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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

## **REPORT**

### **NATIONAL CONFERENCE: TOWARDS INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICY IN PALESTINE RAMALLAH, 9 JUNE 2009**

#### **Summary**

The Ministry of Planning in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), implemented the integrated social policy project in Palestine, followed by the National Conference: Towards Integrated Social Policy in Palestine (Ramallah, 9 June 2009).

The Conference was held in line with the orientations of the Palestinian National Authority and the Ministry of Planning to design an integrated social policy sensitive to Palestinian specificities, reflected in the struggle for freedom and independence along with construction, democracy and development. The Conference was the culmination of a national dialogue process that accompanied the issuance of the National Report on Integrated Social Policy in Palestine since the Oslo Accords from September 1997 to the end of 2008. The report reviewed the content, design mechanisms, institutional frameworks that produce, implement and monitor this policy in order to identify gaps, and propose recommendations to help improve, develop, design, implement and monitor the integrated social policy and developmental plans in the country.

Main recommendations stemming from the Conference include calling upon the Ministry of Planning and the Government to adopt ESCWA approach for integrated social policy and work on devising it based on Palestinian specificities, citizenship rights, and the social contract, in addition to enhancing the national consultative process on economic and social developmental issues through the formation of a socio-economic council representing the various parties of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a social observatory for the development of follow-up, evaluation and monitoring processes for implemented national policies and plans, and establishing a national body to follow up and monitor external funding in light of national priorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants in the Conference proposed a set of recommendations focused on the adoption of ESCWA approach for integrated social policy, and the necessity to design it and provide appropriate and effective tools, means and frameworks to successfully accomplish this goal in Palestine with the support of ESCWA and other national and international institutions. The main recommendations included the following:

(a) To call upon the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development and the Palestinian Government to adopt ESCWA approach for integrated social policy;

(b) To emphasize the importance of social issues for the Palestinian society, such as poverty, unemployment and marginalization and to grant such issues priority in national developmental plans while allocating necessary resources for this purpose;

(c) To stress the role of the State in economic and social life, which requires the reconsideration of the free market principle in particular for issues related to globalization and the international financial crisis;

(d) The need for integrated social policy and developmental plans in Palestine to reinforce the perseverance of the citizens on their land and to fight poverty, unemployment, marginalization, discrimination in particular against women, addressing gaps between regions and social groups, and heeding the issues of youth, women and children as well as the social protection network while conveying aids to the development sector and developing and making use of local resources;

(e) To devise the policy based on the concept of citizenship, in order to contribute effectively and positively to achieving social cohesion, building government institutions, achieving freedom and independence and establishing an independent Palestinian State;

(f) The necessity for the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development to form a multidisciplinary national team aimed to propose specific recommendations for moving forward in devising the integrated social policy in Palestine;

(g) To emphasize the need to establish a socio-economic council which serves as a developmental national framework based on consultation between all parties in the Palestinian society, or to develop the idea of establishing an advisory council for planning in the Ministry of Planning;

(h) To stress the need for establishing a social observatory to contribute to the follow-up, evaluation and monitoring of implemented plans, policies, programmes and projects;

(i) The necessity to establish a national body to follow up and monitor external funding along with national priorities agreed to in the community, in order to contribute to a better management of funding, development and the society.