Bilateral Steering Committee on German-Palestinian Cooperation in Science and Research agreed to fund 14 bilateral research projects in the areas of nanotechnology/materials science, agriculture/management of natural resources and renewable energy. The projects will start with effect from January 2017.

The Bilateral Steering Committee on German-Palestinian Cooperation in Science and Research will meet again in late 2016. Joint research projects and the mobility of young researchers within projects will remain the focus of cooperation. Both Sides agree on a second call for proposals as a follow-up to the successful 2015 PALGER call. Details of this second joint call for proposals

will be discussed; the new call will be published in 2017. The Sides agree to jointly finance the call.

Both sides assess the university reform sector as a field of cooperation. The Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD) works as a reliable and competent partner in the field of mobility.

### **Start of a new science and PhD program with Forschungszentrum Jülich from November 2016**

Furthermore, a new research and PhD programme will be established under the envisaged strategic partnership between the Palestine Academy for Science and Technology and the Forschungszentrum Jülich. The new programme aims in the long run at supporting a Palestinian infrastructure for research and development in science and technology that will serve the community and provide adequate career opportunities for highly educated Palestinian scholars. The programme will involve all Palestinian universities and will be launched by the end of the year.

### **The promotion of the German language**

The German government will continue its efforts aimed at the promotion of the German language in Palestine. The installment of a first Bachelor "German as a foreign language" at the Birzeit University is a welcome and important step.

Both sides recognize the promotion of the German language at schools in the framework of the partner school initiative (PASCH), which currently covers nine partner schools in Palestine: two German schools and seven language diploma schools, which offer or will shortly offer the German diploma of the German Conference of the Ministers for Culture. Both sides intend to continue supporting the PASCH schools in the future.

### **Sport**

In agreement with the Palestinian Football Association, the main focus of the expert's assignment is to be on the development and expansion of Palestinian football infrastructure at regional and national level with a special focus on children's and youth football and including women's and girls' football as well as football in schools. The expert's tasks include advising the Palestinian Football Association, especially in the fields of basic and further training for coaches, organising and holding seminars and courses on basic and further training for coaches, sport teacher trainers and sport instructors, establishing a

permanent competition system at youth level as well as incorporating regional football associations into the structures of the Palestinian Football Association.

Germany supports activities in the framework of “Sport for Development”. The aim of this programme is to use sport as a tool to teach marginalized youth employability skills (personal and social competencies) and make vocational education more attractive to them. The programme is implemented in cooperation with the German Football Association (DFB).

### **Culture**

The Goethe Institute represents the procurement of the German language and the diversity of German culture. It enriches the Palestinian culture scene since 1997 and it works in close cooperation with the Institut Francais in Ramallah.

The conservation of Palestinian cultural heritage is of special importance to the Palestinian society. The German government has supported in recent years such essential projects as the conservation of the Palace Al Khouffash and the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The German government aims to continue this form of support.

The two parties agreed to convene the next Intergovernmental Meeting in Ramallah.