



# **UNITED NATIONS CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR STAFF OF THE STATE OF PALESTINE**

*“Partnerships for Empowering a Future State of Palestine:  
Sustainable Development Goal 17 and  
South-South and Triangular Cooperation”*

Beirut, 27- 28 April 2017

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## **WORKSHOP’S SUMMARY**

The United Nations Capacity Building Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals for Staff of the State of Palestine was organized jointly by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA). The Workshop aimed at assisting the Government of the State of Palestine in enhancing its capacities in priority areas. Recognizing that 2017 marks the 50th year since the onset of the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and the urgent need to end it, the Workshop, in accordance with the international community’s pledge to ‘leave no one behind’, focused on supporting the State of Palestine attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In consultation with the Government of the State of Palestine, Sustainable Development Goal 17 had been identified as the primary focus of the Workshop. In that context, it was decided that the Workshop focus on enhancing international support and partnerships for effective and targeted capacity-building in Palestine with a view to supporting its National Action Plan on SDGs, including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SS&TC).

During sessions facilitated by ESCWA, expert speakers delivered presentations on different aspects of SDG17, including implementation of SDGs, partnerships for implementation of Agenda 2030, SS&TC, financing and partnerships for Development Expenditure. Presentations were followed by interactive discussions with the 24 participants representing various Ministries and entities of the State of Palestine, the business community and civil society.

The **Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine**, the Division and ESCWA representative welcomed the Committee's Capacity Building Programme and highlighted the growing importance of cooperation among developing countries at regional and sub-regional levels (SS) as well as TC, with a view to promoting the national priorities of the State of Palestine. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine urged participants to abandon 'the old logic', which demanded that developing countries, such as Palestine exclusively relied on support from the developed world. Instead, he urged participants to adopt a 'new logic' that embraced greater SS & TC. In his keynote address, **a former Minister of Finance of Lebanon** drew analogies between the challenges and experiences his country faced at the conclusion of the Lebanese's civil war and Palestine's current situation. While the two country's experiences were not identical, there were lessons Palestinians could learn from the Lebanese example.

The second session entitled "Partnerships for the Implementation of Agenda 2030 in Palestine" framed discussions on the Palestine-specific context for Goal 17. Presenters examined Goal 17 and its specific targets. During the ensuing discussion, participants introduced the national priorities of Palestine, according to its strategic plan and discussed the challenges that Palestinian institutions face in implementing Agenda 2030, and the relevant parts of the Palestinian National Action Plan on SDGs. Emphasis was put on the right to development, and on the ability of Palestinian institutions to benefit from the international legal framework to advance the development agenda of the State of Palestine, particularly in relation to building partnerships with donor countries.

There was an expressed consensus that the State of Palestine needed to continue to build strong institutions to facilitate implementation of the SDGs in spite of the occupation and the numerous other hurdles. As a state, Palestine bore responsibility for their implementation. It was important to utilize the opportunities the United Nations and other international actors offered for the benefit of the State of Palestine. As part of the Group of 77 + China, the largest grouping within the UN General Assembly, Palestine had participated in negotiating these Goals, based on a broad consensus. "Palestinian interests were protected within the General Assembly", and it was important for Palestinians to be creative and think "outside of the box".

Session 3 entitled "National and Local-level Partnerships" assessed capacity building programmes that could potentially assist Palestinian institutions in enhancing internal partnerships geared towards the attainment of SDGs. Expert presentations introduced the general framework of local-level partnerships in developing countries and identified needs and opportunities for such partnerships in Palestine. Palestinian civil

society representatives shared lessons learned. Much focus was placed on resource mobilisation and the high level of tax evasion within the State of Palestine.

Participants also acknowledged the need for greater transparency regarding how resources were spent, a prerequisite for donors, including the United Nations, to disburse funds. The ‘paralysis’ of the Palestinian Legislative Council and its inability to hold the Executive power accountable highlighted the role that civil society ought to play in this context. At the same time, “civil society groups were bound by certain criteria”, including gender parity and environmental sustainability.

During session 4, presenters introduced internal and external modalities of financing for development, including partnerships, as well as tools and techniques to enhance the efficiency of development assistance, and to mobilize financial resources. Moreover, they discussed development financing opportunities from countries in the “Global South” as well as previous success stories. Moreover, there had been a change in the “Development Cooperation Architecture” and countries that used to be recipients of development assistance, including Brazil, China, Cuba and India now provided such assistance, and the “BRICS” group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) had been established with the stated aim to help alleviate poverty around the world.

Participants examined best practices to integrate challenges and opportunities into the implementation of Palestinian development plans. Palestinian officials presented their experience and lessons learned from interactions with governments, focusing on the challenges and opportunities to secure funding and partnerships for development. Participants opined that the State of Palestine should base its partnerships on convergent values.

Session 5 examined South-South cooperation and opportunities for partnerships and assistance, particularly in capacity building and knowledge transfer. An exchange of views took place on the most suitable way forward for Palestine, touching upon prerequisites for South-South cooperation-modalities and capacity building needs. The value of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) was addressed by participants who stressed the importance of having a level-playing field whenever such partnerships ought to be meaningful. There was also a need for a ‘shared concept’ of partnerships which encompassed human rights and accountability mechanisms. Such a concept ought to be based on international standards, while leaving room for ‘national ownership’. It was important that donors held recipients of development assistance accountable, and the reverse was also true. For example, Kazakhstan had tapped into the numerous opportunities provided by SSC. Owing to its partnerships, such as with UNDP,

Kazakhstan was able to hone best practices within its civil service. Kazakhstan was now able to provide development assistance to numerous countries, including in Asia and Africa in agriculture, as well as in the oil and gas sectors.

Session 6 entitled “Triangular Cooperation & Sustainable Development in Palestine” revolved around enhancing the participants’ understanding of Triangular Cooperation and identifying the best approaches for Palestine. Triangular Cooperation in the context of the SDGs and Goal 17 was also discussed; the transfer of knowledge, one of the most dynamic dimensions of SSC had developed into a pillar of development. National Ministries of Finance and Development had to cooperate closely. Participants discussed priority areas and criteria to make such cooperation more effective, including learning from previous mistakes and taking into account the peculiar Palestinian context. It was widely acknowledged that SSC and North South cooperation were not mutually exclusive but complementary, and that international organizations had a role to play in their promotion.

In closing, participants once more questioned whether there could be development in spite of the occupation, concluding that SS & TC as well as partnerships with international actors, such as the UN, were only helpful if their ultimate objective was to end the occupation. They called for closer relations and indeed follow up meetings between civil society groups and the Palestinian Government in order to mend fences and urged the Arab League to take up the 2030 Agenda at their next meeting.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations thanked the experts and participants for their contributions and the Division for Palestinian Rights and Committee for making the Workshop a reality. He expressed hope that this and other workshops in future would enhance the capacity of Palestinian officials and therefore Palestine. He pointed to the need for Palestinian officials to transform their mind-set and to ensure that the State of Palestine did not repeat past mistakes.

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