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Attendees: EQA, Sweden, UNDP, ARIJ, EUREP, Spain, FAO, MoPAD, LACS. (*See Annex: List of Participants.*)

Agenda:

- Opening remarks by Co-Chairs (EQA & Sweden)
- Updates by EQA
- Presentations on some main environmental issues (EQA & UNDP)
- Discussion
- Updates by international partners on their interventions in the environment sector
- AOB

Attached Documents:

- Updates on Some Environmental Issues (EQA)
- Fostering Cooperation on Water Management (UNDP)

Minutes:

1- Opening remarks by Co-Chairs

Co-Chair, Mrs. Adalah Atteereh (EQA Chairperson): welcomed all participants, thanking them for attending the meeting. She said that in the course of her first year in office she had witnessed the hard work carried out by qualified and engaged EQA staff, with the support of partners like Sweden, FAO, UNDP, etc. who have helped the EQA to protect the environment and avoid its deterioration as a result of ongoing Israeli policies and practices. Damage caused to the environment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) at the hands of Palestinians remains limited compared to environmental violations in the Palestinian territory committed by Israelis. Although the EQA is understaffed, it is a very active body and a great deal of progress has been made in environmental protection. The EQA has worked hard and the sector is now in a better situation compared to neighbouring countries.

Co-Chair, Mr. John Schaar (Consul, Head of Development Cooperation and Consulate General of Sweden): welcomed participants and thanked them for their attendance. He said he was happy to hear about the evolution of the EQA and environmental issues in Palestine.

The challenges faced in the environment sector are well known. For Sweden, one of the main concerns is to move the environment from a sub-sector-restricted issue to something that is mainstreamed throughout government and, therefore, really influences planning and investments by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the private sector.

On 13 May 2015, Sweden will have a high-level consultation event with the Palestinian Government. This is very significant for Sweden because it will be the first consultation following the recognition of Palestine

and after the Swedish Government's decision on a new cooperation strategy with Palestine. One of the main issues that Sweden is intending to raise is the mainstreaming of the environment through all government sectors and how Sweden can support the Palestinian Government in ensuring this is done effectively. Sweden would like to discuss the administrative changes that may be necessary in order for mainstreaming of the environment to happen and how the next national development plan can be designed with this in mind.

Mr. Schaar said discussions in today's EnSWG meeting would provide an important input for Sweden in its preparations for the consultation event with the Palestinian Government. He also suggested that the EnSWG meeting could cover some topics discussed in previous meetings, for example: developments on the environmental assessment and the impact of the war in Gaza; the process of developing the EQA five-year strategy; the EnSWG work plan for 2015 and any joint efforts needed to ensure the work plan is implemented; the new agreement between UNDP and the Swedish Environment Protection Agency on environmental governance, which is a global programme that will support efforts to mainstream the environment in Palestine.

2- Updates by EQA

Co-Chair, Mrs. Adalah Atteereh (EQA Chairperson): gave a presentation that covered the following main points.

- 1- Four months ago, a meeting of Arab Environment Ministers took place in Jeddah, with the participation of UNEP. The Arab Ministers asked UNEP for assistance with two things in relation to Palestine: to prepare an assessment of the Gishori factories and an assessment of the impact of the last Israeli war on Gaza. As a follow-up to this meeting, EQA sent two letters to UNEP but has not yet received a reply. There might be a lot of political pressure on UNEP. EQA requests that partners intervene with UNEP in order to ensure the two assessments are implemented.
- 2- EQA is in the process of formulating its five-year strategy, with support from CIDA and in cooperation with Birzeit University. An internal workshop was held last week and there will be another one next week. The process is progressing smoothly.
- 3- EQA is working to develop by-laws for hazard waste.
- 4- EQA has two new offices: one in Jericho and another in Qalqilya. Twelve new staff members have been hired by EQA. They received training by EQA before starting their work on the ground.
- 5- Regarding the impact on the environment of the Israeli occupation, the Israeli Government informed the PA that it will close Abu Deis solid waste dumping site. Villages in Jerusalem Governorate will face a real problem in transporting their solid waste. EQA is trying to find a provisional solution by creating a temporary transfer station until Ramoun landfill is opened, which is another story, as PA has still not reached an agreement with Israeli counterparts to establish it and, therefore, no approval from them has been received.
- 6- Qalqilya and Tulkarem areas are also facing a critical situation in terms of solid waste as they are located on the border with Israel and Israelis are dumping hazard waste in those areas. EQA is trying its best to stop such violations.
- 7- EQA is working with the Ministry of Local Government to establish three new transfer stations in Jerusalem, Abu Deis and Salfit, which will serve the localities in the three regions by transferring solid waste to Zahret Al-Fenjan landfill in Jenin.
- 8- Jericho has a new project - implemented by UNDP and funded by Japan - to expand the landfill there and build a materials recovery facility that can be used until Ramoun landfill opens.
- 9- The latest scenario faced by EQA is that the Israelis are using an abandoned Palestinian quarry close to Deir Sharaf, in Nablus Governorate, to dump solid waste especially religious books.

- 10- The Palestinian Cabinet has declared 5 March as National Environment Day. EQA is also preparing for an activity to celebrate the Palestine sunbird, including a public awareness campaign to enhance the awareness of the Palestinian people about the bird and how to protect it.

3- Presentations on some main environmental issues (EQA & UNDP)

Mr. Ahmad Abu Thaher (Director General of Projects and International Relations - EQA): gave a presentation covering three main issues: international environmental conventions; environmental and health impacts on the Palestinian people of the Israeli Gishori industrial zone; climate change mainstreaming efforts in Palestine, including related capacity building of PA institutions. *(Full presentation is attached.)*

Mr. Husam Tubail (UNDP): gave a brief presentation on a regional project funded by the EU that UNDP is implementing in Palestine, Jordan and Israel. The project aims to foster cooperation on water management between the three parties' water authorities. *(Full presentation is attached.)*

4- Discussion

One issue raised was on legal protection in the Palestinian national system in relation to the international Convention on Biological Diversity, which Palestine has signed. EQA clarified that the same article of the Palestinian national law covers all international conventions that Palestine is now a party to. As such, the Convention on Biological Diversity will be treated as domestic legislation.

Participants pointed out that there are two red lists related to biodiversity. FAO is working with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), with the support of the EU, to develop a genetic categorization of 100 plant species, including endangered species. EQA confirmed it is aware of the two red lists, which have been largely developed upon Israeli studies, and said it would make efforts to carry out the needed fieldwork to develop a national list.

Participants discussed the International Conference on Climate Change that will take place at the end of 2015 in Paris and the EQA preparations for the event. EQA clarified that Palestine is aligned with other Arab countries in its approach to the conference. Arab countries support keeping the current agreement, seeing no need for a new one, which rich countries are requesting in order to oblige poorer countries to contribute to the funds. One representative will speak on behalf of all the Arab countries at the conference. EQA has a good sense from the conference secretariat that the Palestine report will be accepted even though Palestine is not a full party. EQA is planning to have a side event at the conference, where it will mainly present capacity development and the greenhouse inventory. Sweden showed an interest in having a joint side event with Palestine at the conference.

Participants also discussed the ongoing mapping of sources of industrial pollution. EQA clarified that Palestine is part of a regional project (Palestine, Malaysia, Morocco, Lebanon and Egypt) called "Governance and Knowledge Generation". Palestine has two national components in this project. The first component is mapping of 600 industrial companies across the West Bank. This is in addition to a previous mapping project in cooperation with UNDP and CIDA, which covered 400 industrial companies. EQA aims to put the results of both mapping exercises together in one report. The second component is to carry out environmental auditing of the stone and marble industry, in cooperation with the EU. EQA has already carried out the auditing of 20 companies. EQA plans to publish a report on both components by end of June 2015.

By the end of 2015, ARIG will publish a report on the status of the environment in the West Bank.

5- Updates by international partners on their interventions in the environment sector

Mr. Carlo Marsico (EU): introduced himself as the new EU focal point for the environment portfolio together with the climate change portfolio. By June 2015, the EU will produce a brochure on its interventions in the agriculture and environment sector, which will include information on projects in Palestine.

Mr. Azzam Saleh (FAO): gave an update on FAO's ongoing interventions focusing on mainstreaming environmental sustainability. The presentation covered the following main points:

1. **Promoting the use of recycled water for irrigation:** FAO is promoting the view of waste as a resource and opportunity. In accordance with this approach, the reuse of recycled water has been identified as an emerging water supply option for agriculture in the WBGS. FAO has been supporting the MoA, the Palestine Standards Institution and other related institutions in finalizing national standards for the reuse of recycled water for irrigation. The relevant Palestinian authorities will, thereafter, adopt these national standards. FAO is currently developing concept notes capturing evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing the use of recycled water for irrigation in the WBGS. Once finalized, FAO will start approaching interested donors for possible partnerships.
2. **Boosting climate-smart agriculture:** Climate change adaptation and mitigation is a prerequisite for building resilient agricultural systems in the context of water scarcity, which is further exacerbated by climate change. FAO supports climate-smart agriculture through a range of interventions supported by the Netherlands, Canada and EU, including:
 - Developing an agricultural, drought management policy paper;
 - Conducting an evidence-based assessment of land tenure, planning and management. This process offers a unique input for informed decision-making on sustainable livelihoods, social stability, environmental protection and economic development in the WBGS;
 - Optimizing fodder production through introduction of hydroponic systems;
 - Safeguarding agro-biodiversity through the development of a national database on local plant genetic resources focusing on around 100 species;
 - Developing market-based diversification of cropping patterns through high value crop production in line with good agricultural practices (Global GAP).
3. **Ensuring sanitary and phytosanitary standards:** Development of institutional capacities to ensure plant health, food safety, animal health - with support from the Netherlands and EU.
4. **Optimizing water demand management:** Current irrigation systems have an estimated leakage of up to 40%. With the support of the Netherlands and the UK, FAO is currently rehabilitating/establishing 40kms of irrigation conveyance systems (i.e. pipelines) enabling farmers to make the most use of available resources.

Mrs. Rima Abumiddain (UNDP): gave an update on UNDP's ongoing interventions focusing on UNDP involvement and work in the environment Sector, her presentation covered the following main points:

- 1- The current portfolio of the environment unit at UNDP/PAPP for 2015-16 is around 26 Million dollars. There are 10 projects focusing mainly on the following:
 - a. Rubble removal Programme with a total contribution of around 14 million dollars supported mainly by USAID (10 Millions); SIDA (USD 3.1 millions) and the government of Japan (USD 0.5 Million). So far, UNDP/PAPP has removed around 230,000 tons of the one million tons it plans to remove.

- b. Although UNDP/PAPP secured all the funds needed for rubble removal, it still needs around 6.5 million for crushing of rubble and its re-use. In roads rehabilitation.
 - c. UNDP/PAPP just signed an agreement with the government of Japan with a total of USD 7.1 Million for two projects targeting the solid waste sector. The first project is to immediately support the solid waste management in the Gaza Strip through the Job creation Programme with a total amount of USAID 4.3 Millions. The other project is to expand the existing landfill in Jericho city until the landfill in Ramallah Governorate is constructed. This is in addition to the ongoing project that targeted the expansion of the Gaza landfill that was completed in June 2014 and the planned rehabilitation of Sofa landfill in Rafah.
- 2- With regard to climate change and the already detailed presentation of the EU funded project for Downscaling of Hydro-climate model, UNDP is also implementing the project that is funded by the Government of Belgium regarding mainstreaming climate change and enhancing the capacities of the PA in climate change adaption and mitigation. The chapter on Green House Gases (GHG) and mitigation measures is already finalized and will soon start the Vulnerability assessment and adaptation chapter. We hope that the project will end in June 2016.
- 3- UNDP/PPAP is also engaging in Disaster risk reduction (with the support of Iceland) and will in May start the development of institutional and legal framework for DRR at the national level. For that purpose, UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of President t who is their main partner for this project.
- 4- UNDP/PAPP is also engaged in the water and sanitation sector and has currently three main projects,: the construction of KhanYounis treatment plan in Gaza (56 Million from Japan and the IDB), the emergency water supply project in the Northern and Rafah Governorate and the second phase for wastewater management that is currently funded by Netherland.
- 5- UNDP/PAPP will support through its own TRAC resources the development of the environment Charter for the environment Sector group.

List of Participants

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