

<p><b>Co-Chairs</b> Environment Quality Authority (EQA) <a href="mailto:chairman@environment.pna.ps">chairman@environment.pna.ps</a> <a href="mailto:ahmadabuthaher@yahoo.com">ahmadabuthaher@yahoo.com</a></p> <p>Sweden <a href="mailto:johan.schaar@gov.se">johan.schaar@gov.se</a> <a href="mailto:gunnar.olvik@gov.se">gunnar.olvik@gov.se</a></p>	<p><b>Environment Sector Working Group (EnSWG)</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of Meeting</b> <b>13 January 2016, 10:00 – 12:00</b></p> <p><b>Venue: EQA, Al-Bireh, Ramallah</b></p>	<p><b>Technical Advisor</b> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) <a href="mailto:rimal.abumiddain@undp.org">rimal.abumiddain@undp.org</a> <a href="mailto:husam.tubail@undp.org">husam.tubail@undp.org</a></p> <p><b>Secretariat</b> Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS) <a href="mailto:yshalabi@lacs.ps">yshalabi@lacs.ps</a></p>
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**Attendees:** EQA, Sweden, UNDP, ARIJ, EUREP, Spain, FAO, MoFP, LACS. *(See annex for list of participants.)*

**Agenda:**

- Opening remarks by Co-Chairs (EQA & Sweden)
- Presentation on EQA Strategic Action Plan (SAP)
- Updates by EQA on COP21 and Palestine's accession to UNFCCC
- Update by UNDP on climate finance
- Update by EQA on mainstreaming the environment in national planning processes
- Discussion
- AOB

**Attached Documents:**

- Presentation on EQA Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2016-2020
- Presentation on Palestine Participation in COP21 – UNFCCC
- Presentation on Mainstreaming Environment in National Planning Processes

**Minutes:**

**1- Opening remarks by Co-Chairs**

*Co-Chair, Mrs. Adalah Atteereh (EQA Chairperson):* welcomed all participants, thanking them for their attendance. She expressed her special thanks to the Swedish Government for the support given to Palestine's participation in COP21 in Paris.

The EQA is very encouraged by the participation of the Palestinian President in COP21. This was the first time the Palestinian leadership participated in an international event on the environment. The EQA believes this will have an impact on the environment sector, by enhancing the awareness of the Palestinian leadership on environmental issues.

Another encouraging factor is Palestine's signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the letter received from the United Nations stating that Palestine will be accepted as a full member of the convention. The UNFCCC will enter into force for the State of Palestine on 17 March 2016. EQA staff have already started communicating with partners to prepare for this full membership, mainly by reviewing laws and bylaws to make sure they are in alignment with the convention. For this purpose, the EQA decided to reactivate the National Committee for Climate Change. The EQA is putting lots of effort into reviewing the technical and legal status of the environment in Palestine in order to have a clearer vision on how to move forward. The EQA has also begun preparations for the multilateral

environmental conventions and drafting of the first National Communication Report on Climate Change, which will be published by mid-2016.

The EQA recently participated in two ministerial meetings. Firstly, the Arab Environment Ministers' Council, in Cairo, where a resolution was taken to ask the United Nations Environment Programme to send a special mission to carry out an environmental assessment in the Gaza Strip to assess the impact of the last Israeli aggression there. Secondly, a meeting of 53 Environment Ministers of Islamic countries, in Morocco, where the EQA started negotiations with a number of countries with a view to gaining support for the environment sector in Palestine.

The EQA has signed three multilateral environmental conventions (Basel, Biodiversity, and Climate Change) and is working hard to develop the bylaws needed to be in alignment with these conventions.

There has been some progress in the Gaza Strip on both the central desalination plant, the ToR for which is now ready, and the central landfill.

The EQA is putting substantial effort into enhancing coordination and cooperation with civil society, especially with NGOs that work in the environment sector and in relation to national environmental strategies and goals. The EQA is encouraging international partners to support these civil society organisations as a tool for strengthening the environment sector in Palestine.

Despite these efforts by the EQA, Israeli occupation policies and procedures still constitute a major obstacle to progress. There are many violations by Israel through the building of settlements and the confiscation of land, which is sometimes a natural reserve rich in biodiversity.

***Co-Chair, Mr. John Schaar (Consul, Head of Development Cooperation and Consulate General of Sweden):*** welcomed participants, thanking them for their attendance and wishing them a happy new year. He said the EnSWG meeting had been postponed a couple of times; however, it was worth waiting for since the agenda had never been so interesting, with plenty of topics to listen to and discuss. A number of issues to take note of and celebrate are:

- Internal progress in terms of the EQA Strategic Action Plan (SAP).
- Palestine's participation in COP21 in Paris. The side event organised by the EQA with Sweden's support was important not only in terms of showcasing Palestine and demonstrating how Palestine is affected by environmental issues, including the challenges it faces, but also because it was one of the few Middle Eastern activities during the conference that was not related to oil production. Therefore, it was a good way to represent the region.
- The fact that Palestine has accessed the UNFCCC will bring many opportunities in terms of eligibility for climate finance. To be an active, full member of this important global convention is a very important achievement, which calls for the EQA and all of its partners to rethink how to engage in this area.
- Another significant success is the change in the status of the environment strategy, from a sector strategy to a cross-sector strategy, which implies mainstreaming the environment across all sectors in the new planning process in Palestine.

## **2- Presentation on EQA Strategic Action Plan (SAP)**

***Mr. Zaghloul Samhan (EQA):*** gave a presentation on the EQA SAP 2016-2020. The SAP has four main objectives, each of which has many interventions and activities. These four objectives, developed in accordance with the EQA mandate, are: 1. To develop, lead and coordinate environmental planning; 2. To promote and enhance the inspection and monitoring role of the EQA; 3. To develop the legal and

institutional framework that regulates the environment sector; 4. To enhance and promote environment-friendly behaviour and practices. The final draft of the SAP will be ready by February 2016. Mr. Samhan stressed that the following factors need to be taken into consideration: the SDGs, the sectoral and cross-sectoral planning process in Palestine that will take place in 2016, and the National Policy Agenda (NPA) that will also be produced in 2016. *(The full presentation is attached.)*

#### ***Discussion:***

**FAO** suggested four points should be taken into consideration in the final draft of the SAP. Firstly, the role of the EQA in ensuring the environment is considered in national spatial planning, in terms of natural resources, protected areas, etc. Secondly, with regards the biodiversity portfolio, over the past decades Palestine has witnessed a gradual habitat shift, therefore, there must be a crucial role for the EQA in leading efforts to monitor habitat shifts resulting from climate change and the implications on national planning. Thirdly, the need for the EQA to mainstream natural resources and solid waste issues in sectoral strategies. For example, Palestine imports around 500 tons of fodder, whilst at the same time producing approx. 2 million tons of organic waste that could easily be transformed into fodder. A further example is treated wastewater and its potential use in irrigation. Fourthly, although the fact that the environment strategy has become a cross-sectoral strategy is a very important step forwards, more efforts and a bigger role for the EQA are needed in the development of all sector strategies.

In response, the **EQA** highlighted that it is a member of the National Committee for Spatial Planning as well as the National Committee on Natural Resources and Historical Site Planning. The latter was endorsed by the Cabinet and categorises land into: high valued agricultural land, natural reserves that have a higher value than agricultural lands, forests, biodiversity areas, and landscape. In terms of biodiversity, the EQA is in the final stages of producing the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Report on Biodiversity, which will be available soon. The EQA, in joint efforts with its partners, has determined 51 protected areas, which have been reflected in the National Spatial Plan. In addition, the EQA and its partners have classified another 51 areas as biodiversity areas, and the EQA is now in the final stages of fieldwork to evaluate those areas. As far as mainstreaming the environment is concerned, there will be a special presentation on this later in this meeting.

### **3- Updates by EQA on COP21 and Palestine's accession to UNFCCC**

**Mr. Nedal Katbeh (EQA):** gave a presentation on Palestine's participation in COP21 and its accession to the UNFCCC. He described the main activities at COP21 and the side event on 5 December organised by the EQA with Swedish support. Mr. Katbeh also presented the main next steps that the EQA is working on: (i) Start communication with UNFCCC Secretariat and Green Climate Fund Secretariat regarding readiness activities and eligibility; (ii) Start communication with the Adaptation Fund; (iii) Prepare for launch of the first phase of the National Capacity Development Programme with UNDP; (iv) Begin work on legal and regulatory amendments; (v) Reactivate the national Committee for Climate Change; (vi) Study the options and prepare for gaining potential climate finance.

### **4- Update by UNDP on climate finance**

**Mrs. Rima Abumiddain (UNDP):** gave a brief presentation on potential climate change finance for Palestine. She clarified there would be a more detailed presentation in the next EnSWG meeting when further information would be available. UNDP thanked the governments of Belgium and Sweden, the EU, and all other partners for their support and contributions, in particular for the National Communication Report, which was a major outcome in addition to the ongoing projects on capacity development for climate change.

Palestine is still working to enhance its capacity and readiness for climate change finance. UNDP developed a report in November 2013 that covered the issue of access and readiness for climate change finance. The

report identifies the low potential to access CC funds to reach around 50 million per year and the high potential to reach around 100 million per year including loans from Investments Banks. The report also identifies the major climate change funds that are available and could be of great potential for Palestine, international funds such as Green Climate Fund (GCF), the climate adaptation Funds, the Clean Development Mechanisms Fund and the GEF funds. The report also identifies current bilateral funds, such as International Climate Initiative (Germany), International Climate Fund (UK), Islamic development Banks.

Each fund is analysed with respect to their: eligibility (who is eligible to access the fund); relevance (what is the relevance of the fund to Palestine); access (what are the access mechanism); governance (what are the governance mechanisms); measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) (what are the MRV mechanisms); and potential (what is the potential funding from each fund). In addition to this clear recommendations were made for each fund consisting of further analysis including probability of receiving funding where possible

Moreover, Part of the ongoing UNDP work with the EQA is the capacity assessment of six main ministries regarding climate change. Chapter four focuses on the PA readiness for climate change finance. Many of the activities for capacity development Programmes should focus on MRV (monitoring, reporting and verification) in each of the six institutions. There might be a need for legal framework modifications in Palestine to access climate change funds. UNDP will continue to work with EQA and other PA institutions to support their capacity building for Climate change including readiness for Climate Finance.

## **5- Update by EQA on mainstreaming the environment in national planning processes**

**Mr. Ahmad Abu Thaher (EQA):** gave a presentation on mainstreaming the environment in both the aid management structure and national planning processes. In relation to the aid management structure, the aim is to consolidate the EQA presence in numerous sector-working groups, namely: water and sanitation, municipal development and local government, education and health, agriculture, justice, security, and affordable housing. In planning processes, Mr. Thaher clarified that the EQA aims to consolidate its role in both the spatial planning and national planning processes. The objective in the special planning process is to enhance the EQA role in assessing rich biodiversity areas, while in the national planning process it is to mainstream the environment in all sectors by changing the environment strategy from a sector strategy to a cross-sector strategy. The EQA communicated these intentions to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and obtained its approval. Consequently, the EQA has changed its planning strategy and has decided to start by producing an environmental policy paper to be ready by April 2016, which will help in three ways: (i) it will form the basis for the EQA contribution to the NPA; (ii) it will form the basis for the coming environment cross-sectoral strategy; (iii) by sharing with other leading public sector agencies before producing the coming sector strategies, it will help to mainstream the environment in other sectors. *(Full presentation is attached.)*

## **6- Discussion**

**Spanish Cooperation** asked for clarifications on the content of the environmental policy paper the EQA intends to develop in the coming three months. In addition, the Spanish Cooperation affirmed that, as an implementing body working with local partners, it has noticed some challenges related to the sustainability of interventions. For instance, there are clear difficulties in ensuring that investments in wastewater treatment or solar energy are sustainable. The EQA can play a very important role in lobbying for the future of these projects and interventions.

**ARIJ** asked how the EQA will ensure that other sectors take environmental priorities into account in their policies and strategies. ARIJ also raised the issue of the sustainability of interventions.

**Sweden** emphasised that dedicated attention must be given to mainstream climate change. Sweden asked how the EQA foresees this process and if it is also going to be part of the coming planning cycle.

**FAO** raised the issue of biodiversity, particularly from the agro-biodiversity point of view. Thousands of dunums in the north of the West Bank are being cultivated with tobacco, replacing many local varieties like cereals. This has food security and agro-biodiversity consequences. A collective effort by different actors is needed to better regulate this issue. FAO suggested developing some regulations to allow for a maximum number of dunums to be cultivated with tobacco per area.

**EQA** clarified that there is an agreement with the PMO to develop the environmental policy paper before starting the planning process in order to guide other sectors on environmental priorities. The EQA will submit the draft policy paper to the PMO for endorsement as one of the bases for the new planning cycle 2017-2022. In addition, the EQA will develop the policy paper in consultation with other stakeholders to make sure they are aware and involved in the discussions related to the environment and climate change. In principle, the policy paper aims to give directions to other sectors on how to protect the environment and integrate environmental and climate change issues in their policies and strategies. It will include the main priorities that the EQA will urge all sectors to take into consideration and include in their sector strategies.

**EQA** also clarified that efforts are ongoing to enhance mainstreaming of the environment and climate change, for example through a dedicated project with four main activities: (i) Prepare for the first National Communication Report as a national exercise in which all stakeholders are involved, as a way to mainstream the environment and climate change issues in national policies and strategies; (ii) Develop capacity in environmental and climate change areas through the National Programme for Enhancing National Capacity. Under this activity, six main line ministries were comprehensively investigated and a further 12 ministries or public agencies were visited, as a result of which a road map including twelve themes was developed to deal with climate change issues; (iii) Pilot 2 projects on adaptation with two line ministries; (iv) Support local NGOs in implementing projects related to climate change.

**UNDP** clarified that mainstreaming the environment and climate change is a process that started more than two years ago. There has been a lot of engagement and momentum from different partners. UNDP, in coordination with the EQA, is seeking to raise funds to conduct a round table discussion between different line ministries and public sector agencies to discuss climate change issues. There will be a similar round table discussion with main donors.

**EQA** clarified that there is an action plan for the National Programme for Enhancing National Capacity, with short-, medium- and long-term phases. EQA has developed the ToR to begin implementation of the first phase, which will include 6 workshops, each with one of the main line ministries or public sector agencies to discuss the proposal of establishing a climate change unit in each line ministry or public agency. Many other activities will take place in the first phase, for instance: development of a specialised website for climate change; a review of the bylaws; a review of the EQA structure in line with climate change priorities; etc.

**EQA** further pointed out that there are five thematic groups under the National Committee for Climate Change, each of which has a specific ToR. The challenge is how to be able to translate these ToRs into implementation and activities.

## **7- Closing**

Participants agreed to hold the next EnSWG meeting by April 2016 to follow up on the many issues raised.

### List of Participants

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