

AHLC Ministerial Meeting

Oslo, 16-17 November 2021

Work Session 3: West Bank and Gaza: Infrastructure, access & movement, and trade

Time: Tuesday 16 November 2021, 16:30 – 18:00

Remarks by Dr. John N. Clarke

Two minutes intervention for the water session:

The first point that is worth noting is that while progress has undoubtedly been slower than hoped for, there has, indeed, been material progress achieved on the ground. Our report goes into greater detail on the challenges still faced, but here I would note that in Gaza, there are now four wastewater treatment facilities up and running, an additional five MCM of bulk water is now entering via the Bani Soheila and Bani Said connection points, and tendering has commenced for three additional infrastructure components that will carry us further towards meeting the still immense gap of 80 mcm/annum in potable water for the strip.

The progress achieved in Gaza offers a basis for achieving further gains both there, but also in the West bank, and in that regard, the joint concept note that serves as the background for this discussion provides the contours of the next steps required. What is required now is that those broad contours be translated into more concrete steps that will enable the implementation of the projects identified and that a forum for continued engagement between the parties and the international community be found.

This progress is important in and of itself, but also for the procedural and process-based precedents that they will set. We are committed to working with both the PA and GoI to ensure that these help to achieve the strategic goals identified by the PWA.

For example, our 2019 AHLC report outlined a set of water and wastewater infrastructure projects for the West Bank totalling approximately ½ billion USD of works. In that report and since then we have continued to encourage the GoI to issue an in-principle approval similar to that which was offered some 5 years ago for the Gaza Central Desalination Plant. That approval would provide the basis upon which donors could begin to identify areas of potential support. In addition, and in our recent discussions with our colleagues in GoI and the PA, including over lunch, we believe that a short-list of priority projects is now emerging which can serve as the starting point for more detailed discussions on implementation.

Thank you very much.