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Press releases

The UN and the EU begin expansion of Southern Gaza Seawater Desalination Plant to help address shortages of safe drinking water in the Gaza Strip

Gaza, 4 December - Representatives of the United Nations, the European Union, and the Palestinian Authority officially marked today the beginning of new works to expand the production capacity of the Southern Gaza Seawater Desalination Plant.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Minister of the Palestinian Water Authority, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Acting Representative of the European Union, the Special Representative of UNICEF in the State of Palestine, representatives from the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), and local stakeholders.

"With safe drinking water in extremely short supply in the Gaza Strip, this seawater desalination plant provides an example of how Palestinian authorities and international organizations can work together to help collectively fulfill people's right to safe water. Although, already capable of producing safe drinking water for up to 75,000 people when operating at full capacity, this plant is being expanded to produce clean water for up to 250,000 people by 2021. Water is not only a basic human need and right, but it is also essential for the functioning of hospitals, clinics and schools. Moreover, by scaling up seawater desalination efforts, we will help to revitalize the Gaza Strip's depleted aquifer, as less water will need to be extracted and more treated wastewater can be returned to it," said **Ms. Genevieve Boutin, Special Representative of UNICEF in the State of Palestine.**

"Nearly 97% of water in Gaza is considered unfit for human consumption. Huge efforts

are needed to ensure that Gazans can access fresh water. This is both a fundamental human right and an urgent humanitarian need. This project, funded by the EU, will help solve the problem in Gaza and will give hope in the midst of a very bleak reality. Once completed, 250,000 Palestinians living in Rafah and Khan Younis will have access to fresh drinking water," said **the Acting European Union Representative Tomas Niklasson**.

" The EU remains fully committed to supporting the Palestinian people, including here in Gaza where over half of the EU support is targeted. We will also continue to call for a fundamental change to the political, economic and security situations in Gaza including allowing the Palestinian Authority to resume its full responsibilities in Gaza and ending the closure. Gaza is an integral part of a future Palestinian state," he added.

This newly inaugurated expansion of the Southern Gaza Seawater Desalination Plant is part of the EU and UNICEF's efforts ensure that all families and social service institutions, particularly those in vulnerable areas, have increased access to safe drinking water and sanitation. UNICEF supports national institutions in planning and delivering sustainable water and sanitation services and responds to emergency water, sanitation, and hygiene needs of the most vulnerable populations.

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