

Ramallah, 15.10.2009  
Ref.: Pr 14/2009

**Press Release**  
**Opening doors of opportunity**  
**The Government of Germany and UNDP inaugurate a school for the blind in Beit Jala**

**Jerusalem, October 15, 2009** – Salam Fayyad, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, today opened a new school for the blind which was funded by a contribution of the Government of Germany, through its development bank KfW, and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, in cooperation with the National Society for the Visually Handicapped.

The inauguration ceremony for the new school was held on Thursday, 15 October 2009 and attended by H.E. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Mrs. Anne Wagner-Mitchell, Cultural and Press Officer of the German Representative Office in Ramallah, Mr. Raji Zidan, Mayor of Beit Jala, Mr. Marc Engelhardt, Head of KfW Office in the oPt, Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, Chairman of the National Society for the Visually Handicapped, and Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator.

The new school was constructed, with funds amounting to €354,000, to create a better environment for the education of blind children in the Bethlehem district as well as other neighboring cities and villages. The school has a floor space of 1600m<sup>2</sup> area and consists of a basement and 3 floors hosting administration, classrooms, computer labs, dormitories for 40 students, kitchens, bathrooms, waiting halls and corridors.

H.E. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad expressed his thanks to all the partners who made this project a success and helped in meeting some of the needs of this important segment of the Palestinian society. "We at the Palestinian Authority will continue to support civil society organizations and build their capacities as part of our social and political responsibility towards our people in the West Bank and Gaza".

Mrs. Anne Wagner-Mitchell, Cultural and Press Officer of the German Representative Office from Ramallah said: "The school for the blind here in Beit Jala is a very positive example of what can be achieved by the EGPs and I am very glad that we are part of this project which will improve the lives and future opportunities of handicapped children."

Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator, said that he is pleased that this school will provide modern facilities for around 100 pupils and give them greater opportunity for a productive life. "Many blind people have contributed to the world through music. But blind people have excelled in many areas such as politics and literature. Lack of sight does not mean lack of vision." he added.

Since 2002, UNDP and KfW have completed more than 530 projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip worth over 71 million Euros to provide services and employment to the Palestinian people.

**For further information, please contact:**

In Jerusalem: Dania Darwish, Communications Officer, Tel. +972-2-6268229 – e-mail: [danial.darwish@undp.org](mailto:danial.darwish@undp.org), Conal Urquhart, External Relations Advisor, Tel. +972-2-6268200 – e-mail: [conal.urquhart@undp.org](mailto:conal.urquhart@undp.org)  
In Ramallah: Anne Wagner-Mitchell, Press Officer, Tel. +972-2-2977 648 – email: [anne.wagner@diplo.de](mailto:anne.wagner@diplo.de)