

February 2023

Partners' Meeting in Support of the Palestinian National Employment Strategy Meeting Summary

Key points

- ▶ The partners' meeting aimed at mobilizing international support from donors and partners for the implementation of the Palestinian National Employment Strategy.
- ▶ Partners pledged to support the priorities under the National Employment Strategy in the pursuit of decent work for all Palestinians. With many already significantly engaged, partners expressed their support to Palestinian resilience and their drive toward achieving economic independence and social justice.
- ▶ Partners, donors, International and UN agencies clearly identified gaps in the implementation of the strategy that demand specific intervention and attention. Many gaps identified exist in both the supply and demand sides of the labour market.
- ▶ Recommendations provided by delegates offered valuable insights into the role of local partners and policy makers in implementing the National Employment Strategy clearly and effectively.
- ▶ The Meeting represented a valuable platform for partner coordination and opportunity for mobilizing additional support to the strategy. The PA, ILO and other partners must build on the success of the meeting to garner further support, create new partnerships and linkages, and raise more awareness about the National Employment Strategy. Hence, the Palestinian Minister of Labour called for holding periodical biennial meetings to follow up on progress.

OPT: National Employment Strategy 2021-25

The compelling need for a comprehensive approach to address the employment challenges prompted the adoption of the National Employment Strategy (NES) (2021–25) by the Palestinian Council of Ministers in November 2020. The NES was subsequently launched by the Palestinian Prime Minister at the National Social Dialogue Conference, held in Ramallah in March 2021.

To ensure broader policy coherence and coordination, the NES was developed by a tripartite and inter-ministerial committee, led by the Minister of Labour and hosted by the Prime Minister's Office. The ILO provided technical support. The process took on board the views of workers' and employers' organizations and ensured their full engagement. The strategy was built on an informed, ILO-led analysis of the employment situation, and through solid diagnostics conducted both pre- and post-pandemic.

The NES thus provides a robust, comprehensive framework to align and federate all labour-market, employment, skills and enterprise interventions to collaboratively chart a path to decent job opportunities and gainful employment for Palestinian women and men, especially youth.

ILO supported a mapping of existing interventions in each area under the NES and has developed ten thematic fiches based on priority areas in line with the objectives of the Strategy, to guide discussions with development partners and provide a map of investments and efforts ongoing and planned, and the gaps that warrant further funding.

Partners' Meeting

The Palestinian Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with the Palestinian Prime Minister's Office and in partnership with the ILO, the Arab Labour Organization and the Government of Germany, convened a high-level [partners' meeting](#) to garner international support for implementing [the first Palestinian National Employment Strategy \(NES\)](#).

Through the Palestinian National Employment Strategy 2021–25 and its combined set of policy measures, action programmes and investments, the meeting provided an opportunity to present the needs identified in the NES, to align existing and planned interventions and to identify funding gaps for partners to scale up support for its implementation. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, development partners, UN agencies, international financial institutions, and representatives from the Palestinian Authority, employers', and workers' organizations to discuss and identify ways forward that are central to the creation of more and better jobs.

The meeting was very well attended with 200 participants and more than 50 countries and organizations represented, including several Ministers and Ambassadors representing governments, as well representatives of international organizations, development funds and the United Nations. While this was not a pledging conference, several bilateral agreements and projects were signed between the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Labour and different international partners and donors, with a combined value estimated at **US \$40.7 million**.

Moreover, the meeting saw the signing of the new **Palestinian Decent Work Programme (DWP) for the period 2023-2025** between the ILO and the Palestinian tripartite partners. The new DWP draws its outcomes from three of the four strategic priorities of UNSDCF and builds on key achievements under the three pillars of the previous Programme of **labour governance, employment promotion and social protection**.

Supporting Statements and Remarks

The meeting commenced with a round of welcoming remarks by the co-hosts and other key partners in the implementation of the National Employment Strategy. The speeches emphasized the importance of the NES, as well as the critical role played by all in attendance in ensuring its success and furthering Palestinian economic prosperity. The speeches articulated the difficult and extreme challenges Palestinians faced in light of several decades living under occupation.

H.E. Yousef Al Shamali, Jordanian Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply, and of Labour expressed his country's commitment to pursuing joint **investments between Jordan and the Palestinians** and called on all Arab countries to support Palestinians by investing in **joint industrial and trade efforts**. H.E. Fayez Ali Al Mutairi, ALO Director General called upon Arab states to provide the needed funding and support to help **foster justice and peace** for the Palestinian people. The German Deputy Ambassador to Jordan, Florian Reindel, speaking on behalf of H.E. Ambassador Bernhard Kampmann, confirmed that employment growth was at the core of German development cooperation efforts in Palestine. Germany also prioritised supporting efforts to green the Palestinian economy. ILO Director General, Gilbert F. Hounbo addressed delegates through a recorded video message in which he commended the adoption of the NES and reaffirmed the ILO's commitment to supporting its implementation, including through the third Decent Work Programme 2023-25.

The meeting took place during a period of acute deterioration in the security situation and increased violence and hostilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. This further accentuated the need for scaling up funding to support



CC Al Oula/ILO: Mr. Omar Hashem, Ms. Ruba Jaradat, H.E. Nasri Abu Jish, H.E. Riad Al Malki, H.E. Yousef Al Shamali, Mr. Florian Reindel, H.E. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, H.E. Fayez Ali Al Mutairi, and Mr. Shaher Saed.

▶ “Collective strategies are needed for a better future for Palestinian women and men, in the West Bank and in Gaza. What is needed is investment in people, training, social protection, and gender equality. Investments are also needed in the institutions of work, collective bargaining, and social dialogue, along with measures to regulate new forms of work. All these will ensure greater social justice and decent work for.”

▶ ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Hounbo

Palestinian livelihoods and prospects for decent jobs, peace and stability. As such, many partners voiced their grave concern over the rise in tensions, which created a heightened sense of urgency in implementing the NES.

ILO Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat highlighted the importance of the continued engagement and support of the international community in the context of a shared conviction that the **steadfast Palestinian people** can build for themselves a better, more **prosperous and independent future**.

In supporting the NES, many country representatives and development partners highlighted the effectiveness of the NES and its importance for employment generation and decent work for all. H.E. Mr. Chen Chuandong, Ambassador of China to Jordan, encouraged the international community to ***“lend its full support to the strategy by expanding humanitarian and development assistance for Palestine and extending it to the labour market to help the Palestinian people create more jobs and develop their economy so that they can live in dignity.”*** In as much, H.E. Ms. Marianne Bolger, Ambassador of Ireland to Jordan, highlighted Ireland’s support to the NES wherein H.E. shares that Ireland’s priority in education, both a national and foreign priority, aligns with the strategy’s objectives and emphasizes the need ***“to link education with labour market needs and the creation of opportunities for both the individual and business, builds the much-needed hope for the future.”***

“We insist on continuing to instil hope throughout the Palestinian land to create stability, opportunity, and peace for our future generations.”

► **H.E. Nasri Abu Jeish** / Palestinian Minister of Labour



CC AI Oula/ILO: Country Representatives

Many of the delegates offered recommendations for the successful implementation of the strategy and identified gaps and areas that required active attention. The Minister of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia extended her support with attention to **the importance of increasing job motivation and providing incentives for job seekers. Aligning higher education to labour market needs** would further job seeking motivation, while a skilled workforce would create a prosperous society.

The Government of Qatar represented by H.E Ali Bin Samikh Al Marri, Minister of Labour expressed its assurance that the State of Qatar would not step back in its commitment and effort in **minimizing the hardship of the Palestinian people**. Qatar was determined to increase its support for the promotion of **decent jobs and skills development**.

From Kuwait, H.E. Aziz Dihani, Ambassador of Kuwait to Jordan, participated and confirmed the Government of Kuwait’s firm position in supporting the Palestinian cause and Palestinian people. H.E. highlighted Kuwait’s long-standing political and financial support to the Palestinians, including through support to the reconstruction of Gaza in 2007, the ILO’s Decent Work Programme in OPT since 2009, and the support to UNRWA. Mr. Noureldin Awam, the Special Envoy for the Government of Algeria, commended the success of the meeting and assured its efficiency in garnering support seeing that ***“in light of the difficult circumstances and sufferings, it demands that we provide support in the most faceted ways and means”***.

The EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmitt, delivered a recorded video message in which he commended the Palestinians for the strategy. It showed determination to tackling key challenges in the Palestinian labour market by prioritizing areas of action such as **vocational education and training, the business environment and entrepreneurship**. Through sharing a common objective of putting people at the centre of recovery, **prioritizing decent jobs and investing heavily in training**, the EU stood ready to continue its long-standing cooperation, including through the Union for the Mediterranean, in support of joint efforts for economic growth and job creation.



CC Al Oula/ ILO: Signing of DWP (2023-2025)

Other partners emphasized the need for a stable political and security situation for the development of the Palestinian economy, reiterating their calls for a two-state solution and ending the occupation. Nevertheless, recommendations to the Palestinian Authority included the importance of **addressing medium term issues such as the gender wage gap, labour shortages in sub-sectors, and promoting the IT sector**. Furthermore, there was significant emphasis on **social dialogue to better link educational outcomes with private sector needs, anticipate developments in the labour market and embrace digital transformation and developments in the IT field**. The Swiss Representative called for the PA to promote more **dual preparatory programmes** to combine theory with practical learning. **Enabling the private sector to thrive in creating more innovative and green jobs for men and women** was another development opportunity. The delegate from Italy expressed appreciation for a successful cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Labour, which had always been a reliable partner in the joint job creation initiatives with the **Palestinian Employment Fund**. Another pillar to the development of the Palestinian economy and success of the NES includes growing trade opportunities regionally and internationally, country representatives like the United Kingdom, Belgium and Sweden are looking to facilitate and reduce costs of the trade that Palestinian businesses face and support the Palestinian Authority and its institutions in standards and customs to grow and create linkages with markets regionally and internationally.

The UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as senior representatives of various UN agencies operating in the OPT attended the meeting and offered valuable insights into the challenges on the ground and their active development efforts in relation to enhancing employment. UN representatives raised concerns over the soaring youth unemployment rate and a persistent under-learning crisis amongst children. **Strengthening TVET systems** in line with labour market needs and **increasing TVET enrolment and support to entrepreneurship** still required further donor support. A number of country representatives, including from Japan, USA, Korea, and China, announced their desire to increase their support in the OPT and strengthen their commitments to advancing decent work, job opportunities and employment generation for the future of the Palestinian economy.

► Annex I: Agreements and MoUs: Palestinian Authority and its Partners' - February 23rd, 2023

► Summarized table of Agreements and MoUs signed to support the implementation of the NES

Partnership title	Country/Agency	Amount	Duration
Sustainable Employment Project	German Credit Institute for Reconstruction, KFW	€11 million	4 years
Funding for Women in Marginalized areas in partnership with MoL	Bank of Palestine	US\$ 1 million	--
Memorandum of Understanding for Decent work in OPT	International Labour Organization	US\$ 10 million	3 years
Project: Sustainable Start-Up	Palestinian Monetary Authority	US\$ 10 million	24 months
Agreement for the Extension of the early recovery project in the Gaza Strip	UNDP and Swedish Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA	US\$ 1,093,748	6 months
Project: My First Job	Belgian Cooperation Agency	€750,000	2 years
Multiple projects	Italian Development Cooperation Agency, AICS	€8 million	One year
Memorandum of Understanding	Republic of Indonesia	Cooperation and exchange of expertise	----
Memorandum of Understanding	Kingdom of Morocco	Cooperation and exchange of expertise	----

► Annex II: List of Participating Countries and Organizations

I. Partners

Country Representatives		
1.	European Union	
2.	Republic of Italy	
3.	Kingdom of Sweden	
4.	French Republic	
5.	Federal Republic Germany	
6.	Kingdom of Norway	
7.	Kingdom of Belgium	
8.	Republic of Ireland	
9.	United Kingdom	
10.	Australia	
11.	Republic of Austria	
12.	Switzerland	
13.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	

14.	Spain	
15.	Kingdom of Denmark	
16.	United States of America	
17.	Canada	
18.	Algeria	
19.	The State of Libya	
20.	Republic of South Africa	
21.	Kingdom of Morocco	
22.	Arab Republic of Egypt	
23.	Islamic Republic of Mauritania	
24.	Republic of Tunisia	
25.	Republic of the Sudan	
26.	Federation of Malaysia	
27.	Republic of Indonesia	

28.	Japan	
29.	Republic of the Philippine	
30.	People's Republic of China	
31.	Republic of Korea	
32.	Republic of India	
33.	Kingdom of Thailand	
34.	State of Qatar	
35.	Kingdom of Bahrain	
36.	State of Kuwait	
37.	Sultanate of Oman	
38.	United Arab Emirates	
39.	Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	
40.	Syrian Arab Republic	
UN and International Organizations and Funds		
41.	UNSCO	

42.	International Labour Organization	 International Labour Organization
43.	WFP	
44.	FAO	
45.	UNICEF	
46.	UNDP/PAPP	
47.	UNIDO	
48.	UNHabitat	
49.	UNRWA	
50.	UNESCO	
51.	World Bank	
Regional Organizations		
52.	Arab Labour Organization	
53.	League of Arab States	
54.	Union for the Mediterranean	

55.	Organization of Islamic Cooperation	
56.	Islamic Development Bank	
Palestinian Delegation		
57.	Prime Minister's Office	
58.	Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
59.	Palestine Arab and Islamic Funds Affairs	
60.	Palestinian Ministry of Labour	
61.	Palestinian Ministry of National Economy	
62.	Palestinian Ministry of Finance	
63.	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics	
64.	Palestinian Monetary Authority	
65.	National TVET Commission	
66.	Cooperative Work Agency	
67.	Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture	 إتحاد الغرف التجارية الصناعية الزراعية الفلسطينية Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture
68.	Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions	
69.	General Federation of Palestinian Workers	
70.	Bank of Palestine	 بنك فلسطين BANK OF PALESTINE