



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION: Achievements and Challenges

Palestine's Report to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, 20 - 22 June 2012



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARIJ	Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DARP	Development Assistance and Reform Platform
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MEEnA	Ministry of Environmental Affairs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Green Economy
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GS	Gaza Strip
IEA	International Environmental Agreements
INGOs	International non-governmental organizations
L/C/day	Liters per capita per day
MCM	Million cubic meters
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoPAD	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NCD	Non-communicable Diseases
NDP	National Development Plan 2011-2013- Establishing the State Building our Future
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
Nm	Nautical miles
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PNGON	Palestinian Non-governmental Organizations Network
PNGOs	Palestinian Non-governmental Organizations
PRDP	The Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (2008-2011)
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
SD	Sustainable Development
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises



UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
UXOs	Unexploded Ordinances
WB	West Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


This report is the Palestinian contribution to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). The report sheds light on the obstacles and challenges, which we, the Palestinian people, are facing under the Israeli occupation regime in our pursuit of sustainable development. The report was prepared in consultation with various stakeholders, including governmental, non-governmental, private sector and independent experts.

It is important to highlight that **Sustainable Development and living under Israeli occupation are two mutually exclusive concepts**. The prolonged Israeli military occupation of Palestine has severely limited the prospects for Palestinian development and has deprived us of our right to self-determination and of our basic human rights. For the Palestinian people; achieving sustainable development means first of all achieving freedom.

Major emphasis is thus placed on the principles and commitments enshrined in the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* which states that the “*environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected*” and the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* which reaffirms the need to “*take further effective measures to remove obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social development and are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be combated and eliminated. People under foreign occupation must be protected in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law*”.

The obstacles, which we face in achieving Sustainable Development, are of two types: external obstacles related to the Israeli military occupation and internal ones related to the institutional framework in place.

The Israeli occupation-related measures have caused physical harm to people and property, as well as economic and environmental damage. Over the past 45 years, i.e. since the beginning of the Israeli occupation, the residency status of nearly 250,000 Palestinians was revoked, which means they were de-facto deported. Since 2000 some 12,400 Palestinian houses and structures were demolished in the occupied Palestinian territory, thus forcibly displacing tens of thousands of Palestinians. The Israeli occupation regime has confiscated Palestinian land, has extracted Palestinian water resources, and has polluted the soil and water through extensive industrial activities in illegal Israeli settlements, military training grounds and the disposal of radioactive waste. Furthermore, the constraints imposed by the Israeli occupation regime on our economy have obstructed the private sector and thereby its ability to create employment opportunities. As a result the occupied Palestinian territory remains heavily dependent on aid and exposed to poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. The long-standing presence of the Israeli military occupation has also increased disparity between various regions of the occupied Palestinian territory, especially between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.



While the most serious constraints on sustainable development for the Palestinian people are a result of the continued Israeli military occupation, the Palestinian National Authority exercises all available options to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of the Palestinian people. The accomplishments of the Palestinian National Authority have probably been most pronounced in the sphere of social development, while economic development lags behind since it is subjected to the rigid obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation regime. In the field of environment we also need to assess our own performance critically and acknowledge that environmental issues have not yet been sufficiently mainstreamed.

Major Palestinian institutional achievements include the development of a national integrated planning and budgeting framework, based on sector and cross-sector strategies. Currently we are in the process of closely aligning our development planning with the Millennium Development Goals through the consultative elaboration of a localized Millennium Development Goal strategy that will underpin the upcoming national plan.

On an overall basis our pursuit of sustainable development reflects a trade-off between the three pillars of sustainable development, namely social, economy and environment.

Achievements in social development include a net enrolment rate in primary education of 95.6% for males and 98.7% for females in 2008/09. The proportion of pupils who completed primary education was 99.4% in the same period. Despite the significant achievements in education, severe constraints remain in Israeli occupied East Jerusalem, where each year some 5,000 pupils cannot be enrolled for lack of Israeli investment in the Palestinian education system. In the health sector, major achievements include the decline in unsafe deliveries to less than one percent. Maternal mortality was significantly reduced to 38 per 100,000 in 2009. The immunization coverage among children aged 12-23 months stood at an impressive 96.5% in 2006. In terms of social protection, the Palestinian National Authority provides targeted cash-assistance to some 85,000 poverty-affected households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. To avoid duplication, the program is closely coordinated with UN agencies operating in the area. In order to address gender disparities; President Abbas endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in March 2009. In May 2011, the President abolished mitigating circumstances to so-called "honor killings", a crime which is now dealt with as common murder. Furthermore, the number of women in decision-making positions has increased.


Economic development is being hampered by the Israeli military occupation. Our economy has remained fragile as a result of the various restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation regime. These multiple restrictions include: the lack of control over borders, imports and exports, limitations on production inputs that are considered as "dual use" items by the Israeli occupying power, the siege on the Gaza Strip, movement restrictions inside the West Bank, land confiscation, excruciating permit regime, Israeli exploitation of natural resources, and the physical destruction of the Palestinian economic facilities. These restrictions have – inter alia – resulted in increased costs of production, transportation, imports and exports and are thus

heavily impacting the development and competitiveness of our economy. The accumulative effects of Israeli occupation policies have resulted in high poverty rates, widespread unemployment, especially in the Gaza Strip, and prevalent food insecurity. Only 33% of the population can be considered as food secure.

The environmental pillar probably remains the weakest pillar of the three due to, both, Israeli occupation and internal challenges. Diminishing access to Palestinian resources and increasing pollution of available resources by Israel are the main sets of obstacles. The most important emerging challenges in the occupied Palestinian territory are desertification and climate change. While the PNA has developed a strategy to combat desertification and another one to adapt to climate change, environmental issues continue to receive limited funding from the national budget, as well as from international donors. On the positive side, some of the achievements in the environmental sector include the establishment of designated government bodies for the management of the environment and natural resources, laws and by-laws to protect the environment, and an increased focus on environmental issues by civil society organizations. Though the environment features as a cross-cutting theme in the integrated national planning and budgeting process, supported by a sectoral strategy, the implementation of environmental objectives throughout each of the affected sectors still requires increased attention.

Further institutional challenges towards sustainable development on the home-front include insufficiency of legislations, overlap in institutional roles and responsibilities, the paralysis of the legislative branch since mid-2007, conditional funding by donors, and the donors' repeated diversion of development assistance towards emergency funding – either as a result of real emergencies or out of a political motivation.

Although there is no agreed-upon definition for a green economy, various aspects of a green economy are already visible in the oPt. Initiatives in this field include green loans, green energy, green agriculture, and green buildings. The two sectors with the strongest potential to become drivers towards a truly sustainable economy are energy and agriculture. In the energy sector the endorsement of the Strategy for Renewable Energy and the Strategy for Rationalization of Energy Use are major achievements. The share of renewable energy among the total energy consumption in the oPt stands currently at 16%, with the aim of increasing it to 25% by 2020, taking into account an overall increase in energy consumption as a consequence of population growth.




Not being recognized as a member state implies that Palestine cannot ratify International Environmental Agreements and thus does not have access to related funding opportunities. No country can, however, address global challenges in isolation. It is hence important that Palestine can access to and benefit from all International Environmental Agreements. Furthermore, it is important that Palestine can have membership, access to and benefit from any post 2012 institutional framework that emanates out of the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*.

We will continue to strive towards sustainable development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals through pursuing national independence vis-à-vis the Israeli occupation regime on the one hand and good governance at home on the other hand. However, we, the Palestinian people, will be deprived of the opportunity to achieve sustainable development so long as we continue to suffer under a hostile and expansionist Israeli occupation regime, which impacts every single aspect of Palestinian social and economic life, as well as the natural environment.



INTRODUCTION

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, RIO 1992) and the tenth anniversary of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg 2002). The objectives of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) that is currently (June 2012) taking place in Rio de Janeiro is to renew public awareness of the world's environmental crisis and to strengthen political commitment to sustainable development (SD). This conference is set to take SD agendas around the world a step further as participants were asked, to assess their progress, identify remaining gaps in the implementation as well as to address new and emerging challenges.



The present report is the Palestinian contribution to the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* (UNCSD). The report sheds light on the obstacles and challenges, which the Palestinian people are facing in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt¹) in their pursuit of SD. A particular focus is put on SD-achievements over the past ten years. Before concluding with the main Palestinian expectations of the UNCSD Conference this report will present the Palestinian vision on two of its main themes:

- A green economy in the context of SD and poverty eradication and
- The institutional framework for SD

This report was prepared based on an extensive review of the available secondary sources, as well as built on positions taken verbally by the involved political leaders and stakeholders. The meetings that were needed for this purpose (see Annex 3) were held in March and April 2012. Within the framework of preparation for the Palestinian National Report; interviews with national government representatives, non-governmental organizations, private sector representatives and experts have been conducted. Information was obtained from various sources, including national government, non-governmental organizations, private sector, UN Agencies, donor institutions, and water utilities.


1 The oPt refers to the WB (including Jerusalem) and GS that was occupied in 1967 by Israel.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT IN OPT

The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future of 1987, also known as Brundtland's Report², defines SD as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* [1]. Hence, for the Palestinian people SD means the kind of development that leads to freedom, peace, security, human rights protection, a healthy environment, economic prosperity and social justice based on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination i.e. the end of the ongoing Israeli military occupation. Palestinian people and their political leaders consider the achievement of a good and decent quality of life for present and future generations a right.

2 Named after the chair of the commission



However, within the current political situation in oPt; achieving SD means first of all a struggle to achieve basic human rights. In view of the Israeli occupation and its practices; SD *“reflects the determination of the Palestinian people to remain on their land and continue to pursue their livelihoods, not succumbing to the pressures placed upon them by the Israeli Occupation. It is also a concept that refers to the transition from unviable development under military Occupation to development for endurance and survival”*[2].

According to the Brundtland report, SD consists of integrated achievements under the three pillars economic, social, and environmental. Thus, when it comes to assessing progress towards SD, the single most important indicator is the extent to which these three pillars have already converged. However, this type of convergence is often difficult to assess and at the same time there is no agreement on the exact indicators to be used to measure convergence. What is available at this stage is a pre-defined set of indicators, each of which is specific to a sector. The indicators that were used for the analysis of the present report were adapted from a list of indicators that the Arab Environmental Ministers have adapted in 2007 [3]. Not all indicators could be deployed though because of practicalities of reporting and insufficiency of data.



CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has started working towards SD since its establishment – as indicated not least through the various relevant institutions that were established. However, significant progress is hampered by the ongoing Israeli military occupation. The following chapters will explore step after step the political commitments made by PNA and the typology of the Israeli barriers imposed that limited SD achievements in oPt.



The Impact of Israeli occupation on Sustainable Development in the oPt

SD and a state of Israeli occupation are two mutually exclusive concepts. Palestine continue to be deprived of any meaningful advance towards SD so long as we, the Palestinian people, have to suffer from a hostile and expansionist Israeli colonial occupation regime, which impacts every single aspect of Palestinian social and economic life, as well as our natural environment.

The prolonged Israeli occupation of the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS) has severely limited the prospects of Palestinian development and has deprived us of our right to self determination as well as of our their basic human rights.

Through military orders, the Israeli occupation has established control over our natural resources and has denied us access to it [4,5,6]. The Israeli occupation is not only in control over land resources, but has purposely fragmented the oPt by deploying a matrix of more than 500 checkpoints [7]. Thus the mobility of the Palestinians is controlled. The Israeli occupation has also been working continuously and systematically on destroying basic infrastructure such as ports, roads and water networks. This has affected the environment and limited the ability of the PNA to provide needed services to its citizens.

The Declaration of Principles (Oslo I Agreement), signed on September 13th, 1993, was an interim arrangement between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that was meant to only last for a period of five years. However, it has now persisted for almost 20 years, permitting the further entrenchment of the Israeli occupation regime. During the same period the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was established with the aim of laying the foundations for an independent State of Palestine and responding to the development needs of the Palestinian people. It is important to note that despite the Oslo framework and the off-and-on negotiations that followed, the international legal context of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the applicability of international humanitarian law and human rights law was not affected; Israel remains the occupying power over Palestine and owes duties to the Palestinian people as such.

As a result of the Interim Agreement of 1995 (Oslo II), the Palestinian land occupied in 1967 was classified into three different areas: "Area A", "B", and "C" [8]. Like the Interim Agreement itself, this classification was supposed to be temporary to permit a gradual withdrawal of the Israeli occupation while permanent status negotiations would proceed to conclusion with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Years of continued Israeli illegal settlement expansion and Israeli delays in the implementation and violations of the Interim Agreement fueled the spark that ignited the uprising in the oPt in 2000 (i.e. the Second Intifada) when Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon entered the al-Aqsa Mosque square under heavy guard (i.e. the holiest shrine for Moslems in Palestine). Massive protests erupted to which the Israeli forces responded with excessive use of force. Heavy Israeli incursions took place from the end of 2001 in almost all the cities of the oPt, and the construction

of the Annexation and Separation Wall commenced in June 2002. As a result achievements in Palestinian institutional and human development were reversed to the state in which these had been a decade ago.

A study conducted by the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy, in cooperation with the Palestinian think-tank ARIJ in September 2011 [9] attempted to quantify the costs incurred by the Palestinian economy in 2010 as a result of the Israeli-imposed geographic fragmentation and related restrictions. According to the study, the Palestinian economy suffered losses of USD 6.9 billion in 2010, an amount close to the GDP of that year as a direct result of the Israeli occupation measures. As the study conclusively demonstrates, USD 4.5 billion of losses are the result of heavy restrictions imposed on Palestinians in accessing their natural resources, such as water, minerals, natural gas reserves, salts, stones and land. Losses incurred by restrictions on accessing these resources amount to 56% of the GDP and cannot be justified by security needs. Many of these resources are rather exploited by Israel itself.


Another large portion of the economic losses is related to the Israeli siege on the GS. The heavy costs resulting from the siege on GS are a direct result of a myriad of Israeli restrictions, including the almost complete closure imposed on internal commerce and international trade, the disruption caused to the electricity production, the limited access to the sea resources and the continued shelling of essential infrastructure and economic facilities. Additionally, the siege deprives the treasury of more than one third of its revenues stemming from imports and exports across the GS's borders [9].

Other losses related directly to the Israeli occupation include the extra costs imposed on the oPt and resulting from its dependency on Israeli supplies for water and electricity, costs imposed on exports and imports, higher transaction costs inside Palestine, as well as the destruction of agricultural lands and structures.

The above mentioned study by ARIJ on the economic costs of the Israeli occupation is likely to under-estimate the full actual economic impact of the Israeli occupation since it was not able to quantify losses pertaining to the situation of East Jerusalem, which as the economic, social, and religious center of Palestine, has been completely cut off from the rest of the WB and from the GS.

Finally, the study concludes that the PNA would run a healthy fiscal surplus of several hundred millions of dollars in the absence of these direct losses attributable to the Israeli occupation, and which –otherwise – would enable the Government to further invest in social, economic and environmental development. Instead the PNA required USD 1.1 billion in external support in 2010 for recurrent expenditures to sustain existing levels of services.

As Israel is the occupying power it bears certain responsibilities under international humanitarian law. The rules of belligerent Israeli occupation oblige Israel to protect the wellbeing of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation and strictly prohibit the Israel from transferring its own population into opt, as well as from engaging into economic activities in the oPt (e.g. abstraction of water, natural gas, mineral resources and quarries located in "Area C") with a view to drawing economic benefits



for itself. Rather, the occupying power has a duty to enable the development of the occupied territory and its resources for the benefit of its indigenous population. Rather than supporting to develop the oPt, the Government of Israel has de-developed it for Palestinians, has deported the Palestinian population and has confiscated Palestinian resources, built illegal Israeli settlements and deployed Israeli citizens into the oPt. Furthermore, Israel as the occupying power has attempted to make the Palestinian workforce and economy fully dependent on Israel. Over the past 45 years, namely since the beginning of the Israeli occupation up to 1994, the residency status of nearly 250,000 Palestinians was revoked, which means they were de-facto deported [138]. Palestinian industrial development was actively constrained, Palestinian natural resources were confiscated and ties between the Palestinian people and the Arab world were cut off. The result is a Palestinian people dependent on Israel and on external assistance.

The Annexation and Separation Wall


The Annexation and Separation Wall is made of concrete and razor wire fencing, as well as of an entire regime composed of trenches, watchtowers, and electric fences [10]. Based on the plans approved by the Government of Israel the route of the Annexation and Separation Wall extends deep into the WB and separates the WB from East Jerusalem and communities in the WB from one another. Currently some 62% of the Annexation and Separation Wall has been completed, 8.2% is under construction, and 30% in the planning stage. When completed, 85% of its route will be lading deeply into the WB, rather than along the border with Israel [11]. The area that lies between the Green Line and the Annexation and Separation Wall will encompass about 9.4% of the WB. Accessing Palestinian owned land that is located between the Green Line and the Annexation and Separation Wall requires a special permit. There are 66 designated gates to enter these lands, but access is cumbersome, random and discriminatory. Currently approximately 6,500 Palestinians are trapped between the Annexation and Separation Wall and the Green Line. It is expected that this number will climb to 25,000 Palestinian when completing the Annexation and Separation Wall as planned [11]. Palestinians living in these enclaves require residence permits to continue living in their own homes. The Annexation and Separation Wall thus impacts livelihoods across Palestine. On 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice stated that the sections of the Annexation and Separation Wall, located within the WB, including East Jerusalem, violate Israeli's obligation under international law [11].

Restrictions and Fragmentation in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem)

As mentioned above, the Interim Agreement divided the WB into the areas “A”, “B”, and “C”. Areas under limited Palestinian self-government (“Area A” and “Area B”) are fragmented enclaves within the WB. Currently 64% of the Occupied WB, including East Jerusalem, is under full and direct Israeli control. Those regions of the WB, which are fully controlled by Israel are called “Area C” and are home to some 150,000 Palestinians [12]. Without developing these strategic land reserves for the benefit of Palestinians, there can be no territorially contiguous and truly sovereign and independent State of Palestine. Significant stretches of agricultural land and different types of natural resources are located within “Area C”, the only contiguous area of the WB. More basic infrastructure for electricity, water, wastewater and solid waste can only be located in “Area C” if it is to make this area meet the needs of a growing Palestinian population.

According to the current system applied by the Israeli military occupation, we are not allowed to develop our communities in “Area C”. Israeli occupation authorities have only approved limited development plans for a marginal percentage of villages in “Area C”. As a result, we are left with no choice but to carry out construction on their own land, unauthorized by Israeli occupation regime, to meet our basic needs. However, many of these structures are subsequently being destroyed by the Israeli occupation forces. Since 2000 some 6,000 Palestinian houses and structures were demolished in “Area C” (this figure does not include East Jerusalem) [13], with a steep increase in demolitions over the past two years. This Israeli policy has forcibly displaced thousands of Palestinians (since 2009 alone some 3,000 Palestinians have been displaced) in stark violation of international humanitarian and human rights laws as reported, inter alia, by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [14]. Altogether more than 12,400 structures have been demolished since 2000 in the oPt, thus rendering tens of thousands of citizens homeless.

Following the Israeli occupation of the WB and GS in 1967, Israel, the occupying power, unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem (some 70.5 km²) to its territory [15], which is illegal under international law. In the subsequent years; Israel has restricted Palestinian development in East Jerusalem by land confiscation, home demolitions, illegal Israeli settlements’ construction, separation of East Jerusalem from the WB and GS, restricting access to education and health, and the ability to plan and develop its own community [15]. The accumulative result of these oppressive policies is that tens of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave the city to seek a better life in the WB or abroad. Furthermore, approximately 14,000 Palestinians from East Jerusalem have lost their residency status in East Jerusalem, under the claim that their “center of life” is not in East Jerusalem [15]. Since 2008 alone some 4,500 Palestinian have been expelled [15]. This policy is blatantly illegal as the 4th Geneva Convention prohibits forcible transfers. The occupying power also has the responsibility to preserve and maintain the demographic and social configuration of the occupied territory.



Of the total land area of the unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem, thirty-five percent was confiscated for the purpose of illegal Israeli settlements in spite of the fact that the international humanitarian law prohibits the transfer of citizens of the occupying power to the territory it occupies. A meager thirteen percent of East Jerusalem land is zoned for Palestinian development, 22% as green area or public land, and the remaining 30% are un-zoned areas. It is important to mention that the 22% of the area designated as green or public land is in reality considered a land reserve for the expansion of Israeli illegal settlements. Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are allowed to build only within the 13% of East Jerusalem zoned for them, and even there construction is subjected to significant Israeli restrictions. [15]. A conservative estimation of the gap between the number of housing permits given and the need of housing units based on natural growth and the existing demand is more than 1,100 housing units per year [16]. This situation forces Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem to meet their basic housing needs without a construction permit, risking demolition of their homes and heavy fines. According to conservative figures, some 28% of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem are at risk of demolition due to the alleged violation of Israeli planning laws [16]. In the same context, since 1967, the Israeli authorities have demolished an estimated of 2,000 houses in East Jerusalem (2009 data) under the claim that these were built illegally [16].

Illegal Israeli Settlements

Since 1967 the number of illegal Israeli settlements in the oPt has continuously risen to reach 144 in 2010. The illegal Israeli settlements have been increasing in size and population over the 45-year-long Israeli occupation. The number of settlers in the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied WB stood at 518,974 in 2010, of which 262,493 settlers are living in the Jerusalem Governorate. Of those settlers living in Jerusalem Governorate 196,178 live in Jerusalem J1³ area [17].

The Israeli government has announced the WB as a “priority” development area for Israel, where settlers, as a result, enjoy economic and social benefits that Israelis living inside Israel do not enjoy [18]. Settlers in the WB are thus able to exploit Palestinian natural resources with the approval and assistance of the Israeli government through economic and social benefits [18]. Furthermore, protected by the Israeli armed forces, Israeli settlers conduct attacks on Palestinians and their property. The number of attacks by Israeli settlers has been increasing rapidly over the years, without any protection of Palestinian civilians by the occupying power [19].

3 Jerusalem J1 is: Those parts of Jerusalem, which were annexed by Israel in 1967. These parts include the following localities: (Beit Hanina, Shu'fat Refugees Camp, Shu'fat, Al' Isawiya, Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi Al - Joz, Bab Al-Sahira, As Suwwana, At -Tur, Jerusalem "Al - Quds", Ash -Shayyah, Ras Al-Amud, Silwan, Ath – Thuri, Jabal Al – Mukabbir, As – Sawahira Al – Gharbiya, Beit Safafa, Sharafat, Sur Bahir, and Um Tuba, Kufr A'qab).

The illegal Israeli settlements have been engaging extensively in agricultural and industrial production [20]. In both cases heavy pollution patterns can be observed and with a direct impact on Palestinians and the environment in the oPt. Israel has moved many of the polluting industries into the WB illegal Israeli settlements. Israeli occupation does not enforce the same environmental laws in illegal Israeli settlement in oPt as it does on Israeli territory. Therefore, Israeli industries in the illegal Israeli settlements have been subsidized directly through various financial incentives, and indirectly through being relieved of the external costs that arise from the industrial production.

Siege on the Gaza Strip


The GS, a coastal enclave with an area covering 365 km², houses some 1.7 million Palestinians, almost 80% of them being registered refugees who in 1948 were uprooted and displaced from their homes in what is now the State of Israel. The GS, with its lack of natural resources and its consequent extremely high dependency on Israel, has suffered mostly during the 2nd Intifada and during the subsequent years from destruction and economic decline. Since 2006, the GS has been under siege; its external borders are largely sealed, with limited imports of vital goods and no exports worth mentioning. Trade with the outside world depends largely on underground tunnels at the Egyptian border. Repeated Israeli military assaults on the GS, in particular those in 2008/2009, used excessive force against civilians and lead to heavy destruction in the GS.

The GS of today is a closed area where movement in and out of people and goods is significantly restricted. The “ease” of the siege on the GS announced by the Israeli Government on June 20, 2010 was marginal in terms of improving the humanitarian conditions in the GS [21]. As yet, raw materials that are vital to help improve living conditions, the economic situation, and that are needed for the reconstruction, are not allowed into GS. Therefore, the policy of “easing” the siege did not have any significant impact on the economic situation [22]. Furthermore, the easing of the siege has not resulted in any improved movement of people between GS and the WB (including East Jerusalem) [21].

Israeli Imposed Restriction on Access to Land and Sea in the Gaza Strip

Over the past ten years, Israel has gradually increased restrictions on farming along GS’s border with Israel. Palestinian farmers in GS have been either totally or partially prevented from accessing land up to 1,000-1,500 meters from the border. This area is estimated to comprise some 17% of the GS and more than one third of the agricultural lands [23]. The restriction has directly impacted around 113,000 people [23]. The value of land and property destroyed by Israel over the past 5 years in this so-called “buffer zone” is conservatively estimated at USD 308 million [23]. Furthermore, economic losses resulting from restricted access to this zone are estimated at USD 50.2 million a year. Also it is worth mentioning that several schools are located within the restricted zone [23].





In a similar manner Israel has progressively restricted the fishing perimeters off the GS's coast. While the Interim Agreements set out a fishing zone of 20 nautical miles (nm), this has been reduced to 12 nm in 2002, to 6nm in 2006 and since 2008 it has been restricted to only 3nm. At present this means that fishermen are prevented from accessing 85% of the maritime areas entitled to them in the Interim Agreements. These restrictions have impacted 65,000 people directly [23]. Economic losses in fishing are estimated at USD 26.5 million over five years [23]. Restrictions on the GS fisheries have also brought about change with regard to the means of fishing that are used. With the fishing becoming more intensive, less environmentally friendly practices allow to secure at least some of the livelihoods. Significant environmental deterioration with mainly the loss of biodiversity is expected along the coastline and in the allocated waters for fishing. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) noted in a report in 2007 that restrictions on fishing rights to 6nm have *"led to overfishing in shallow coastal waters and resulted in the depletion of breeding grounds. If the restrictions continue, future fishing stocks will be threatened."* [24]. This situation has become even more severe since restrictions started to be enforced on a stretch that is less than 3nm away from the coast.

The only way to address the dire situation in GS is to immediately lift the restrictions that are currently imposed on GS's population, including restrictions of access to land and sea.

Overarching Institutional Challenges to Sustainable Development

Several overarching institutional challenges affect the attempt of achieving SD. The main challenges include:

- National sector classification differs from the three pillars of SD (environment is a cross-cutting theme, rather than a macro-sector by itself)
- Imposed conditional donor funding,
- Diversion of development assistance towards emergency funding – either as a result of real emergencies or out of a political motivation un-unified legislations, inactive Legislative Council,
- Inability to enforce laws in the whole oPt due to lack of sovereignty,
- "Parallel" structures in the WB and GS, and
- Human rights challenges.


The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) for instance has divided its National Policy Agenda into four major sectors: governance, social, economic and infrastructure. The infrastructure sector is divided into the following sub-sectors: energy, environment, housing, transportation, and water and wastewater management. It should be noted here that the environment has been acknowledged as a cross-cutting sector in 2009. With this change, an increased interest to the environment has been observed. Though the environment features as a cross-cutting theme in the integrated national planning and budgeting process, supported by a sectoral strategy, the implementation of environmental objectives throughout the sectors still requires increased attention. Within the aid coordination structure an Environment Sector Working Group has been created to coordinate Palestinian and international efforts towards the environment pillar of SD⁴.

With comparison to the subdivision of SD by the PNA described above, the international discourse on SD is structured around the three pillars: environmental, social and economic; with governance being the framework that fosters SD. This differs from the Palestinian approach, which views the economic and social sectors as macro-sectors in its successive development plans and recently introduced environment as a cross-sector strategy, hence as a cross-cutting topic to be mainstreamed across all other macro-sectors and sectors. Nevertheless environmental aspects still feature under infrastructure and are thus reduced to more service oriented aspects such as water supply and waste collection. It is important that the environment protection becomes a principle and overall objective in the national planning process. If the PNA wants to reflect SD principles in their National Policy Agenda, restructuring of the four major sectors should take place to ensure that the environment is a major sector and not a cross-cutting sector, thereby following the SD approach.

Another challenge to SD is conditional funding. Although, funding to the Palestinians living in oPt has been important in improving humanitarian conditions and a driver for development in oPt; conditional funding imposed by some donors is still a challenge facing SD. Conditional funding stands for a common practice by which the donor takes an “aggressive part in shaping the agenda of its recipients” [25]. Conditional funding has serious consequences in oPt, as it leaves NGOs with a high level of uncertainty, and may leave the most vulnerable without support due to their political affiliations, and deprive the occupied Palestinians from their right to resist the Israeli occupation [25]. This has resulted in significant increase in move of international NGOs towards implementation, and the exclusion of Palestinian NGOs from project implementation [25]. Further, as INGOs starts to be implementers they become competitors to Palestinian NGOs, and result in their replacement in development work. This makes the path to SD very vulnerable as social change and development of a society should come from within [25]. Therefore, without local NGOs striving for SD in oPt becomes obsolete.

Donor dependency leaves the PNA and Palestinian NGOs in a relatively weak position with comparison to the donor agencies themselves, when it comes to negotiating programs and setting policies. In reverse, neither PNA nor Palestinian NGOs are capable of sustaining their institutional capability to meet the needs of the programs

4 This working group is co-chaired by the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Sweden, with a representative from UNDP as the Technical Advisor.



that they are working to implement [25]. In spite of the Paris Declaration [26], the Accra Action Agenda [27] and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation [28], such practices often lead to reduced aid effectiveness in oPt.

The political conditions that have become significantly worse as a result of the Israeli occupation measures in the past few years have resulted in a shift of international aid from developmental towards humanitarian action particularly in GS, leading to limited prospects for development. For SD to become achievable, it is essential that aid be gradually moved towards developmental programs [25].

Another issue that requires handling is the definition of roles and responsibilities of the various actors, and the overlap between the various national government agencies. The insufficiency in some aspects of the legislative framework restricts the move towards SD. Some laws are still not unified; some of the laws are Egyptian (in the GS), some are Jordanian (in the WB), some are Palestinian Laws; further some of the laws that are still active date back to the Ottoman and British periods. In addition, not all laws (including the Palestinian ones) are harmonized among each other and with the Basic Law.

Limited enforcement of laws is due to various reasons but most importantly is lack of sovereignty. The Israeli occupation has issued several military orders after PNA establishment. These military orders did not specify the areas where they would be implemented other than jurisdiction of these Laws in oPt, i.e. did not limit the jurisdiction of the laws to regions under Israeli control according to Oslo Agreements. This has resulted in conflict between PNA laws and the Israeli military orders, hence weakening the implementation of the Palestinian regulations. Furthermore, many laws are not supported by sufficient by-laws and lack instructions to allow for their enforcement.

The state of internal division has resulted in additional institutional obstacles in the face of SD; including the de facto of “parallel” institutional setup, the paralysis of the legislative council since mid-2007, and human rights challenges.



4

POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the convergence of the three-pillars, political commitment is considered a key success factor towards achieving SD. In oPt indicators to assess political commitment include the following high-level declarations:

- Protection of various human rights including the right to a well balanced and a clean environment in the Basic Law [29];
- Inclusion of principles of good governance in the Basic Law [29];
- Development of various Palestinian Laws
- Development of national strategic plans: the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) (2008-2011); Palestinian National Development Plan (NDP, 2011-2013) [30] and 23 sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies;
- Development of 65 Strategic Development and Investment Plans in participation with the local community;
- Adaptation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their integration in the Palestinian development plans (see Box 1)

Box 1: Political Commitment to MDGs

Political commitment is seen in issuing a ministerial decree in September 2005 [31] to adapt the MDGs and to work on their integrations in the Palestinian development plans. The Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development (MoPAD) has worked on preparing a series of reports that document the achievements towards the MDGs in partnership with various stakeholders. In order to enhance the ownership of the MDGs and to ensure the achievements of the goals by 2015; MoPAD has started a participatory process for localizing the MDG's. Half of the participants in the various meetings were from non-governmental organizations and civil society. The strategic plan for the MDG is considered an input to the upcoming national development plan.

Financial indicators show strong political commitment towards the social sector, weak support of the environmental sector and with support to the economic sector ranging somewhere in the middle (Figures 1-3). The unequal attention afforded to different sectors is largely due to the inherent but difficult trade-off between the three pillars of SD. Albeit the single most important deterrent to SD in the oPt is the ongoing military Israeli occupation which is imposed as a scourge on virtually all sectors.

Figure 1- Financial distribution of Official Development Assistance (2010) [32]

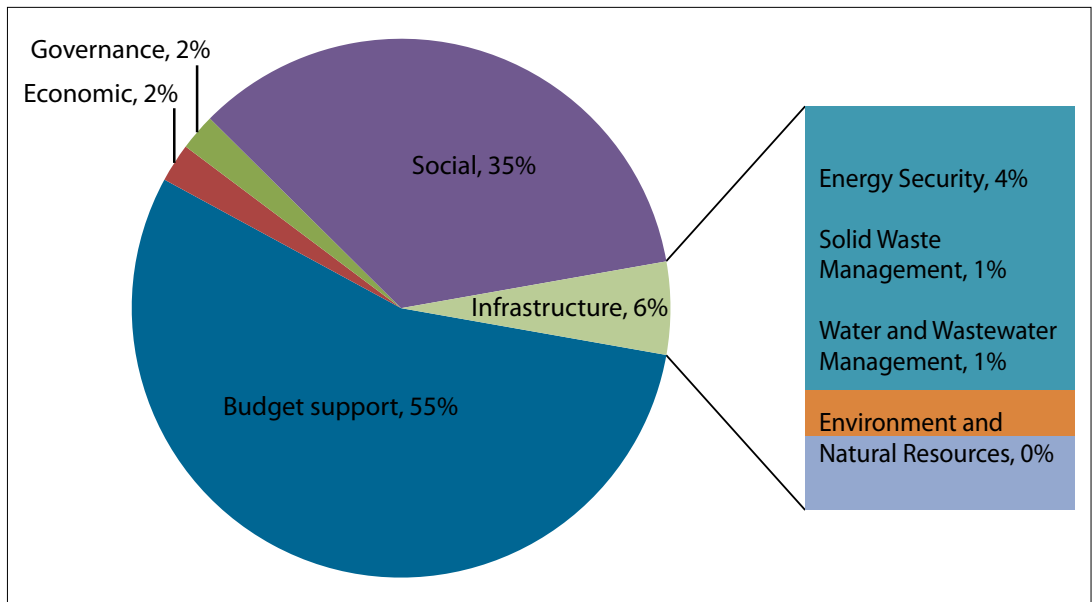


Figure 2- Financial distribution of NDP (2011-2013) [30]

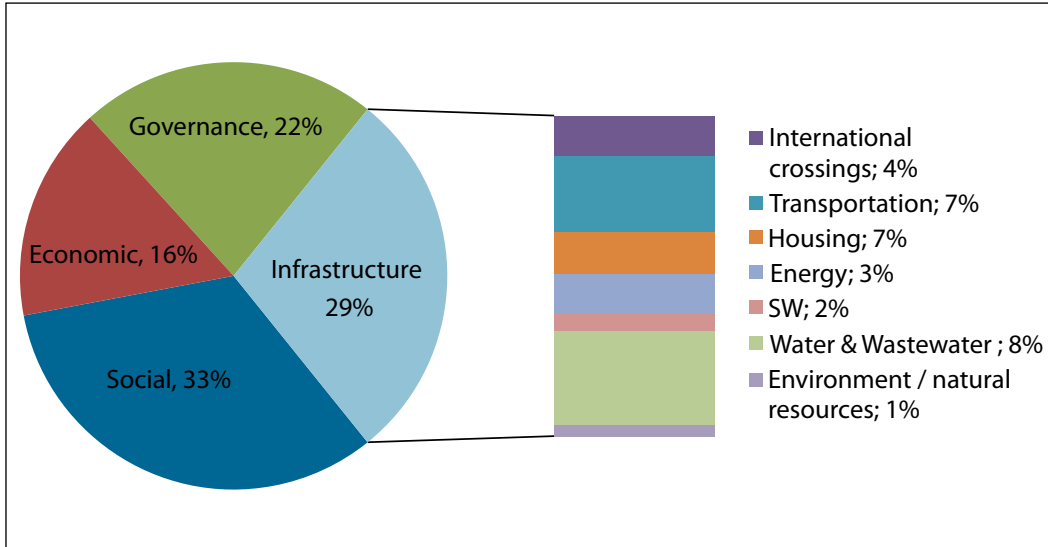
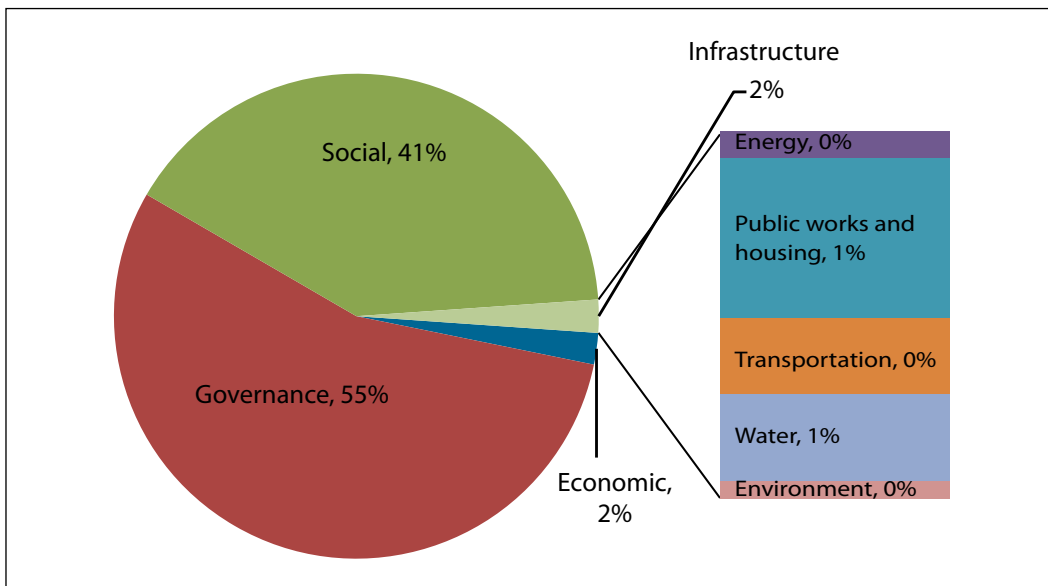


Figure 3- Financial distribution of national budget (2011) [33]





ENVIRONMENTAL PILLAR

Past achievements, ongoing developments and challenges under the environmental pillar are discussed below. The chapter is divided into three sections; the first section addresses the institutional aspects of environmental management, the second section presents the ongoing developments and obstacles related to natural resources management, sanitation, radiation, and Israeli military assaults; while the third section addresses emerging environmental issues, i.e. desertification and soil pollution, and climate change.

Institutional Aspects of Environmental Management in oPt

Several achievements in the environmental management were observed in oPt, probably of the most important is acknowledgement of a well balanced and clean environment as one of the human rights in the Palestinian Basic Law. Further, the principle of sustainability has been introduced in the Basic Law by emphasizing that preservation and protection of the Palestinian environment from pollution, for the sake of present and future generation as a national duty [29]. Various indicators of achievements on the institutional level are presented below. In addition, major achievements in the institutional framework of environmental management include:


The establishment of two national authorities designated with environmental management; The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and the Ministry of Environmental Affairs (in May 2012 the Environment Quality Authority, EQA, has been promoted to the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, MEnA);

- The establishment of a department for SD in the MEnA;
- Issuing the Law Concerning the Environment [34], the Water Law [35] and other by-laws based on the two laws;
- The Law Concerning the Environment [34] has considered International Environmental Agreements (IEAs) as an integral part of the law;
- Development of the first generation (1999-2001) of environmental strategies⁵;
- Development of second generation (post 2009) of environmental strategies⁶;
- Increase in the number of environmental NGOs and in the number of NGOs addressing environmental aspects in their programs, and
- Granting 31 environmental inspection officers from Ministry of Environmental Affairs (MEnA) the power of commissioners.

While there are indications of political will for the protection of the environment, the environmental pillar in itself is not prominent in the oPt's National Policy Agenda. To clarify this point, it is useful to compare the implication of two statements. In the infrastructure sector of the National Policy Agenda the statement "*Fully integrating infrastructure networks [...] will enable good stewardship of oPt's environment and natural resources*"[30], the concern is the result which is "good stewardship". In comparison, principles were included in the social sector; such as social equality in order to guide the work of the government, where "*The state that embraces*

5 the first environmental strategy for duration of ten years [36]; the Gaza Strip Coastal and Marine Environmental Protection and Management Action plan (2001) [37] and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Palestine (NBSAPP) (1999)[38]

6 the Environmental Strategy (2011-2013) [39]; the Water and Wastewater Strategy 2011-2013 [40]; the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2005) [41]; the National Strategy, Action Program and Integrated Financing Strategy to Combat Desertification (2012) [42]; the National Strategy for Solid Waste Management 2010-2014 [43]; and the National Policy and Legislation for Promoting the Conservation of Agro-biodiversity (April 2005) [44]; and the National Spatial Plan (2011).



*supreme human values of tolerance, openness, social justice and equality” [30]. Accordingly, to follow the example of the social work agenda statement, using the environmental values such as protection and conservation, the statement can read as follows: *The state that embraces environmental values, such as protection and preservation.* Therefore, environmental protection and preservation have been overlooked as a principle to govern Palestine in the National Policy Agenda.*

In addition, Institutional obstacles that environmental management is facing include:

1. Limited implementation of the first generation of strategies due to repressive Israeli measures;
2. Inability to enforce laws due to lack of sovereignty;
3. Inability to introduce integrated environmental management principles due to limited control of resources and continued violation of Israelis to Palestinian natural resources;
4. No environmental taxation has been introduced up to date;
5. Environmental services provided by MEnA are free of charge including environmental approvals;
6. Limited implementation of Polluter Pays Principle that was introduced in the Law Concerning the Environment and the Water law;
7. Limited financial allocation to environment in the national budget (Figure 3) [33];
8. Limited international aid to environmental management (Figure 1) [32];
9. Lack of a national environmental fund that could be utilized for environmental rehabilitation and conservation;
10. Insufficiency in laws to implement and enforce various environmental strategies and plans [39,45];
11. Limited number of technical staff at MEnA compared to the tasks at hand;
12. Lack of representation of experts on environment, or representatives of the PWA at the Ministerial Cabinet, where all decisions and policies are approved; however in May 2012 this has changed as a result of upgrading the Environment Quality Authority to a Ministry; and
13. Lack of mainstreaming of environmental aspects in the national policies and strategies and local master plans as none of these plan have undergone Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA⁷) that is mandated by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Policy [46].

7 SEA is defined as the environmental assessment of strategies and plan.

Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

It is important to indicate that although efforts are underway towards environmental protection and preservation, the practices of the Israeli occupation have effectively limited the Palestinian efforts towards progress in environmental issues. With no control over resources, and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources by the Israeli occupation in violation of the international humanitarian law, Palestinians are hindered from managing their own resources.


The Palestinian Basic Law [29] (Article 33) states that a well-balanced and clean environment is a basic human right. Thus the preservation and protection of the Palestinian environment from pollution, for the sake of present and future generation, is a national duty.” [29] This indicates that environmental preservation and protection should be one of the basic and important principles that guide governing Palestine. The PNA has designated two authorities that have a mandate in environmental management. The Palestinian Water Authority, that focuses on water; and the MEnA that focuses on the natural resources sustainability and environmental preservation and protection. Further, the Law Concerning the Environment [34] and the Water Law [35] are highly important to the protection of the environment and natural resources.

The Law Concerning the Environment [34] defines the regulatory framework for sustainable resource management and aims at 1) Protecting the environment from all forms and various types of pollution; 2) Protecting the public health and social welfare; 3) Institutionalization of environmental protection in the economic and social development plans and encouraging the sustainable use of vital resources; 4) Conserving the biodiversity and the sensitive environmental areas, and improving the environmentally damaged areas; and 5) Promotion of information gathering and sharing, as well as increasing of public awareness on environmental issues. While the Water Law [35] defines the regulatory framework for sustainable water resource management and aims at the development and management of the water resources; increasing its capacity; improve its quality, preservation and protection of the water resources from pollution and depletion.

Issuing the Law Concerning the Environment [34] was a major step towards institutionalization of SD in Palestine. However, the law remains ineffective if not implemented. Several factors caused the law to be ineffective: lack of sovereignty, insufficiency in by-laws and regulations that support the law, limited financial resources, and insufficiency in equipment and personnel.

Water

Lack of access to adequate and safe water has been a prolonged problem in the oPt, which is a result of the Israeli occupation and its water policies and practices [47]. The Palestinian water use is estimated at 73 Liters per capita per day (L/C/day) [48], far less than the World Health Organization (WHO) minimum recommended standard of 100 L/C/day. The Israeli daily per capita use is about 300 Liters, which is about four times higher than the Palestinian use [47]. This inequitable abstraction, allocation, and consumption reflect a clear case of environmental injustice imposed



by the Israeli occupation. Currently, while the Government of Israel abstracts the vast majority of Palestinian water resources, Palestinians have to buy back more than 36% of their national water supply from the Israeli national water company [48], which in addition subjugates the Palestinians to severe water cuts, particularly in the summer season [49].

The Oslo II Interim Agreement [8] between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel has acknowledged the Palestinian rights for the water resources in the WB, however the definition of these rights, was left to be identified with the final status negotiations that should have been reached in five years after Oslo Agreement. After 18 years from Oslo II Agreement, the Palestinians are still facing restrictions on water access.

The total volume of the shared water resources with Israel is 2,989 MCM, of which groundwater constitutes approximately 50%; of this shared water; about 90% is consumed according to the following pattern [40]. Palestinians consume only about 271 MCM; i.e. circa 11% of the total water consumed. The remaining volumes are consumed by the Israelis [40]. The total renewable ground water in the WB is estimated to be at 669 MCM that can be extracted from the three aquifers (Western Aquifer, North-Eastern Aquifer and Eastern Aquifer), of which only 15% is controlled by the Palestinians. In a report published by the World Bank, the extraction of Israeli's from the Western Aquifer in 1999, was at 591.6MCM, which is in excess of the aquifer's yearly sustainable yield [47].

Furthermore, Israeli settlers have assumed illegal control of many springs, particularly on those located in Area C. In 30 out of 56 springs surveyed by OCHA⁸, settlers had full control with Palestinian having no access to the area [50]. The other 26 springs are at risk of settlers' takeover. In 40 out of the 56 springs, Israeli settlers have started to develop spring area as "touristic attraction" for the benefit of the settlers. It is important to note that 84% of these 56 springs are located on area that is privately owned by Palestinian citizens [50].

The denial of access to water resources has been increased as a result of the construction of the Annexation and Separation Wall. Fifty eight water sources have been isolated by the Annexation and Separation Wall with an annual average withdrawal of 67.3 MCM; of which 4.3 MCM from groundwater wells and 63 MCM from 29 springs. [51]. More, than 30 water production wells were confiscated during the construction of the Annexation and Separation Wall in Tulkarem and Qalqilya Governorates; the total abstraction of these wells represented 22 % of the total Palestinian abstraction from the Western groundwater aquifer [52]. Further, with the lack of control and access on these wells, the Palestinian Water Authority has lost its ability to monitor the water quality and levels in the basin. The total number of wells located within the "buffer zone" is 15 wells [52]. Further, the water level in the areas of Tulkarem and Qalqilya is shallow, increasing concern about the impact of the heavy machinery work in the area during the construction of the Annexation and Separation Wall, and contamination of the water from fuel and oil. The Annexation and Separation Wall further impedes the natural drainage of storm water; leading to flooding, change the valley flow morphology, intercepting the running streams, surface water patterns are interrupted during and after the construction [52].

8 These 56 springs located were chosen as they are located in vicinity of Israeli settlements.

In GS, the coastal aquifer is the only natural source of fresh water. Its renewable yield is 45 MCM [40]; however the actual abstraction from this aquifer is currently about 3.7 times the renewable volume. In the northern areas of the GS groundwater levels dropped by eight meters between year 1935 and 1969 [53]. This drop in the water table is most apparent in the north due to unsustainable groundwater exploitation at the Eastern-Northern border of the GS and by Israel, upstream from GS. In addition, in the GS, between years 1970 and 1993, groundwater levels have dropped by almost 2 meters [53]. The reduction of the water table has resulted in significant impacts on the sustainability of the coastal aquifer, as it is estimated that within five to ten years, the supply of water suitable for human consumption from the coastal aquifer will have disappeared [54]. Dropping water levels in the Coastal Aquifer has resulted in sea water intrusion which in turn has reduced water quality as a result of the increased salinity; resulting in chloride ion concentration from about 250mg/L to about more than 10,000mg/L [55]. Further, pollution of the aquifer from untreated or partially treated wastewater, and agricultural activities is also observed and measured through the high level of nitrate concentrations. More than 80% of the water samples had a nitrate concentration above 50 mg/L⁹; the WHO standard. In a recently conducted survey it was found that about one fifth of households with children under the age of five had been infected with diarrhea within the four weeks prior to the survey [54]. In order to provide clean and safe water for the population, the PNA is searching for alternative water resources in GS including the option of sea water desalination. As it stands now, a large-scale sea water desalination plant has become an immediate need for more than 1.7 million Palestinians living in GS.

The priority for the Palestinian government is to ensure the availability of accessible water resources, with particular focus on communities that are significantly deprived of water [30]. Between 1994 and 2009; PNA has developed water networks in 123 communities, which has helped to reduce water scarcity. It is important to note that these developments, although important, mostly fall short of reaching their main goal (i.e. guaranteed fresh water supply to households) because the Palestinian government is ultimately lacking access to most of the available fresh water resources.

The Jordan River is the most important surface water in the oPt. Palestinians have been denied their rights to access the waters of the Jordan River since 1967. The natural flow of the Jordan River was diverted mainly by Israel and then by Jordan, Syria and Lebanon [56, 57]. The estimated annual flow in 1953 was 1,250 MCM, which has reduced significantly to 20-40 MCM in (2011) [56]. This has resulted in a width decrease from 40 to 60 m in the mid 1960s, to 0.6 to six meters in 2011 [56]. Moreover the remaining waters are heavily polluted by non treated wastewater and high salinity [56]. The disposal of untreated Israeli wastewater and the untreated dumping of used water from fishponds and agricultural water in the lower Jordan River has intensified to an extent to become a public health risk as a result of high levels of nitrate and fecal coliform bacteria [56]. This indicates the lack of sustainability of the Jordan River as a fresh water source, and its exploitation on the expense of the current and future Palestinian generations. Finally, the drying up of the Jordan River also has devastating effects on the waters of the Dead Sea by reducing its water level.

9 Calculated based on the results provided by Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU).



The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea has been identified as being of a significant value to the future Palestinian economy and environment. Nevertheless, the Palestinians have been denied their right to access, control and use of the Dead Sea.

The amount of water flowing into the Dead Sea has reduced by 98% over the past forty years [56], from 1,500 MCM to less than 30 MCM [57]. This has resulted in drastic decline of the water level by more than 20 meters; from -399m to -425 m between 1976 and 2011 [57]. The surface area has shrunk from 1,020km² in 1960 to 631 km² in 2009 [58]. The decline in the sea level has resulted in shrinking and splitting of the sea into two separate parts [56]. With no action taken¹⁰, it is expected that the Dead Sea level will decrease to -467 below sea level by 2060, resulting in a surface area of 512 km² [59]. This means that the average annual shrinkage of the sea level is 1.2 meters, i.e. equivalent to a surface loss of 5.5 km² per year [56].

Israeli and Jordanian potash factories on the shores of the Dead Sea in the oPt, have utilized the Dead Sea water for the production of chemical fertilizers. These industries pump 520 MCM of water per year [57]. Several negative consequences result from the decline of the Dead Sea level such as the increase in salinity, the formation of sinkholes along the coasts, the reduction the fresh groundwater reserves and the loss of biodiversity.

A channel connecting the Red Sea and the Dead Sea was suggested by the Israeli and Jordan governments as a response to the decline in the Dead Sea water levels. However, such a project is not without significant environmental, economic and political impacts. There are several environmental impacts that are expected from such a channel, including the potential of polluting groundwater from construction activities, potential impacts of increasing salinity of the fresh groundwater, a concern on the negative impact on the Red Sea and its natural biodiversity. The mixing of the water from the two seas with various salinity, might lead a completely “new” sea that might not have the traditional advantages of the Dead Sea, and the project does not include any rehabilitation measures for the Jordan River [56].

At the political level, the impacts of the construction of the channel, “would give Israel major control over the sustainability of the Dead Sea, part of which, according to international law, is located in the occupied Palestinian land. This project would likely result in enhancement of Israeli industry and tourism in the Dead Sea region, thus reinforcing the Israeli occupation of the WB” [56]. The only alternative for rehabilitating the Dead Sea and the Jordan River is the sustainable water policy, and not the construction of the channel, the rehabilitation through restoration of the natural flow of the Jordan River.

10 With the assumption that chemical companies operations continue as planned.

Coastal and Marine Environment in Gaza Strip

Direct causes for polluting certain sites of the marine environment in the GS are very visible, and it is totally due to the huge quantities of the wastewater discharged into the sea. This has resulted in health problems for bathers and the marine life alike. Further, the Coastal area is faced with significant erosion due on- and offshore urbanization including the construction of fisheries ports and wave barriers. This has resulted in disruption of the natural precipitation of sand at the shores of GS [39]. A major future risk to the area is the anticipated 35-cm-sea-level-rise by 2100 [41].

Sand dunes

The sand dunes in GS have important environmental and natural landscape values. These dunes are the habitat for a variety of flora and fauna and are important for water infiltration into the groundwater. At the same time, sand is invaluable as a building material. Accordingly, a balance between excavation and natural replenishment should be ensured [45]. In the first national report on SD, it was indicated that at least 25 MCM of sand have been excavated in the duration of 20 years [60]. In 2010, according to MEnA of the “de facto government”, about 2MCM were mined. This forms a serious concern and a threat to biodiversity, infiltration to groundwater, and to the availability of this natural resource for future generations. Sand mining takes place without integrated resources management principles, and requires significant efforts, in terms of regulation, management, and identification of the renewable volume for utilization.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes. The varied topography and climates in oPt as well as the area’s location at the intersection of three continental masses allow for a rich biodiversity. Various sources estimate plant varieties between 2,500 and 2,953 species belonging to 126 families [45]. There are 511 reported bird species, 116 mammals, 97 reptiles and 7 amphibians. In addition, there is a wide assortment of marine species, including fish, mollusks, crustaceans, and polychaeta, as well as marine mammals [45]. The MEnA has found out that construction of the Annexation and Separation Wall has resulted in destruction and fragmentation of the natural habitats and ecosystems and clearing of natural vegetation cover; thus threatening and endangering species of plants and animals [52]. Furthermore, the network of roads that is constructed for primary use of Israelis in the oPt has resulted in disruption and fragmentation of natural ecosystems and habitats [51]. The total length of these roads is 1,661 km, for which 41,525 acres of Palestinian land was confiscated [61]. Biodiversity is mainly impacted by the Israeli occupation practices; especially the physical fragmentation of the land by Annexation and Separation Wall, fences and bypass Israeli roads that connects illegal Israeli settlements; by climate change, scarcity of water, pollution, and socio-economic factors, such as rapid expansion of urban areas, and over exploitation of resources.





Natural Reserves and Forest Coverage

The WB has forty eight natural reserves established by the Israeli occupation, of which only 17 were transferred to PNA, the rest remain under the Israeli occupation control [62]. The total land area of the 48 national reserves forms six percent of the WB [39]. More than 50% of the total natural reserves have been closed by the Annexation and Separation Wall and its buffer. Many of these natural reserves have been transformed into the use for illegal Israeli settlements and military bases, indicating that the assignment of natural reserves that is announced by the Israeli occupation has a political nature of increasing control over natural resources, rather than the protection of biodiversity [39]. In addition to the national reserves, there are 93 forests in the WB and 13 forests in GS with a total area of 232 km² [62]. More than 62% of the forested area in the oPt has been confined by the Annexation and Separation Wall and its buffer, including the biggest forests.

GS hosts only one natural reserve that is Wadi Gaza. The total length of the Wadi is 105 km, of which nine kilometers are located in GS. Most of the water in the Wadi originates in the Hebron Mountains in the WB and flows into GS. Israel has constructed a dam to divert this water before it reaches GS. There is no information on the annual flow of Wadi Gaza, nor on the diverted volume by Israel [47]. The total width of the Wadi varies, and it is at its widest near its mouth as it forms a wetland ecosystem. The Wadi harbors a relatively wide diversity of fauna and flora. Wadi Gaza was recognized to be an important natural area by the PNA and was declared as a natural reserve in June 2000 [63]. Although, this area was targeted for protection, the efforts to protect the Wadi over the past ten years have failed. The current situation of the Wadi is characterized by high pollution levels of the soil and aquifer extending to a distance of five kilometers. Furthermore, the public health is seriously endangered with the pollutants disposed in the Wadi, where the main source of pollution is untreated wastewater that was disposed of in the Wadi over the past ten years [63]. The wastewater pumped into the Wadi comes from two main sources; Gaza City and the Middle area of GS. Current average of wastewater that flow into the Wadi is 446 m³/hour [63]. In order to rehabilitate the Wadi, a wastewater treatment plant is suggested to reduce the pollution, currently at the assessment stage, has not materialized yet.

Land

Some 64% of the West Bank remain under the direct control of Israel, the occupying power. Furthermore, access to land has been effectively prohibited by the Israeli occupation and has been utilized for the Israeli occupation political purposes, rather than for the Palestinian development needs. The Israeli occupation has issued military orders to increase its control on the land, has confiscated land for various reasons, including for the construction of the Annexation and Separation Wall, the construction of bypass roads for Israeli settlers, the construction of the illegal Israeli settlements, and closure of oPt land for military activities.

Landscape destruction and fragmentation of land by the Israeli occupation is the main reason for the deteriorating of this resource. "The continuous encroachment on Palestinian land for the purpose of settlement expansion is the most significant reason behind the ongoing fragmentation of the WB" [50].

One of the most important aspects of managing land resources is spatial planning. Recently, the introduction of environmental objectives in spatial national planning has become a priority to the national government, as can be seen from the approval of the Ministerial Cabinet on 28.02.2011 on the national spatial plan. The plan objective is to balance intended development with the protection of limited natural resources to ensure sustainability for future generations. The approval on the national spatial plan was limited to the WB, because participatory approach for approval of the plan in Gs could not be achieved with the current internal division. The national spatial plan provides a framework for local and regional spatial plans. The spatial national plan is a map that limits land use for protection purposes, such as agricultural (high and medium sensitivity), landscape (high and medium), natural observatory points, forests, biodiversity, natural conservation areas, cultural and historical areas, and archeological sites. Further work on the national spatial planning includes the development and approval of bylaws that ensure the implementation of the national spatial plan.

Desertification and soil pollution are important factors leading to lack of sustainability in land resources. Particular concern for desertification is for areas with an average rainfall lower than 300mm, which forms 50% of the WB. Further information on desertification is presented in a spate section below [39].

SANITATION

Wastewater

The estimated volume of wastewater generated by Palestinians is 106MCM, of which 56MCM is generated in the WB, and about 40MCM in GS [40]. The PWA estimates that only about ten percent of the wastewater is treated. In 2010, 54.4% of Palestinian households in housing units were connected to public sewage network [64]. However, connection to sewerage network does not necessarily indicate that the wastewater from these households is subject to treatment, or subject to treatment to sufficient standards for disposal. One of the problems that face Palestinians is the difficulty in obtaining Israeli approval for construction of wastewater plants. The situation is even worse in GS due to the inability to import construction materials.

Moreover, the illegal Israeli settlements dispose their wastewater without treatment, for example the raw sewage from the Ariel illegal settlement, estimated to be at 1.32 MCM flowing into the valley, where a spring supplies over 30% of the water of Salfit city and its surrounding villages [20]. The pollution can be observed very clearly in the valley nearby, Wadi Qana, which has been significantly polluted by the illegal Israeli settlements in Salfit; it is worth mentioning that Wadi Qana was announced as a natural conservation area. In the valley, one of the 16 springs remains suitable for consumption [20]. This is a typical case of environmental injustice that should be addressed immediately.

Solid waste

The solid waste collection coverage has been significantly improving since 1994. A reduction of the percentage of the population that is non-serviced was achieved from 36% in 1994 to eight percent in 2011 [65 and 66]. During the prolonged Israeli occupation, the Israeli occupation has not provided any safe disposal methods to solid waste in the oPt. The first sanitary landfill in oPt was built in GS by the PNA in 1997, followed by another one in the WB in 2007. Currently, the PNA is in the process of planning and construction of additional two sanitary landfills in the WB, and one sanitary landfill in GS. It is important to note, that one major problem in developing the solid waste sector was the difficulty in obtaining permits for sanitary landfills. The sanitary landfill in Ramallah and Al Bireh Governorate has been under negotiations with the Israeli occupation forces since 2004, the conditional pre-approval was granted in December 2011. The Palestinian government has enhanced its efforts in the solid waste sector, by adapting the solid waste management strategy in 2010, and by including indicators in the NDP that are related to development of this sector. The main objective in this sector is to improve the service delivery of the collection of waste, increase sanitary disposal of solid waste, improve cost recovery to ensure long term sustainability, and initiate recycling activities. The solid waste sector, has been receiving an increased interest from the private sector, leading to recent investments in recycling. Public-private sector cooperation in the North of the WB is one example, where more than USD 3 million is the estimated cost of the investment in recycling.

The estimated municipal waste generation ranges from 0.4 to 1 kg/capita/day with variation between rural, urban, and camps as follows: 0.8-1.0 kg/day (urban areas); 0.5-0.7 kg/day (rural areas); 0.4-0.6 kg/day (refugee camps) [67]. The estimated Palestinian generation of hazardous waste is 62,621 ton/year of which 58,660 T/year is generated in the WB and 3,961 T/year in GS [68].

According to the National Development plan 2011-2013 (NDP) [30], the planned investment in solid waste management is USD 39.6 million, of which 78.5% directed to improved solid waste collection and disposal in sanitary landfills and forms 1.6% of the NDP; further, about 20% is directed to hazardous waste handling, while the remaining percentage is directed to rehabilitation of random and unofficial dumpsites.


Radiation

The Israeli nuclear plant Dimona is located in close proximity to oPt, in which radioactive testing of dangerous and various substances are under way. This plant has been subjected to safety evaluation by impartial international committee(s)- as the norm is- and is out-dated, thus risking the safety of the whole region and the oPt [69]. The Dimona nuclear plant is threatened as cracks have been observed in the body of the reactor indicating an increased risk for a disaster in the region. Furthermore, Jordan has announced that the risk of explosion and thus significant radiation leak from the reactor is very high in case of an earthquake, hence increasing the threats not only to the Palestinians but also to the Jordanians [70]. MEnA has submitted a formal request to the Arab Ministers of Environment Session held in Cairo, November 1st, 2000, to call upon the international community to drive Israeli Government to shut down the nuclear plant located in Dimona. Furthermore, an Israeli paper indicates that there is a radiation leakage to the water, which in turn is posing health threat [51]. In addition, nuclear waste from Dimona plant is buried in the village of Dahriyya in the WB, in which increased cancer cases have been reported in comparison to the national average [51].

Israeli Military activities

Water contamination, disrupted habitats and ecosystem, abandoned Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs), improper handling of toxic waste, air and noise pollution are just some examples of the environmental impacts caused by Israeli military activities in the oPt [51]. About 20% of the WB, more than 1,000 km² has been confiscated by Israel as Israeli military closed zones [51]. In addition to the closed military zones, Israel has more than 210 military bases occupying 38km² of the oPt [51]. In a survey conducted by the Israeli Ministry of Environment on five military bases, it was found that soil and water pollution from leakage of fuel and oil has occurred in these bases [51]. Further, several UXOs and landmines without any cleanup or markup of these areas; leaving Palestinian communities exposed to them. The number of UXOs and landmines in oPt as a result of the Israeli military trainings is unknown; However; circa 2,500 Palestinians are believed to have been injured or killed in the oPt by UXOs or land mines since 1967; the majority of which were children [51].





With GS Invasion in 2009, UXOs have injured and killed many people [51]. The Mines Advisory Group has removed 300 UXOs. It is important to note, that the Mines Advisory Group was prevented from accessing the “buffer” zone that extends between 1,000 and 1,500 meters, in which 150 houses required inspection, leading to increased risks to citizens¹¹.

EMERGING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Desertification and Soil Pollution

The PNA has developed a strategy on combating desertification in 2012 [42]. The overall objective of the strategy is “to prevent, halt and where possible, reverse the effects and impact of desertification, land degradation and droughts, in order to contribute to poverty alleviation, improve livelihoods of people and achieve Sustainable Development”. The strategy has identified five priority projects that should be complementary to what has been identified in the NDP for the years 2011-2013, in the sum of USD 4.2 million, with lead agency as MEnA in cooperation with other Palestinian stakeholders, including non-governmental and private sector. The main causes of soil pollution were summarized in the environmental strategy as: increased desertification and soil erosion, soil pollution due to mismanagement of liquids and solid waste, natural and manmade soil erosion, and soil pollution caused by Israeli military activities.

Climate Change

The PNA has developed the climate change adaptation strategy and program of action [41]. The concept of climate vulnerability has been adopted by the strategy, which was defined as “the propensity of people or systems to be harmed by climate hazards” [41]. The impact of climate change in oPt is projected to be a combination of decrease in precipitation (with significant seasonal variations), prolonged heat waves, drought, increase of vector borne diseases and sea level rise [41]. The strategy has identified the agricultural and the water sector as the most sensitive sectors to climate hazards at present and in the future; leading to strategic focus on adaptation on water and food insecurity. The strategy has identified various low and no regret measures for adaptation, combined with very high cost adaptation measures however essential. The high cost of adaptation measures include increased water use efficiency from infrastructure investment, development of new water resources, including a new major desalination plant with capacity of 150MCM/year, and new coastal protection structures for GS. It is important to indicate that the continuing Israeli occupation undermines the development of Palestinian resilience to climate hazards.

11 Information obtained from UNDP.

Linkages of Desertification, Climate Change and Green Economy

The combating desertification strategy is one of the important achievements towards SD and highly linked to green economy. The improvement of a seemingly purely environmental aspect, desertification, is directed linked to improvements under all three pillars of SD, e.g. activities to alleviate poverty in rural areas. According to combating desertification strategy, there are 127 ongoing or recently completed projects that are of relevance to combating desertification, land degradation, and adaptation to drought in oPt, summing up to USD 86 million [42]. These projects are distributed as follows; eleven on land use, 23 on livestock, 15 on water harvesting and storage, 49 on water management, and 29 on plant production and irrigation.

Polluted soils and waters together with the anticipated impacts of Climate Change and the ongoing military Israeli occupation render all communities in the oPt prone to environmental catastrophe thus putting SD achievements, livelihoods and economic sectors at risk.





6

SOCIAL PILLAR

Past achievements and ongoing developments under the social pillar will be illustrated under the categories demography, health, education, women, youth, and social protection. The focus on women and youth was seen as very important for UNCSD as they form two major groups of the conference.

Demography

The total population in oPt in mid 2011 was estimated at 4,168,860 of which 61.9% live in the WB (including East Jerusalem) and 38.1% live in the GS [71]. The population is expected to reach 4,816,503 by 2016 [71]. The Palestinian population living inside oPt is expected to reach 5.37 million by 2020 and 6.06 million by 2025 [64]. About 44% of the population living in the oPt are refugees [72]. The total number of the registered Palestinian refugees worldwide was estimated to be at 5 million [73]. The actual number would be much higher if the unregistered refugees were considered as well [74].

oPt is characterized by a young population; while 47% of the population in 1997 was under the age of 15 [75]; in 2007 this number has decreased to 42% [76]. This decrease is related to a decrease in fertility rate. Further, the percentage of children under the age of 5 years is 15% in 2007 [77]. The percentage of the elderly (above 65) was 3.1% for the same year [76]. In Palestine, the average household size has decreased from 6.4 [75] in 1997 to 5.8 in 2011 [72]. The household size in GS is 6.3, which is higher than that in the WB 5.6 members [72].


According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the population density at the end of 2011 has reached 693 individuals/km² of which 456 individuals/km² in the WB and 4,353 individuals/km² in the GS [64]. The population density in the GS is the highest in the World [74]. In 2000, the dependency ratio¹² in oPt was 100.6% (112.8% for GS and 94.3% for WB) [60]. The dependency ratio in oPt has decreased to 75 in 2011 (73 in the WB and 87 in GS) [72].

Health

The health situation in the oPt is similar and comparable to neighboring Arab countries. Female life expectancy stands at 73 years in 2008 compared to an increase in male life expectancy from 69 years in 1997 to 70 years in 2008 [78]. The total fertility rate declined from 5.9 births per woman in the year 2000 to 4.1% in 2010. Family planning methods usage among married women (15-49 years) was 52.4% (54.9% WB and 48.1% GS) in 2010 compared to 51.4% in 2000 [79]. There has been an important decline in unsafe home deliveries or other unsafe places in the oPt from 5.2% in 2000 to 0.8% in 2010 (1.2% in WB and 0.3% in GS) [79]. In the decade between 1996 and 2006; the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel increased from 94.9% to 98.6%. In 1995 the PCBS estimated the maternal mortality ratio ranged between 70 and 80 live births per 100,000; which was significantly reduced to 38 per 100,000 in 2009 as estimated by the Ministry of Health (MoH) [80].

Both infant and child mortality rates have shown modest improvements. The under-five mortality rate declined from 33.2 per 1000 live births in 1990-1994 to 28.2 per 1000 live births in 2005-2006, while the infant mortality rate dropped from 27.3 per

12 The dependency ratio is "The ratio of the persons defined as economically dependent to those in the ages defined as economically productive; arbitrary defined as the ratio of the elderly (those 65 years and over) plus the young (those under 15 years of age) to the population in the "working ages" (those 15-64 years of age)" [72]



1000 live births to 25.3 per 1000 for the same period [80]. The immunization coverage among children aged 12-23 months who completed all scheduled vaccinations had an impressive increase from 69.3% in 2000 to 96.5% in 2006 [81].

Non-communicable diseases continue to be a major cause of morbidity and seem to be on the rise to become the leading cause of death in the oPt [78]. The percentage of adults aged 18 years and over with at least one chronic disease increased from 11.5% in 2000 to 18.8% in 2010. The prevalence of smoking – a main preventable cause of non-communicable diseases- decreased from 27.5 % in 2000 to 22.5% in 2010 among adults aged 18 and over [79]. A recent survey conducted in the oPt revealed a high prevalence of obesity and hypertension [82].

The political will to improve the health of the Palestinian people by providing improved health care services and improved access to these services is manifest. In 2009 the total MoH expenditure constituted 10.5% of the PNA budget, and around 60.4% of the Palestinian population was covered by health insurance in the same year [83]. Another main indicator of the commitment to improve the health of the Palestinians living in the oPt was the increase in the total expenditure on health from USD 384.3 million in 2000 to 893.8 million in 2008 [84].

The issue of access to health care services is one of the most important challenges and obstacles to the Palestinian health care system functioning and development. The WHO reported various Israeli occupation measures that form major limitations for accessibility to health care services among Palestinian patients [85].

This is why, despite intensive efforts at improving health conditions and services, the current situation of ongoing Israeli military occupation of oPt remains the major impediment to progress and sustainability. As long as there is Israeli military occupation and a lack of sovereignty over land, resources and people, Palestinians will continue to endure the social suffering related to war, low life quality, human insecurity and distress, all of which have a negative impact on health and over the life course, can precipitate disease. Thus Palestinians will continue to require and need protection, financial support for the provision of basic needs in health, and international support for ending Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land and ending injustice.

Education

The PNA committed itself to ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete primary schooling [80]. Education is seen as an important element to *“improve the absorptive capacity of the Palestinian labor market through matching the outputs of education and training systems to the labor market needs”* [86]. This was reiterated and emphasized in the Strategy of Technical and Vocational Education and Training developed in 2010 [87]. The Education Sector Strategy 2011-2013 built on the four core pillars of the MoEHE Development Strategic Plan 2008-12: enrolment, quality of education, management, and linkage with the needs of the market and society [86].

In Primary Education, net enrolment rose from 87.5% in 1994/95 to 95.6 % for male and 98.7% for female in 2008/09, which reflects a gender balanced situation. The proportion of pupils who started first grade and could reach last grade was 99.4%, compared to 98.3% in 2000 [80]. The literacy rate for the age group 15-24 year, women and men, increased from 96.7% in 1995 to 99.2% in 2005 through 2008. As for the adult literacy rate, it is 94.1%, which is reasonable compared to regional literacy rates in the region [80]. As for illiteracy rate for 15 years and above in 2010, it was 5.1%. Drop-out has decreased during the period 1993/94 to 2006/2007 from 2.25% to 0.9%. It is noted that in government schools, the drop-out percentage dropped from 3.33 % to 0.1% in the mentioned period. It is noticed that male students start dropping out in fifth grade, and the rate of drop-out increases until tenth grade where it reaches 2.5% compared to 1.5% for female students¹³ [88].

Although equity in education is almost achieved in primary education, and a lot of improvements were introduced to schools, and classrooms to make schools more friendly, a lot is still needed to attract both genders to vocational and technical education and training and to human sciences. Drop-out in the vocational stream increases in the eleventh grade for boys in the in the vocational stream (2.1% for boys, and 1.5% for girls) and in the twelfth grade for girls (2.1% for girls, 1.1% for boys). This requests more awareness towards gender issues, and more choices to attract different students. Nowadays, there is lack in skilled labor, and it is important that education addresses the labor market needs [88].

The data reveals few significant disparities with respect to geographical location degree of urbanization and gender. However, there are certain challenges in East Jerusalem where the Israeli government has complete control over the education system, which does not allow the PNA to follow up and supervise the Palestinian schools properly. About 5,000 students are not enrolled in schools every year in Jerusalem [15]. Furthermore, military blockades prevent WB teachers from reaching Jerusalem. There are also severe deficiencies in the quality of the learning environment in both GS and "Area C" in the WB, where the PNA is effectively prevented from constructing and rehabilitating damaged schools. Furthermore, children living in communities isolated by the Separation and Annexation Wall are not always able to attend classes due to the closure of military checkpoints.

There is still a great need to improve the quality of education. Although life skills are considered as one objective of the reading books, it becomes clear when viewing these books that this is not always the case [89]. A methodology using more participatory and child-centered approaches in the classroom, allowing for extracurricular activities and involving the parents as well as the community would be preferable.

13 Percentages were calculated by the researcher



Women

The last 6 years witnessed a lot of achievements in the oPt at the decision making level with regards to women empowerment. Five women ministers in the last government, a woman governor, and two women Sharia' judges were appointed, in addition to one woman as a chief police officer. At the level of the electoral process, an open quota was approved by the former Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) which brought 17 women to the PLC, compared to five women in the former PLC, 537 women to the local councils and municipalities, and four of them were elected as heads of their councils¹⁴. The first woman was elected to the executive committee of the Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO) since its establishment on 1964. In addition, the Convention on Elimination all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was endorsed by President Abbas on March 8, 2009 and was followed by a presidential decree on 16 May 2011 to cancel Articles 340 and 98 in the Penal Code that applied mitigating circumstances to so-called "honor killings", a crime which is now dealt with as common murders [90].

In spite of the endorsement of the CEDAW by President Abbas, and the cancellation of the two articles in the Penal code; up till now, no change has taken place in the current Personal Status Law that affects women in the WB and GS and contradictory to CEDAW. Although, the Personal Status Law used in the WB (a Jordanian Law) and the Family Law used in GS (an Egyptian law) are outdated; they are still in use since before 1967 in GS and the WB. It is important to indicate that both laws were changed in Jordan and in Egypt.

The commitment to gender-mainstreaming was not observed in the National Development Plan 2011-2013. The different needs of men and women were not taken into consideration [91]. The absence of a gender perspective is reflected in the national budget as well. The Ministry of Woman Affairs receives only 0.056% of the national budget [92]. This situation calls for the need to consider gender sensitive perspective at the highest administrative and financial levels, on allocation of budget taking the most vulnerable, and the difference in the needs of both men and women into consideration

Youth

Palestinian youth between 19-30 years old form 17.7% of the total population in the oPt [93]. Despite the importance of this group and the huge need to invest in it, the budget allocated to the Ministry of Youth did not exceed 0.5% of the national budget in the year 2011¹⁵, and not more than 0.23% [32] of the total aid budget was allocated to youth programs.

14 Before the elections, the number of women members in the local councils did not exceed 65, all of them in the WB, and one woman was elected by the members of the council as the head of the council.

15 Commitment basis

Although there is an increase in the number of organizations and programs directed toward youth through the last ten years, the percentage of youth involved in these programs and organizations remains minimal. The limited involvement of youth can be observed from various indicators; such as voluntarism at 12.2%; participation in political parties at 6.4%, in youth groups at 8.1%, and 14.7% are active in community work [94]. There is a need for a clear framework of work with youth to be developed in partnership between governmental organizations, the NGOs working in the field, youth councils and unions, youth involved in parties and other youth groups.

According to the cross-cutting Youth Strategy in the oPt, youth are facing challenges at different levels: political, economical, cultural, and institutional. At the political level, Israeli occupation is the first challenge. The impact of the Israeli occupation on youth is clear in the direct and indirect violations that are imposed. Lack of mobility, targeting by the Israeli occupation army, feeling of insecurity, and barriers to planning for the future negatively impact youth access to education, health services, and independency [95].

The second level of challenges is the economical, which is characterized by the absence of a strong productive economic base, and dependency on donors' funding. Youth are considered one of the vulnerable groups with regard to the economic sector. Unemployment among youth reaches about 40 % for youth in the age group 25-34 years old (30.1% males, 47.3% females) while the unemployment rate among people in the age group 35-44 is 16.1% for males, and 11.7% for females [96]. One of the main reasons for the higher number of unemployment among Palestinian youth is the lack of professional experience [95]. Another reason is the incompatibility between the educational programs provided within the education system and the market skills [97].

In regard to cultural challenges, youth are perceived by the community, organizations, and political parties as beneficiaries who are incapable and inexperienced rather than actors of change in their community; which lead to their active prevention from decision making levels [95].

Finally, Institutional challenges are seen in the various political and civic structures where youth participation takes place. Youth political participation remains limited due to the legal environment that does not allow youth to be represented in the various decision-making bodies at local and national levels. Election laws whether presidential, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) or local councils discriminate against youth as they are allowed to vote at the age of 18; yet they are not allowed to nominate themselves before the age of 40 for presidency (Election Law 2007, Article 36) [98], before the age of 28 for the PLC (Election Law, 2005, article 45) [98], and before the age of 25 for local councils (Local Councils' Election law, 2005, article 18) [99].

With regard to institutional structures, youth organizations' main offices are located in the central area of the WB [100]. Meanwhile there is a new trend to be represented in the more peripheral areas as well through work with community based organizations (CBOs). This cooperation allows for exchange of knowledge, experiences and skills and can therefore be considered as an encouraging new development [101].



Social Protection

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) looks at the importance of linking and merging humanitarian assistances with development assistance in their programs with the goal to allow households to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty. MoSA reviewed its mission, vision and interventions in the social protection sector to include empowerment for the vulnerable groups (the poor, women, children, people with disability). MOSA's strategy also aims at expanding and strengthening the primary health care services in villages and camps, especially services directed to women and children, and gives special attention to protection of women and children, and to developing emergency shelters [102]. Three shelters for women are currently available, and supervised by MOSA, to ensure a secure and healthy environment to both battered women and children [102]. MOSA has worked on integrating various cash assistance programs into a single program to enhance targeting capacities and bridge remaining gaps in delivering assistance. MoSA has adopted a transfer mechanism that allows a direct bank transfer to beneficiaries. Currently MoSA provides targeted cash-assistance to some 85,000 poverty-affected households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. To avoid duplication the program is closely coordinated with UN agencies operating in the area. Within this program, a total of NIS 600 to 1800 has been provided to each household living under deep poverty line every three months [136]. As part of their support to the poor, they provide not only cash assistance, but as well as waiver of educational fees for 96,000 poor families; provision of health insurance for 70,000 families and health coverage for households with chronic diseases such as cancer cases. In addition, they have various vocational and rehabilitation centers for the group age 12 to 16 years old to support them in entering the job market. These centers can graduate 500 students per year. They try to cooperate with private sector to integrate graduates into the labor market, although success in this area is still limited. Most of these children are from poor families, or hardship cases. MoSA refers the graduates to other projects that are designed to give loans and/or grants for the poor combined with capacity building.



ECONOMIC PILLAR

The developments, achievements and challenges relevant to the economic pillar are presented in this section. A description of the overall challenges that the Palestinian economy is facing will be followed by a presentation on the status of poverty, unemployment, labor force and food insecurity. Taken together, these categories form a main part of the indicators of the economic status in oPt. This is followed by a discussion on Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), decent jobs and social corporate responsibilities, agriculture and energy.



Challenges to Economic Development in oPt

The Palestinian economy is fragile due to the various restrictions placed on it by the Israelis. Some of these restrictions are: lack of control over borders, lack of control over import and export, restrictions on production inputs that are considered “dual use” items by the Government of Israel, the siege on the GS, movement restrictions inside the WB, confiscation of land, control over natural resources, and the destruction of the sea and air ports. These restrictions have resulted in increased costs of production, transportation, imports and exports, thus impacting the local economy and weakening the local production. As a result, the Israeli occupation is interfering in all details of the Palestinian life, leading to inability to reviving of the economic sector.

As indicated in the section on the political framework, the economy of GS cannot recover without relieving it from the siege and blockade. With restrictions on imports of raw materials and restrictions on export, creation of long term jobs with adequate wage that could reduce poverty levels is not seen as an option for GS [103]. Combined with this is the restriction on access to agricultural land and the sea. Hence, three quarters of households rely on humanitarian assistance; food insecurity and absolute poverty rates are very high [104].

Perhaps one of the most important factors preventing economic development and state building in oPt is the internal fragmentation inside the WB as well as between GS and the WB [105]. Internal connectivity should not be controlled by the Israelis and free movement especially between the WB and GS should be possible. Without free mobility of people and cargo locally and internationally, a viable economy cannot take place [106]. With the current imposed Israeli occupation restrictions on the movement between GS and the WB, the WB has become a landlocked area. Even though GS is a coastal area; the restrictions imposed by the Israelis result in virtually no economic access to the sea.

Another major aspect that is hampered by the lack of freedom of free movement between GS and WB is the development of economies of scale and the efficiency of production [106]. Both GS and WB are too small to allow large scale production, a combination of the two areas will result in acceptable size for goods, services and factor of production that increases the economies of scale [106].

Poverty

Poverty estimates by PCBS, based on a standard family with six members¹⁶, show that poverty has reduced from 25% in 2004 to 22% in 2009 [107]. The PCBS statistics also indicate that Individuals living in refugee camps are more likely to be poor, whereby larger households are disadvantaged in comparison to smaller ones Poverty rates are moreover higher in households that are headed by a female; 29.8%; in comparison to 25.2% for households headed by a male [108]. Although the poverty, and deep poverty have slightly decreased from 2009 to 2010; an Increase in inequality in 2010 was observed in comparison to 2009. The consumption patterns of the ten richest percent with comparison to those of the ten poorest percent has increased from 4.4 in 2009 to five times in 2010 [108]. The inequality index of distribution was 41% in 2010; in comparison to 38% in 2009 [108].

It is important to indicate that social assistance have helped to reduce the poverty rate by almost 16.8%, deep poverty by 26.6%, and the poverty gap by almost 40% [108]. Meanwhile, social assistance can yet be improved by reducing targeting errors. Significant targeting errors have been observed with the distribution of assistance; PCBS has found out that around two thirds of those receiving assistance were not in need in 2010; while 42.6% of those who are in need for assistance, did not receive it [108]. Furthermore, a study conducted by World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has concluded that 24% of the richest quintal of the population living in oPt receive assistance; while 29% of the poorest quintal of households did not receive any assistance [109].

Labor Force Participation

The percentage of males (above the age of 15) participating in the labor force¹⁷ stood at 66.8% in 2010 [96]. The participation of females (above the age of 15) in the work force has increased slightly during the past 15 years from 11.2% in 1995 to 14.7% in 2010. The participation in the labor force in GS is 40%; while in the WB it is at about 47% [96].¹⁸

The average daily wage has been decreasing in the oPt. It has decreased from NIS 77.9 (USD 20.5¹⁹) in 1999 to NIS 63.6 (USD 16.7) in 2010 [96]. The average daily wage in the WB is 33% higher than that in GS reflecting the higher price indexes in WB in comparison to GS.

16 In 1997, the National Commission for Poverty Alleviation (NCPA) developed the official relative and deep poverty lines for the WBGS. The deep poverty line reflects the cost of food, clothing, and housing, whereas the relative poverty line also considers the cost of other necessities, such as healthcare, education, transportation, personal care, and housekeeping supplies. Calculation of the poverty lines was based on a budget of basic needs for a family of six (two adults and four children), and is adjusted when necessary to reflect the varying consumption needs of households differing in size and number of children (PCBS). The estimations of poverty and deep poverty were reviewed recently by PCBS to include variations in prices among the various areas in oPt.

17 The participation rate (i.e. the ratio of the workforce to those of working age).

18 Based on the relaxed definition.

19 1 USD is equivalent to 3.8 NIS.

Unemployment

Unemployment rate has significantly increased due to the repressive Israeli measures since the Second Intifada. Up to date; the unemployment rate²⁰ has not been reduced yet to the level before the Second Intifada. The unemployment rate in GS in 2010 reached 43.7%; while in the WB it was 23.4% [96].

Food Insecurity

About half of the Palestinian population is food insecure and vulnerable to food insecurity [110]. Thirty three percent of the Palestinian household population is food insecure; 13% are vulnerable to food security; 21% marginally secure, with only 33% that can be considered as food secure. Female headed households face higher food insecurity (30%) in comparison to male-headed households (22 %) [110]. Fifty two percent of the households in GS are food insecure in comparison to 22% in the WB. Food insecurity in GS is higher among rural area at 69% in comparison to urban and camps at about 50%. However, in the WB, the food insecurity in refugee camps was higher by 33%, in comparison to 22% in the rural and urban areas [110]. Further, living close to or within areas with restricted access imposed by Israel has direct impacts on food security; forty percent of those living between the Annexation and Separation Wall and the Green Line are food insecure or vulnerable to food security. In addition, 55% of herding households living or having their livelihood in "Area C" are food insecure [110], which is also a result of the physical, social and economic restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation [111]. Since the political context is not changing, neither employment, nor food security would be improved with the systematic Israeli restrictions and control over resources [112]. Although relief assistance and social safety net schemes are important to soften the direct spontaneous effects of the direct political and economic situation of the oPt; it should not lead to undermining of developmental interventions that limit poverty and food insecurity [113].

As a precondition for food security under Israeli occupation, independent local agricultural and food production are crucial. In order to achieve this, it is important to support the local economic production towards variation of local agricultural products for local consumption. Therefore, it is important to encourage the farmers to return to the local and organic agriculture, which is demanded at the local level and the international level [114]. Economy that is self sustained can produce peoples' basic needs liberating them from the Israeli occupation towards a productive independent economy [114].

20 The Number of unemployed persons according to ILO standards plus those Persons outside labour force because they were frustrated.

Small and Medium Enterprises

There is an increased awareness on the importance of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the economic development in the oPt. The importance of this economic sector has been identified to the extent that currently a draft law has been developed to support them. SME constitute 95% of the existing economic institutions in oPt and are the largest employers [115]. Although increased interest in the SME has been building up, up to date there are still some internal challenges that face SME, such as [116]:

- The investment law does not allow for SME to benefit from tax exemptions.
- Small and medium-size establishments continue to suffer from low level of provided financing, with a big gap between supply and demand.
- The programs providing small lending are dependent on foreign aid, therefore dependent on donors' agenda, hence with little sustainability for these programs after the aids cease.
- The size of loans provided does not suffice the increased demand for bigger loans.

Decent Work and Corporate Social Responsibility

The Ministry of Labor (MOL) has elaborated a labor law and by-laws to ensure that the minimal rights of workers are protected and their wellbeing is ensured. These rights include mainly the right to accident insurance and appropriate working conditions. However, the implementation of the law and its enforcement remain weak. A survey conducted by the PCBS on working conditions in 2004 [117] found that only 35 % of the workers in the private sector have accident insurance, although it is mandatory by the labor law. Further, the study revealed that only 38% of wage employees have written contracts [117]. The study also revealed that 18.3% of the employees work additional hours without remittances in spite of the fact that several labor unions are active in oPt, and 91.7% of the employees were approved as members in the labor unions [117]. Currently, there are discussions on creating a specialized court for labor cases to facilitate and promptly address and solve labor disputes.

In a survey conducted by PCBS about social corporate responsibility, it was found that support provided to the local community by the private sector with more than 30 employees is targeted towards social issues in both WB and GS. Most of the private enterprises with 30 employees and more surveyed indicated that they have guidelines in place to rationalize the use of energy; with 97% of the private sector has such guidelines in GS, in comparison to 66% in the WB. In this survey, it was found that recycling is the least practiced in both GS and the WB; however guidelines and programs to foster the use of recycled materials is higher in the WB, where 80% of the private sector reported that they have such programs, with none in GS [118]. Also 18% of the surveyed private sector in the WB indicated that they support environmental issues compared to only 1 % in GS [118].



Agriculture

Agriculture is a very important sector not only for its contribution to economic development, but its importance stems also from the major contribution it makes for protection of land from Israeli occupation confiscation, reducing food insecurity, and creating job opportunities.

During the past 20 years, the contribution of the agricultural sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the oPt has been decreasing from 13% to less than 6% [119]. Further, the agricultural sector employs 21.4% of the female labor force, and 9.9% of the male labor force [96]. In addition, the agricultural sector absorbs 39% of the informal labor force, of which 90 % are women [120]. The cultivated land area is 31% of the total area of the oPt, of which 91% is situated in the WB, with 86% of it being rain-fed [62]. About 63% of the arable land is located in "Area C", leading to restrictions imposed by the Israeli military on the development of the sector. Furthermore, the total irrigated agricultural utilized by illegal Israeli settlements is equivalent to 50% of total irrigated land in the WB [120].

The agricultural sector consumes 150 MCM water annually, of which 45% is distributed in the WB. Most irrigated agriculture is located in Jericho and Nablus in the WB. It is important to indicate that in 2006, illegal Israeli settlements in WB utilized 60MCM. GS utilization of water for irrigations is 89.5 MCM, i.e. much higher than the recharge to the aquifer. Water resources management is a key factor for agricultural sustainability [62]. Most of the groundwater in GS is saline and not useful for human consumption or agriculture as discussed in the water section. This is becoming a major problem and concern for agricultural development particularly in GS. It is important to restructure the agricultural sector in GS to allow for more production of food for local use to increase food security and to decrease water over abstraction.

Agriculture faces several problems caused by the Israeli occupation, such as access restriction, land confiscation, illegal Israeli settlements' activities, expansion of the Annexation and Separation Wall, and violations of Palestinian water rights [121]. Other challenges include insufficient land registration, high land prices, and urban expansion.

According to the Agriculture strategy (2011-2013), the main challenges facing the agricultural development have been categorized with issues related to resources management, agricultural production, agricultural services, and institutional framework [62]. This categorization is coherent with the analysis that most NGOs share when it comes to the obstacles that the sector is facing. Challenges related to resource management include: the Israeli occupation, the deteriorated and inefficient use of water resources, excessive and partly illegal pumping of ground water, utilization of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes; overlaps and contradiction in roles and responsibilities combined with incomplete legal framework, deteriorated status of rangelands and biodiversity and weak mechanisms that deal with disasters, and the impacts of climate change and desertification. Challenges related to agricultural services include access limitations, weak and insufficient services delivered to farmers, poor infrastructures, weak extension and scientific research. Main obstacles related to agricultural production are the

restrictions on land and sea, displacement of Bedouins and fishermen, limited freedom for movement of goods and persons, bans of importation of breeds, crops seeds and seedlings, reliance on import of agricultural inputs and supplies, the additional costs charged by Israeli trade mediators without whom import of inputs and supplies cannot take place, and low productivity particularly with regards to sheep, goat and rain fed crops.


Energy

In mid March 2012, the ministerial cabinet has signed two strategies of importance to SD: The strategy for Renewable Energy and the Strategy for Rationalization of Energy Use. The former strategy aimed at increasing the renewable source of energy to 25% in 2020. The current renewable energy share of the total consumption is currently at 16% [122]. About 64 % of the households utilize solar energy to heat water [123]. The main problem of energy in oPt is energy security. Palestinians have no guaranteed energy supply as the oPt relies on gasoline, diesel, electricity and gas purchases from neighboring countries.

Almost all households are connected to the electricity network (99.3%) in 2011[123]; this is a significant increase since 1996 (94.2%) [75]. Although most of the population is connected to the network, this does not mean that households have electricity all day long. All the population in GS (1.7 million about 40 % of the total oPt population), receives electricity for less than six hours per day [123]. The electricity shortage in GS resulted from the Israeli imposed siege on GS, which hinders the import of industrial fuel to the local electrical power plant.

A major concern of the energy sector is the limitations in the availability of non-renewable energy sources such as gasoline, diesel and petroleum products. Further, according to the Paris economic agreement, the import of petroleum products should be in accordance to European and American standards; however since neither Jordan nor Egypt can provide petroleum at such standards, the only source of petroleum products and gas is the Israeli companies [124].

Energy security is a main challenge in oPt, the high dependency on Israeli sources for energy is of major concern. Therefore, alternative energy sources are being explored such as the renewable resources. As a result the renewable energy strategy comes as an immediate response, and as a need, to reduce the energy insecurity and dependency. Renewable energy constitutes a small but secure source. Only 20% of the total energy needed in oPt is generated from local primary production, whereby the sources of the primary production are as follows: 43 % of this energy is solar energy; 51 % is wood and charcoal, and 6 % olive cake [122]. It is important to note that the percentage of the solar energy of the total primary production has been decreasing in the past years; although it has been slightly increasing in absolute numbers.



Natural gas was found in GS at the coastal area. It is expected that this gas field will provide more than 1,000 billion cubic feet, which is composed of 99.4 % of methane and has no sulfur content. The natural gas with no sulfur content indicates that combustion would lead to reduced emissions. Up to date, marketing of the natural gas has not yet materialized as the international companies that took the contract of utilization of the natural gas could not market to Israel after nine years of negotiations due to disagreement on price [124].

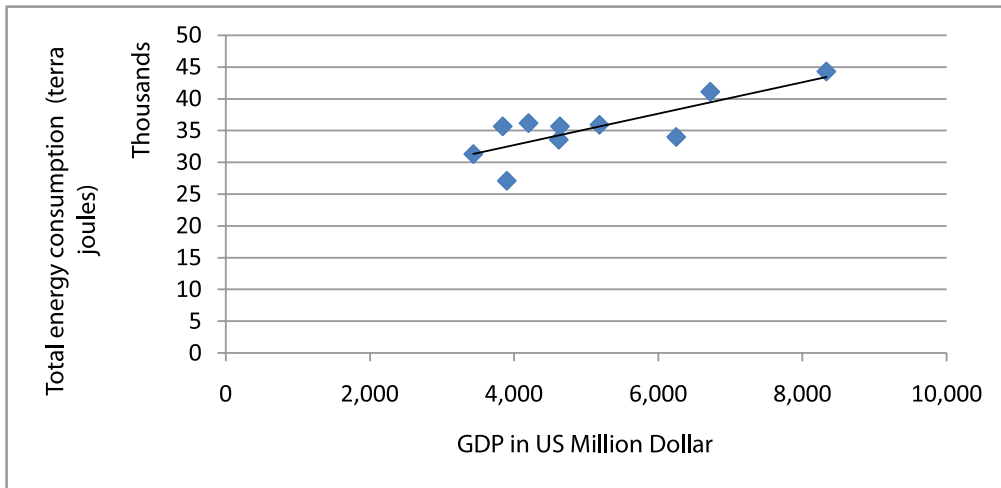
Electricity forms about 30% of the energy utilized in oPt, which is provided from Israel, the GS power plant, as well as from Egypt and Jordan [124]. About 50% of the electricity is utilized by households in oPt [122]²¹. In the WB about 49% of the electricity is utilized for households, 30% is utilized by commercial establishments and 20% for other uses such as industry, agriculture, street lightning, and water pumps²². One of the challenges that is facing the electricity sector in oPt is the high losses, reaching up to 26% [124]. Fees' collection for electricity is another challenge, however this has been improving particularly in the WB with the installation of prepaid electricity meters; currently 17% of household consumption that is provided by the four major companies in the WB is being charged through pre-paid meters; a variation of this rate is observed from 13% in one company to about 42% in another. Further, progressive tariff on electricity for household consumption and commercial consumption is utilized for those paying their fees after consumption; however flat fee rate is utilized in two companies with prepaid meters²³. It is important to note that other uses of electricity, such as industrial, agricultural, street lightening, water pumps, are all being charged based on a flat rate tariff. This does not provide an incentive for industries to reduce their electricity utilization.

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- 21 Calculated from PCBS energy Balance in the Palestinian Territory 2010. Furthermore, the data provided by the Energy authority for four companies confirms indicates that 48.5 % of the electricity distributed by the four major companies in the WB is for household consumption.
- 22 Calculated from data provided by the Energy authority for four companies distributing electricity in the WB.
- 23 Data provided by the Energy Authority for 2010. Energy consumption from the major four distributors in the WB.

Sustainable energy consumption

It is important to indicate that oPt is still at the early growing phase, and the energy consumption in the oPt is mainly utilized by households. Up to date, and probably for the other coming few years, the energy consumption will continue to increase with GDP increase (Figure 2), although it is expected that the share of the renewable resources will increase as a result of the renewable energy policy.

Figure 4: Total energy consumption in comparison to GDP for years (2001 to 2010) [122,125-131]





GREEN ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

Green economy in oPt is seen largely as an economic approach that limits the negative impacts on the environment and foster environmental protection, thus providing a healthier, cleaner and well balanced environment for the benefit of the people. The United Nations defines Green Economy as *“one in which the vital links between economy, society, and environment are taken into account and in which the transformation of production processes, production and consumption patterns, while contributing to a reduction per unit in reduced waste, pollution, and the use of resources, materials, and energy, waste, and pollution emission will revitalize and diversify economies, create decent employment opportunities, promote sustainable trade, reduce poverty, and improve equity and income distribution”*[132].

Nevertheless, up to date there is no agreement on the definition of green economy. However there is still a lack of clarity within the concept of Green Economy (GE) especially when it comes to designing projects towards its practical achievement, which has led to difficulties with developing a Palestinian definition. It is important to indicate that any definition of GE should not replace the concept of SD; rather it should be used as one of the tools for its achievement. It is important to study the opportunities and challenges of green economy, and the implementation tools for such a transition. The interest in the issues within green economy is constrained by several factors including:

- Additional financing required for restructuring a sector to become “greener”,
- The need for transfer and localizing technologies,
- The need for enhancement of technical capacities and capacity building for developing countries and people under oppression and Israeli occupation.

In addition, GE should be seen as a dynamic concept, thus allowing developing countries for a gradual and smooth transition according to their own local conditions, i.e. without increasing conditionality on funds and without interference in the local policies of states, including those under foreign occupation.

Although the GE definition is not clear, there is an understanding on some of components that would fit within this concept, such as renewable energy, integrated resources management, green loans, green jobs, green buildings, green jobs, solid waste recycling, reuse of treated wastewater, and green agriculture. Although many concerns of how the concept would and could be utilized, there is an agreement that various aspects of green economy are applicable and in use in oPt. It is important to indicate that green agriculture was strongly advocated for by NGOs, while the government has strongly indicated interest in green energy. GE is not seen as a priority by the PNA, out of fear that a transition towards GE might reduce the economic growth, in addition to the obstacles being imposed by the Israeli occupation. This approach is contradictory to the one seen by NGOs, where a view prevails that GE can be a tool to achieving economic development while protecting the environment and the marginalized.

Green Agriculture

The agricultural strategy is one of the few strategies that address environmental, social and economic aspects. Agriculture is thus one of the few sectors, for which both the government and NGOs see the three pillars of SD could converge if proper policies and strategies are undertaken. Since most agricultural holdings are of small size, policies to develop the agricultural sector that focus on the small holders would have a direct beneficial effect on poverty reduction and food security. If, in addition, environmental aspects are integrated into such equitable agricultural development, a green agriculture for poverty eradication could emerge. Green agriculture would result in improving agricultural production efficiency and reducing waste production. Further, it would lead to sustainable management of natural resources, including land, water, fish stocks and biodiversity.



Box 2 - Vision of the NGOs for Agricultural Sector Development – A Green Agriculture Approach

The following is a summary of the important aspects that are relevant to green economy for poverty eradication of the framework presented by PNGON for agricultural sector development, [120]:

- Based on integrated natural resources management
- To ensure SD
- Capable to contribute to the achievement of food security
- Enhancing land, water and biodiversity resources as a value for resistance, survival and sovereignty.
- Able to generate working opportunities and sufficient income for the agricultural workers.
- Able to support and protect small farmers
- Capable to provide a just and sustainable agricultural development,
- Based on shared but different responsibilities to reach an independent state.
- Based on participation and transparency, complementary between the various stakeholders in its various policies and strategies.
- Liberated, based on the complete and full jurisdiction of the Palestinian people on their own resources (including graze lands, forests, water, and natural resources).

Vision presented by a Palestinian NGO Network [120]

The NGO vision summarized in Box 2 conceptualizes a sustainable framework for an equitable agriculture development that could become one of the main GE achievements in oPt. If achieved, this agricultural approach would strengthen the steadfastness of the most vulnerable communities under Israeli occupation through poverty eradication, fair employment, pollution control, and environmental protection.

PALESTINIAN INITIATIVES IN GREEN ECONOMY

Composting – a Tool for Achieving Green Agriculture:

In one NGO in the GS; composting of agricultural waste takes place, the cost of the plant is covered by the sale of compost. It is important to indicate that the compost is sold to FAO, which in turn distribute the compost free of charge to farmers as part of their support to reduce food insecurity. Currently, NGO is upgrading the composting pilot into a big project with recycling of waste that will compost and recycle 100 tons of waste.

Recycling

A new project in recycling in cooperation between the Joint service Council in Jenin Governorate with a private sector to recycle more than 400 tons of incoming waste to the sanitary landfill. The initiative is still at its early stages of operation.

Green Loans

Bank of Palestine has started about a year ago, an initiative on Green Loans. The program provides small loans to farmers and households to encourage the utilization of green technologies. Three types of investments are supported currently under this initiative: solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and grey water treatment. The bank has an agreement with a private company that provides the technical support for applicants, and provides the bank with an estimate of the cost of the investment. The loans are in the range of USD 1,000 to 8,000; and can be repaid within five years. The loan can form up to 80% of the total individual investment. The Bank has not started operating this type of loan in GS due to inability to find a private sector partner yet. The bank is considering reviewing the Green Loan to include other technologies and options.

Green Energy

Several initiatives in the green energy field have been conducted, of which two types are presented below:

1. Energy conservation initiatives: energy auditing on big industry and some governmental building has been conducted; a total 15 locations were subjected to energy audits by Palestinian Energy Authority and Natural Resources to identify strategies to conserve energy. Furthermore, the Municipal and Development Lending Fund have introduced as part of its Municipal Development Program support to municipalities to pilot reduction of operational costs of municipalities by reducing and rationalization of energy use. An audit for four municipalities was conducted and complemented with measures to improve efficiency.
2. Electrification and lightning initiatives: a good example of this type of initiative is the Illumination of Wadi an-Nar street with solar energy, the road that links the south of the WB with the northern WB. There are other initiatives of electrifying rural villages with solar energy or with hybrid wind-solar energy technology.





Green Jobs

Two typical examples of green jobs are worth mentioning in this section. The first example has benefited the construction sector and the second the agricultural sector.

The development of green jobs in the construction sector in GS. These jobs were designed with the purpose to utilize more than 90% of recyclables in construction and renovation of some buildings destroyed during the Israeli aggressions on GS by the as raw materials.

Green jobs, particularly for women, were created in the agricultural sector. A project of recycling palm waste in producing handicrafts and livestock fodder in Deir Al-Balah Community, the project was accompanied by an awareness campaign to farmers, which was successful in leading to the preservation of these trees. [133]

Green Buildings


A Higher Council for Green Buildings was established in oPt. This council includes members of various ministries and national authorities, such as the engineering association, various universities, the Palestinian Standards Institution, Palestinian Federation of Industries, and the representatives of Palestine in the energy committees in the Arab engineers Association and World Federation of Engineering Organizations. The objective of this council is to promote green buildings in oPt.

Palestinian energy efficient building code and a Guide on the design of energy conservation buildings has been developed in oPt. Furthermore, developing engineering skills and training construction sector stakeholders on green building is taking part in Gs as part of some projects. The integration of the concept of sustainable buildings into vocational training programs is being assessed. In addition to the above, several new projects cover the piloting of green schools and clinics as well as energy conservation, geothermal and solar energy harvesting, natural ventilation, and rain water harvesting activities.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was established as a result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. However, the ability of the Palestine to utilize international structures such as the GEF is very limited due to the missing status of Palestine as a member country. Hence, since the establishment of GEF, support to projects in oPt was limited to a total number of circa 120.



The missing status of Palestine as a member state has prevented us from ratifying International Environmental Agreements (IEA). Palestine has recognized IEAs as an integral part of its Law Concerning the Environment but it is not able to formally ratify any IEAs since ratification and adherence is only open for member states. Hence, the Palestinians are denied the benefits emanating from and the support given by these agreements for the protection of natural resources. Furthermore, not being able to sign these agreements, Palestinians are denied access to legal action and follow up on any violation of these agreements by other States. For example, by not being able to ratify the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Palestine is not able to prosecute Israel for disposing hazardous waste in the oPt. Thus, not being recognized as a member state, Palestine has missed out on funding opportunities that were created in particular for environmental protection, such as the Kyoto, Montreal, Cartagena, Geneva protocols or the Basel convention. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the Palestinian people should be supported in their efforts towards statehood and full adherence to the IEAs.

Consequently, the Palestine must be represented in any post-2012 institutional set-up and be allowed to benefit in a manner equivalent to the one a member state may benefit from the projected new arrangements.

It is notably important that the right of the occupied people must be protected and that they are given full rights to access resources, know-how and the opportunity to participate in achieving SD. It is important that the new institutional set-up reaffirms principle 23 of the Rio Declaration [134], article 19 of Johannesburg declaration [137], and article 103 of Johannesburg Plan of implementation with regards to the people under occupation [135] (see Box 1). Furthermore, it is important to indicate that any international institutional framework should not impose further burdens on developing countries or to people under occupation; and that it should not include any conditionality.

Box 1: Clauses Related to People under Occupation from the *Declaration of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)* and the *Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)*

UNCED Declaration, Principle 23:

“The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.” [134]

Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, our commitment to Sustainable Development, Article 19:

We reaffirm our pledge to place particular focus on, and give priority attention to, the fight against the worldwide conditions that pose severe threats to the Sustainable Development of our people, which include: chronic hunger; malnutrition; foreign occupation; ...[137]

Plan of implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Article 103:

“Take further effective measures to remove obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social development and are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be combated and eliminated. People under foreign occupation must be protected in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law.” [135]



PALESTINE'S POSITION PAPER TO THE UNCSO

The position of Palestine to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) is outlined in the following paragraphs (for the full position paper please refer to Annex 1):

The UNCSD and participating states and organizations should be consistent in applying Principle 23 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development by implementing their **commitment towards people under foreign occupation**, in line with the Article 19 of Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. We fully support Article 103 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which reaffirms the need to “take further

effective measures to remove obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social development and are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be combated and eliminated. People under foreign occupation must be protected in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law". Sustainable Development and a state of Israeli occupation are two mutually exclusive concepts. The Palestinian people continue to be deprived of any meaningful Sustainable Development so long as they have to suffer from a hostile and expansionist Israeli colonial occupation regime, which impacts every single aspect of Palestinian social and economic life, as well as the natural environment.


Associating ourselves with the G77 and China, and the Arab States position, **we would like to see tangible progress emanating from the UNCSO. What we need now is renewed political commitment for Sustainable Development**, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on Sustainable Development and addressing new and emerging challenges. We will not renegotiate nor retract agreed outcomes of the major summits and agreed principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is a key tool in realizing the principles and commitments spelled out in past declarations on Sustainable Development. Therefore **we call for an increase of resources for development, including commitments by developed countries and to people and states under occupation to increase ODA, and the fulfillment of ODA assistance.** Furthermore, effective access to and transfer of knowledge and technologies for developing countries, in accordance with the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development has to be secured.

Not being recognized as a member state implies that Palestine cannot accede to International Environmental Agreements (IEA) and thus does not have access to related funding opportunities. No country can, however, address global challenges in isolation. It is hence **important that the Palestinian people can access to and benefit from any all International Environmental Agreements.**

The principles and commitments to achieve sustainable development require concrete operationalization. In full accordance with the G77 and China, and the position of the Arab States we call for an **action framework with a set of indicators that would outline tangible steps towards implementing previous principles and commitments in an integrated, but sequenced approach with clear responsibilities for the various parties.**





The **principle of subsidiarity** needs to be applied in implementing the commitments on Sustainable Development. Local concerns need to be addressed at the local level, national concerns at the national level, regional concerns at the regional level, and global concerns – in specific climate change which is one of the greatest challenges of our time – need to be addressed at the global level. **No single level can effectively handle the whole spectrum of issues** arising in the context of Sustainable Development.

The Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development with universal membership should be the means to achieve Sustainable Development, people and states under occupation should have access to and benefit from any post-2012 institutional setup that emanates out of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable development. This institutional framework ***should lead to the balanced integration of the three dimensions and mainstreaming of Sustainable Development, without putting any additional burden on developing countries or posing an obstacle to their development prospects and respecting their national priorities and policy space.***


Palestine, as a member state of the League of Arab States, reaffirms its commitment towards the ***Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region adopted by the 2004 Arab Summit***, and calls for bringing it in line with new and emerging developments and challenges and for supporting national and regional efforts and policies aimed at achieving Sustainable Development in the Arab region, including agreed upon goals.

Palestine, as a member state of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), reaffirms its commitment towards the ***Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development***, adopted in its draft form at the recent meeting of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers in May 2012.

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ANNEX 1 – PALESTINE’S POSITION PAPER TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development and living under Israeli occupation are two mutually exclusive concepts. We, the Palestinian people continue to be deprived of the opportunity to achieve sustainable development as long as we suffer under a hostile and expansionist Israeli occupation regime, which impacts every single aspect of our social and economic life, as well as the natural environment.

To provide just a few examples, Israel, the occupying power, currently controls more than 90% of our **water resources**, thereby restricting agricultural and industrial development as well as access to the basic human right to water. Further, the denial of access to water resources exacerbates the progressing desertification in our semi-arid region. The **closure regime**, the route of the illegal Annexation and Separation wall, the siege on Gaza Strip, and the denial of control over borders all contribute to the creation of fragmented Palestinian enclaves which lack continuity and economic viability. Currently some 64% of the West Bank remain under the direct control of Israel, the occupying power. The **health** of our citizens is directly and adversely impacted by the Israeli nuclear waste disposal in the southern West Bank, by hazardous waste and pollution inflicted by Israeli industries located inside illegal Israeli settlements in the northern and central West Bank, and by untreated sewage disposed of by these illegal Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank.

Our major emphasis is thus on the following principles and commitments enshrined in the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and the *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*:


Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Principle 23:

The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.

Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, Our commitment to sustainable development:

We reaffirm our pledge to place particular focus on, and give priority attention to, the fight against the worldwide conditions that pose severe threats to the sustainable development of our people, which include: chronic hunger; malnutrition; foreign occupation; ...

While the most serious constraints on sustainable development for the Palestinian people are a result of the continued Israeli military occupation, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) exercises all available options to improve



the social, economic and environmental conditions of the Palestinian public. Sustainable development through the establishment of an independent State of Palestine is the central theme of our integrated planning and budgeting process, which links development planning with a medium-term fiscal framework. We are currently in the process of closely aligning our development planning with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through the consultative elaboration of a **localized MDG strategy** that will underpin our upcoming national plan.

To list the individual achievements which the PNA has managed to accomplish in spite of the continued Israeli occupation would exceed the scope of this paper. The accomplishments of the PNA have probably been most pronounced in the sphere of social development, while economic development lags behind since it is subjected to the strict obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation regime. In the field of environment we also need to assess our own performance critically and acknowledge that environmental issues have not yet been sufficiently mainstreamed within the PNA. Plans and legal frameworks are not always allocated the required resources to properly implement them. Thus, while the Israeli occupation regime is the central impediment to sustainable development in Palestine, we remain determined to improve livelihoods and protect our environment.

Our expectations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) are outlined in the following paragraphs:

The UNCSD and participating states and organizations should be consistent in applying Principle 23 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* by implementing their **commitment towards people under foreign occupation**, in line with the Article 19 of *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development* and the *Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*. We fully support Article 103 of the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, which reaffirms the need to “take further effective measures to remove obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social development and are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be combated and eliminated. People under foreign occupation must be protected in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law”. Sustainable Development and a state of Israeli occupation are two mutually exclusive concepts. The Palestinian people continue to be deprived of any meaningful Sustainable Development so long as they have to suffer from a hostile and expansionist Israeli colonial occupation regime, which impacts every single aspect of Palestinian social and economic life, as well as the natural environment.

Associating ourselves with the G77 and China, and the Arab States position, **we would like to see tangible progress emanating from the UNCSD. What we need now is renewed political commitment for Sustainable Development**, assessing

the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on Sustainable Development and addressing new and emerging challenges. We will not renegotiate nor retract agreed outcomes of the major summits and agreed principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.


Official Development Assistance (ODA) is a key tool in realizing the principles and commitments spelled out in past declarations on Sustainable Development. Therefore **we call for an increase of resources for development, including commitments by developed countries and to people and states under occupation to increase ODA, and the fulfillment of ODA assistance.** Furthermore, effective access to and transfer of knowledge and technologies for developing countries, in accordance with the *Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* has to be secured.

Not being recognized as a member state implies that Palestine cannot accede to International Environmental Agreements (IEA) and thus does not have access to related funding opportunities. No country can, however, address global challenges in isolation. It is hence **important that the Palestinian people can access to and benefit from any all International Environmental Agreements.**

The principles and commitments to achieve sustainable development require concrete operationalization. In full accordance with the G77 and China, and the position of the Arab States we call for an **action framework with a set of indicators that would outline tangible steps towards implementing previous principles and commitments in an integrated, but sequenced approach with clear responsibilities for the various parties.**

The **principle of subsidiarity** needs to be applied in implementing the commitments on Sustainable Development. Local concerns need to be addressed at the local level, national concerns at the national level, regional concerns at the regional level, and global concerns – in specific climate change which is one of the greatest challenges of our time – need to be addressed at the global level. **No single level can effectively handle the whole spectrum of issues** arising in the context of Sustainable Development.

The *Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development with universal membership* should be the means to achieve Sustainable Development, people and states under occupation should have access to and benefit from any post-2012 institutional setup that emanates out of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable development. This institutional framework **should lead to the balanced integration of the three dimensions and mainstreaming of Sustainable Development, without putting any additional burden on developing countries or posing an obstacle to their development prospects and respecting their national priorities and policy space.**



Palestine, as a member state of the League of Arab States, reaffirms its commitment towards the ***Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region adopted by the 2004 Arab Summit***, and calls for bringing it in line with new and emerging developments and challenges and for supporting national and regional efforts and policies aimed at achieving Sustainable Development in the Arab region, including agreed upon goals.

1. Palestine, as a member state of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), reaffirms its commitment towards the ***Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development***, adopted in its draft form at the recent meeting of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers in May 2012.

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