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Press Release

Maqam Nabi Musa and Khan Al-Wakala: two historic sites in Palestine revitalized through a new European Union and UNDP partnership

Jerusalem, 18 February 2014 - In the presence of the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Dr Rami Hamdallah, Ms Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and EU Representative Mr John Gatt-Rutter, the European Union and UNDP marked the launch of a new €5 million tourist development programme at the historic site of Maqam Nabi Musa in Jericho Governorate.

Through this three-year programme, a guesthouse and tourist centre will be established in Maqam Nabi Musa to accommodate tourist groups and visitors. In addition, the historic Khan al Wakale complex in Nablus will develop into a tourist hub through support for the Municipality of Nablus and private companies to operate its museum, guesthouse and shopping area. The rehabilitation of the Khan al Wakale site was completed in 2012 through another EU-funded project. The programme is fully funded by the European Union and will be implemented by UNDP in close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, local communities and other relevant stakeholders in the tourism sector.

"I am delighted to launch this new tourist development programme at one of the great cultural and historical landmarks in Palestine, Maqam Nabi Musa. The Palestinian historical sites are not only important for their cultural and heritage values but also for their potential to promote prosperity by boosting tourism and business opportunities. This programme is part of the EU's continuing commitment to preserving Palestinian cultural heritage and at the same time exploiting in full - and for the benefit of all - its rich economic potential", said the EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter.

The State of Palestine has the potential to become a much larger and profitable tourist market. The objective of the programme is to bring together the Palestinian public and private sectors to exploit untapped potential and improve the management of cultural sites for touristic purposes. This can considerably increase the number of tourists and visitors, generate business opportunities in new markets (such as cultural, eco-touristic and alternative tourism) and lead to economic growth.

"With more than twelve thousand major archaeological sites and approximately sixty thousand historical buildings, Palestinian cities and towns are rich in cultural heritage," said UNDP Administrator Helen Clark. "With appropriate investment, there are incredible opportunities for increased tourism which would create the revenue and jobs critical to sustainable development" she added.



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Tourism also has the potential to foster mutual understanding among different peoples, cultures and religions. To this end, the programme will closely involve local communities and raise awareness about the importance of cultural heritage.

As part of its overall efforts to promote cultural tourism, the EU started work with UNDP in 2013 on a Palestinian cultural heritage preservation programme in the Old City of Jerusalem. The programme activities include the rehabilitation of Hammam Al Ayn and Hammam Al Shifa, Al Madrasa Al Kilaniyya and related housing units in the old city, the development of a business management plan and training on the maintenance of rehabilitated sites.

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