Press Release
The European Union, the Islamic Development Bank and UNDP launch the Revitalization of Sultan Suleiman and Salah Eddin Streets in East Jerusalem

East Jerusalem, 13 December 2016 – The European Union, the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Waqf, Arab Chamber of Commerce and UNDP’s Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) launched today the Productivity and Urban Renewal Programme in East Jerusalem (PURE). The programme, with a total value of around USD 22 million, aims at supporting the resilience of Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem by improving socio-economic conditions through the urban revitalization of two key commercial centres in the city namely Salah Eddin and Sultan Suleiman streets.

Director General of Islamic Waqf, Sheikh Azzam Al-Khateeb, thanked the partners for supporting such a vital project in East Jerusalem. “It is important to bring the streets of Jerusalem back to life and to preserve our culture and legacy,” he added.

The PURE programme is currently funded by the European Union (EU) (5 million Euros) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) (USD 4 million). The programme will be implemented by UNDP/PAPP over a 30-month period in cooperation with the Islamic Waqf and the Arab Chamber of Commerce in East Jerusalem. It will address the needs of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, businesses and local shop owners, as well as the local population at large by creating an enabling environment for competitive and attractive commercial gateways. The different components will also enhance economic development and foster private sector investments in East Jerusalem.

"Palestinians living in Jerusalem have the right to live in dignity and to enjoy their political, civil, economic and social rights, also through equal access to resources and opportunities. The EU put its words into action and developed a dedicated programme of support for East Jerusalem. This programme has an annual budget of 10 million Euros to improve the living conditions of the local Palestinian population," said the EU Representative Ralph Tarraf. "Today we are marking the start of a new project that will revive two of the main streets in East Jerusalem: Salah Al Din and Sultan Sulaiman. This is a unique project. It is not only about infrastructure and economic development, it’s about preserving the Palestinian identity in East Jerusalem”

It is estimated that over 120 commercial and 50 business activities will directly benefit from the project, in addition to 350-400 businessmen and workers, with approximately 16,000 work days created. In addition, the programme will increase awareness and provide legal support against restrictions, operating businesses, licensing, and finally ensure that Palestinians will be included in the development of urban plans in East Jerusalem. Comprehensive technical studies, including town planning, for Sultan Suleiman and Salah Eddin streets will also be produced through the programme.
Mr Hani Abu Diab, Representing the Islamic Development Bank highlighted that Al Aqsa Fund of the Islamic Development is supporting projects worth over USD 150 million in Jerusalem ranging from housing, to health, education, economic empowerment, youth, sports and others. “It is our responsibility as donors, Waqf, implementing partners and beneficiaries to work together to make this programme a success, despite the challenges,” he added.

Fadi Hidmi, Director of the Chamber of Commerce explained that the economic situation in East Jerusalem is difficult, demand is low and many people are on the verge of losing their businesses in the city. “I consider this project a success story even before it begins. The two streets targeted by the project are the lifeline that has been feeding the economy in East Jerusalem for years,” he said.

After the opening remarks, a presentation on the design concept for both Salah Eddin and Sultan Suleiman streets was given and was followed by a tour to visit the spaces and buildings targeted for rehabilitation works.

UNDP Special Representative, Roberto Valent, highlighted that supporting the resilience and development of the Palestinian people is a priority for UNDP and this priority has to start in East Jerusalem. “People in East Jerusalem are cut off from economic opportunities day after day. Their architectural heritage is under threat. The programme we are launching today is not only about infrastructure. It is about creating jobs, improving livelihoods and safeguarding the cultural, architectural and social fabrics of East Jerusalem,” he added.

The launch ceremony took place on Tuesday, 13 December 2016 at the St. George Hotel in Jerusalem and was attended by Sheikh Azzam Al-Khateeb, Director General of Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem, Mr Ralph Tarraf EU Representative, Mr Hani Abu Diab on behalf of the Islamic Development Bank, Mr Fadi Hidmi, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Mr Roberto Valent, UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator, as well as representatives from the tourism and private sector, cultural and educational institutions.

It is worth noting that UNDP/PAPP is implementing several socio-economic programmes in Area C and East Jerusalem, in particular through the Facilitating Access to Infrastructure Resilience in Area C and East Jerusalem programme (FAIR), Community Resilience and Development Programme (CRDP), and the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Programme (DEEP).

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