

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

*PALESTINE*¹

AMOUNT: 25 800 000 EUR

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2016/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annex is to serve as a communication tool for ECHO's partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

March 2016 – Modification No. 1

Following the political orientation provided by Commissioner Stylianides to scale-up ECHO's financial support towards education in emergencies to reach the global target of 4 % and the additional contribution of EUR 26 million granted by the budgetary authority, an amount of EUR 800 000 has been added to the current HIP.

This additional contribution will be used to support activities that enable safe access to quality education for boys and girls in ongoing conflicts, complex emergencies, other situations of violence and early recovery phases. Furthermore, it may support longer-term education activities in protracted crises and in refugee/IDP camps, as well as actions targeting transition to formal education systems.

In spite of the increased recognition of the important role that education may play for children and young people affected by crises, education in emergencies remains one of the least funded humanitarian sectors. For boys and girls affected by crises, safe access to education can be lifesaving, protecting them from external threats, giving them a sense of normalcy, teach them important life skills, strengthen their resilience and restore their hope for a better life. As protracted crises in the world are becoming more prominent there is a risk of creating a "lost generation" if there is not investment in education in emergency at an early stage.

1. CONTEXT

The Government of Israel's (GoI) occupation policy and the lack of progress in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) have resulted in a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences for the Palestinian population. The crisis mainly derives from prolonged occupation and recurrent violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) such as advancement of settlement activities. The European Union has in numerous Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions reiterated that settlements, the separation barrier, demolition of homes and evictions of Palestinian people or communities are illegal under international law.

In the past year, the humanitarian operating space seriously shrunk, with ECHO Partners encountering increasing difficulties in delivering humanitarian assistance in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as reflected in the use of demolitions and confiscation of assets incidents.²

¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue

In 2014, Israel demolished 496 Palestinian structures in Area C, nearly a quarter of which were aid items provided by international donors³. Frequent impediments for access of humanitarian workers and relief assistance to Gaza were also witnessed throughout 2015. There have been 678 crossings for International Organisations as of 30 September 2015 compared to 5 783 in 2014⁴ while only 25-30% of the ABC construction material entered Gaza in October 2015.⁵ The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which are illegal under international law⁶, has contributed to an increase in demolitions of private Palestinian property, an increase in settler violence and intimidation, and an increase in restrictions on movement and access. This has led to a deterioration of access to basic services and precarious living conditions for Palestinians. Such a coercive environment has undermined their livelihoods and security and has increased their socio-economic vulnerabilities and risk of forcible displacement. Also, the recent trend in mass community demolitions, rather than single households, and the change in legal modalities imposed by the GoI that speed up the process of demolitions, have increased the concerns of the humanitarian and international community regarding the imminent threat of large scale displacement of already vulnerable communities and the erosion of their protection.

Prospects for resilience building and development in the West Bank have been hindered by the limited possibilities of the Palestinian Authorities to invest in Area C under the Oslo Agreement and the existing restrictive planning and zoning regime imposed by the GoI. This regime facilitates the development of illegal Israeli settlements at the expense of Palestinians, for whom it is virtually impossible to build or develop their land in Area C.

The Gaza Strip has suffered three wars in eight years. In the meantime, the collective punishment of the civilian population continues for the eighth year in a row due to the blockade imposed by the GoI, which is in breach of its obligations under IHL. This blockade translates into a situation of continuous economic de-development and increased vulnerability of the population. Unless normal movement of people and goods is allowed to resume, there will be no fundamental change in the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.⁷

Periodic shocks and repeated cycles of violence spark off humanitarian crises, as seen during Israel's 'Protective Edge' military operation (7 July - 26 August 2014), the fourth conflict in ten years' time, where at least 2 100 Palestinians were killed, of whom 500 were children, and unprecedented damages to public and private infrastructure and the general socio-economic situation.

In Gaza, any development prospects have been seriously hampered by the blockade and the limited imports and exports that could support the reconstruction and development of the Strip. Regular demolitions of donor-funded infrastructure during conflicts has contributed to the reluctance of donors to invest in Gaza, pending an agreement on permanent issues such as accountability of parties to the conflict to protect social and economic infrastructure and increased movement of goods and people.

While ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2015-2016 identified low humanitarian needs for the West Bank and moderate humanitarian needs for Gaza, the vulnerability of the population affected by the crisis is assessed to be high in Gaza and low in the West Bank. The Vulnerability Index is 6.9 (10 being the highest).⁸

2 Since 2009, over 600 structures amounting to over € 2 million worth of ECHO humanitarian aid are reportedly under threat of confiscation/demolition. Another 130 structures amounting to approximately €200 000 have already been confiscated/demolished

3 UNOCHA online demolition database: <http://www.ochaopt.org/demolition-sys.aspx>

4 OCHA Erez crossing report : movement of people into and out of Gaza : <http://www.ochaopt.org/gazacrossing/index.aspx?id=1>

5 Shelter Cluster Palestine – Construction Material Tracking for Gaza – October 2015

6 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on the MEPP (July 2015): <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/07/20-fac-mepp-conclusions/>

7 The EU calls for a fundamental change of the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns: Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on the MEPP (July 2015): <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/07/20-fac-mepp-conclusions/>

8 <http://www.inform-index.org/>

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

- 1) Affected people/potential beneficiaries: Palestinians affected by IHL violations.
 - 1.8 million inhabitants⁹ living in the Gaza Strip under the economic and physical blockade. More specifically, the people directly affected by the military operation in July-August 2014, who may still be in need of humanitarian assistance. Approximately 100 000 people (17 817 families)¹⁰ remain displaced and are currently living with host families, in rented apartments, prefabricated units, tents and makeshift shelters, or in the rubble of their previous homes¹¹. Humanitarian agencies under the coordination of OCHA are updating the profile of the IDPs, including precise vulnerability criteria to better inform priorities in terms of delivery of assistance.
 - Potential vulnerable categories of Gaza's population that could be exposed to protection threats, including fishermen and small farmers working in the Access Restricted Areas (ARA) and permissible fishing areas. Access and rehabilitation to agricultural lands are seriously compounded by remnants of war and the demolitions of agricultural assets (roads, wells, greenhouses ...) resulting in an unprecedented decrease of livelihood opportunities in rural areas.
 - 300 000 Palestinians¹² living in Area C of the West Bank, specifically communities having difficulty accessing their land because of settler violence and the expansion of settlements; communities affected by (or at risk of) demolition and confiscation of private property and whose livelihoods are at risk; this includes the communities at risk of forcible transfer including the 7 000 Palestinian Bedouins¹³ in the Jerusalem Periphery, the E1 block, as well as the residents in Southern Hebron, and the 6 200 Palestinians¹⁴ residing in areas designated as “firing zones” (closed military zones for training). Throughout 2015, ECHO partners have increased their capacities to target the most vulnerable communities and households factoring in socio-economic and protection related vulnerabilities.
 - The 11 000 Palestinians¹⁵ living in Seam Zone (land area in the West Bank between Israel's separation barrier and the 1 967 Green Line) which are cut off from public services and are impeded in accessing land and property.
 - The 298 000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, notably the 93 100 at risk of house demolition and evictions, and families at risk of forcible transfer who will also lose their livelihoods¹⁶.

2) Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

The prolonged and entrenched nature of the Israeli occupation has resulted in the denial of the most basic rights of the Palestinian people. There are clear humanitarian needs resulting from the socio-economic vulnerability of the population and the lack of protection. Although all parties to the conflict are bound by international law, violations of IHL include the complete blockade on the Gaza Strip for the ninth year in a row and the cyclical shocks resulting from military escalations, the expansion of

⁹ PCBS, Demographic and Population Statistics, July-September 2013

¹⁰ Source Shelter cluster

¹¹ OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, May 2015

¹² Area C of the West Bank: Key humanitarian concerns, UNOCHA – Update August 2014

¹³ UNOCHA Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report, April 2015

¹⁴ UNOCHA Fragmented Lives. Humanitarian Overview 2014, March 2015

¹⁵ UNOCHA, The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier, Fact sheet July 2013

¹⁶ East Jerusalem; key Humanitarian Concerns, UNOCHA, Update August 2014

settlements through destruction and confiscation of property, restrictions on movement, and exploitation of natural resources. These violations contribute to a coercive environment and progressive isolation and the forcible transfer of the Palestinian population, in breach of the Geneva Conventions.¹⁷

The civilian population in the Gaza Strip continues to be subject to a collective punishment due to the all-out blockade by Israel on access and movement. This has had serious social and humanitarian consequences for many of its 1.8 million inhabitants. The high population density puts great pressure on the poor infrastructure. The situation has deteriorated further in recent months as a result of the closure of the majority of tunnels between Egypt and Gaza and the latest military operation (the 3rd and most devastating shock in 8 years). Before the latest military escalation, Gaza was already facing a decline across all aspects of life with power outages across Gaza up to six hours a day, resulting in the closure of sewage pumping operations and reduced access to clean water. Gaza was also suffering from a reduction in medical supplies and equipment, cessation of imports of construction materials, rising unemployment, and lack of access to livelihoods especially in the ARA. The latest military intervention exacerbated an already precarious situation. The gradual impoverishment of the average Gazan household is due to a steady loss of coping mechanisms coupled with a reduction in essential services. The population is now more vulnerable if there were to be any further rise in violence.¹⁸

In the West Bank, the Palestinian population is suffering from progressive fragmentation and isolation, which is linked to their vulnerability in terms of socio-economic status and their exposure to protection threats. This can be attributed to the ongoing seizure of Palestinian land, including Palestinian farming land and water resources. The Palestinian population in Area C and East Jerusalem (about half a million) are subject to economic deprivation with severely limited access to basic services (water, food, health, schooling) due to a multi-layer Israeli system of restrictions and obstacles; the population is increasingly subjected to displacement and dispossession of their land and housing through forced evictions and home demolitions.¹⁹ The 1215 people displaced in 2014 due to demolitions are the highest recorded in a single year by OCHA²⁰. To date, 551 people have been displaced in 2015.

Rapid advancement of plans by the GoI to transfer Palestinian Bedouins from their communities to other locations has become a grave concern since the GoI started to accelerate the implementation of relocation plans early 2015. These plans are likely to lead to large-scale forcible transfer of Bedouins (e.g. in the Susya and Abu Nwar communities). This is coupled with an increase in demolitions throughout 2015. Comparing the number of demolished structures between 2014 and 2015 (Jan-May); 239 structures were demolished – of which 41 are EU funded, already in the first five months of 2015, whereas 601 structures were demolished throughout 2014, of which 49 were EU funded.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

1) National / local response and involvement

The Palestinian National Development Plan (PNDP) 2014-2016 confirms that priority areas are governance, social sectors, economic sectors and infrastructure. The PA focus has shifted since 2011 from state-building, focused on areas under its direct jurisdiction, to Area C which is expected to become the backbone of the Palestinian economy despite the fact that Area C is exclusively under the control of the GoI. The PNDP will also focus on East Jerusalem with the purpose of enhancing the resilience of its Palestinian residents and to prevent the population from being further coerced into

17 Rule of Law: A Veil of Compliance in Israel and the oPt 2010-2013 - Diakonia

18 Gaza under pressure – ICRC – April 2014. <http://blogs.icrc.org/ilot/2014/04/13/gaza-under-pressure-gazans-require-much-improved-access-to-essential-supplies/>

19 UNOCHA – May 2015 – Joint UNOCHA / UNRWA press release.

20 UNOCHA Fragmented Lives. Humanitarian Overview 2014, March 2015

leaving the city. Following Protective Edge operation in 2014, the PA launched a two track initiative to support early recovery in Gaza:

- A 100 days plan initiating early recovery activities as soon as feasible, alongside immediate relief activities;
- An Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (2 years), presented at the International Donor Conference, which took place in Cairo on 12 October 2014.

Due to lack of progress in the implementation of the national consensus government and the blockade, this plan has not been implemented properly following operation Protective Edge, thus further compounding the ordeal of the Gaza population.

2) International Humanitarian Response

The UN 2015 Humanitarian Strategic Response Plan (SRP) amounts to \$705 million (compared to \$390 million in 2014) of which \$324 million are dedicated to food assistance/social safety nets and \$225 million for shelter assistance. This is the third largest ever appeal launched for Palestine since the first CAP was launched in 2003. To date, 48 % of the 2015 appeal has been funded. In addition to the SRP, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also released a “Strategic response to Gaza hostilities appeal” after the end of the conflict in 2014 amounting to \$1.6 billion and a 2015 Emergency Appeal amounting to \$366 million dedicated to Gaza only.

The scope of the 2015 SRP remains broad, and still focuses on social safety nets that do not allow for an assessment of the protection dimension of the crisis in Palestine. The Socio Economic and Food Security Survey (SEFSec), one of the main assessment tools used by the SRP, and the Poverty Assessment System (PAS) method of UNRWA, are the main methods used to capture key rates and trends while providing limited analysis on the protection elements which are needed to inform adequate humanitarian programming for the Palestinian crisis. Moreover, a 2014 internal technical review²¹ of the assessment tools highlighted the inadequacy of the SEFSec in correctly measuring food insecurity rates.

3) Constraints and ECHO response capacity

ECHO analysis prior to the July 2014 Gaza war highlighted that despite the deterioration of the general situation, conventional humanitarian indicators remained above regional emergency averages, thereby indicating the absence of a humanitarian emergency. Since the needs assessment tools currently used in Palestine are still not contextualized enough to better inform humanitarian programming with protection mainstreaming/integration as the main component for analysis, ECHO has been encouraging and contributing – technically and financially – to the development of better suited tools to capture the needs of the current protection crisis. Increased capacities of OCHA and the NRC-led consortium in 2015 should help develop a better informed humanitarian response around socio-economic and protection-related indicators.

During the past years, the humanitarian space has shrunk with increasing difficulties faced by humanitarian organisations, including ECHO partners, in delivering humanitarian assistance. The provision of humanitarian assistance by humanitarian actors working in Area C communities could be subject to criminal prosecution by the GoI, according to recent Israeli policy.²² This development

²¹ Review of Palestine SEFSec Food Security Analysis Methodology, TANGO International Inc, March 2014

²² West Bank Demolition and Displacement: An overview – UN OCHA – May 2014.

could pose an additional significant risk to the international community's provision of humanitarian assistance to Area C communities.

Israeli Authorities are increasingly hindering access of humanitarian actors in and out of the Gaza Strip through denial of permits and detention of humanitarian aid staff. Following increased needs due to the July August 2014 escalation, the access of humanitarian staff as well as relief materials will be one of the crucial bottlenecks to be addressed with the Israeli authorities in order to ensure an efficient humanitarian response in Gaza. In case access impediments remain, this will directly affect the expected standards of implementation and follow up of ECHO projects.

The planning and zoning regime in the West Bank as well as the blockade on Gaza will remain major obstacles in order to build strategies promoting increased resilience (not to mention development) for the affected population. In Area C of the West bank, the risk of criminalizing development assistance (as it is already the case for the demolished humanitarian assistance) will most probably refrain major development actors from investing in those communities most at risk of forcible transfer. The potential of further destruction of development funded infrastructure in Gaza may also explain part of the reluctance of donors to engage.

The current coordination system in the West Bank is still not adequately equipped to prioritise and address the most prominent protection issues. In Gaza, the humanitarian coordination system needs to be further developed in view of more accurately identifying the humanitarian needs and reinforcing the response capacity. In 2016, improved information management capacities, technical tools and technical expertise should allow for improved assessments and M&E capacities.

4) Envisaged ECHO response and expected results of humanitarian aid interventions.

During the implementation of this HIP, special attention will be given to relevant aspects related to migration and displacement, advocacy, international humanitarian law and humanitarian access.

Envisaged ECHO response:

ECHO's strategy in Palestine will continue to focus on protection, emergency preparedness and response, and humanitarian advocacy. ECHO partners are expected to provide humanitarian assistance on needs-based evidence aimed at ensuring protection against violations of IHL and possibly preventing violations from happening, under the overall framework of IHL.

Given the shift of ECHO's strategy in Palestine since 2011 from classical recurrent service delivery to focus on humanitarian protection and emergency concerns, social sector support will generally not be considered under this HIP.

Strategic partnerships are essential and will continue to be sought with ECHO partners who have the capacities and the mandate to consolidate efforts - *inter alia* in the form of consortia - to scale up emergency response activities— as it has been done under the HIP 2015.

Gaza Strip:

In the Gaza Strip, ECHO will continue to focus its interventions on “emergency preparedness and response” to the recurrent shocks affecting segments of the population that are suffering from humanitarian consequences of the violations of IHL. Lessons learnt exercises following the response to Protective Edge should better inform future operations. This will allow to better define the context of intervention in time of crisis: restricted access and movement to and within the Strip, challenging security environment, few actors maintaining real operational capacities during the conflict, major violations of IHL by Parties to the conflict.

The response to humanitarian needs resulting from Operation Protective Edge should address the most urgent needs in terms of access to emergency shelter, water and sanitation, health and protection targeting the most vulnerable people in Gaza.

ECHO will increase its support to those partners who have proven effective capacity to respond to emergency WASH needs (essential repair, rehabilitation, operation and maintenance) at municipal and community levels. ECHO partners are requested to constantly monitor the situation in Gaza while strengthening readiness to respond to possible emergencies together with national bodies like the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) and the Palestinian Water Authorities (PWA).

ECHO-funded health interventions will be geared towards “emergency medical services” through the support of the ICRC operation aiming at enhancing health emergency preparedness and response.

ECHO will continue to prioritize alternatives to in-kind food aid, while encouraging other donors to address the structural/chronic food insecurity resulting from the blockade. According to ECHO, cash and vouchers-based interventions are feasible in Gaza as it is already implemented successfully by some partners. They confirm that despite the strangled economy in Gaza food is available on the market. This modality would increase the range of possibilities available to humanitarian organisation in emergencies as well as promoting more dignity and empowerment of the affected population in the delivery of assistance. In terms of preparedness, ECHO strategy aims at: 1) increasing capacities to respond to new emergencies by developing innovative tools and systems (e.g. cash assistance, vouchers, e-wallet etc.) 2) promoting effective contingency planning/preparedness and 3) increasing the coordination capacity of lead agencies (including UN, national NGOs, local authorities).

West Bank:

In the West Bank, the ECHO strategy will be implemented by reinforcing response to demolitions, preventive measures against destructions of Palestinian assets and increased resilience to IHL violations by providing targeted legal and material assistance communities most vulnerable to protection issues such as settler violence and forcible displacement. This will be implemented in full respect of the humanitarian principles and in line with the Humanitarian Imperative.

The emergency response mechanism in the West Bank follows a comprehensive approach based on needs and clear socio-economic and protection-related vulnerability criteria. The response should aim at improving community targeting in addition to response at household level, ensuring the involvement of other stakeholders on resilience and a community-based protection mechanism which should lead to the transfer of some pillars of the envisaged operation to other better suited donors.

Humanitarian Advocacy/Communication:

Humanitarian advocacy remains a pre-condition for ECHO partners in Palestine: the causes of the on-going deterioration of the humanitarian situation can only be addressed through effective advocacy, by calling all parties to the respect of IHL. To ensure the effectiveness of proposed interventions, partners are expected to integrate a strong advocacy strategy in their action that aims at strengthening accountability of the humanitarian system at all levels.

Partners will be expected to ensure full compliance with visibility requirements in accordance with the applicable contractual arrangement as well as with specific visibility requirements agreed-upon in the Single Form, forming an integral part of individual agreements. In particular, this includes prominent display of the EU humanitarian aid visual identity on EU funded project sites, relief items and equipment and the acknowledgement of the funding role of and the partnership with the EU/ECHO

through activities such as media outreach and digital communication. Further explanation of visibility requirements can be consulted on the dedicated visibility site.²³

Coordination:

A stronger engagement with local actors (*inter alia* municipalities) will be encouraged by ECHO in 2016 in order to reinforce emergency preparedness capacities. Effective coordination is essential- ECHO supports the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda (ITA) and encourages partners to demonstrate their engagement in implementing its objectives, to take part in coordination mechanisms (e.g. Humanitarian Country Team/Clusters) and to allocate resources to foster the ITA roll-out.

Education in emergencies:

ECHO will provide further support to meet the mounting needs of children in conflict affected contexts that are out of school or risk education disruption. Within this HIP project addressing education and child protection will be funded. ECHO will favour education in emergency projects in areas where the % of out-of-school children is particularly high, there are grave child protection concerns and where other sources of funding available are limited. Complementarity and synergies with other EU services and funding instruments will be sought. In addition, complementarity and synergies with funding provided by the Global Partnership for Education is encouraged.

Expected results of humanitarian aid interventions:

Humanitarian assistance in Palestine is expected to address needs arising from violations of IHL and improve resilience to these violations, provide evidence-based advocacy through quality programming and promoting humanitarian advocacy which addresses IHL violations as the root cause of the humanitarian needs.

As IHL violations constitute the main trigger for humanitarian needs in other sectors, partners should ensure that the context analysis takes into account threats in addition to vulnerabilities and capacities. The analysis should bring out both external threats to the target population as well as the population's coping strategies adopted to counteract the vulnerabilities (enhancing community targeting in addition to enhancing targeting at household level with the aim of balancing the analysis between systematic response to IHL violations and socio-economic vulnerability criteria). Based on this analysis ECHO expects partners to design integrated programme responses, where protection actions will address needs in other sectors and where other sector actions will mitigate or increase resilience to protection risks. These responses must thus demonstrate how risks are reduced by reducing the threats and vulnerabilities but also by increasing resilience.

In Gaza, the humanitarian response to the humanitarian needs caused by the July 2014 military escalation should be designed with the aim to avoid increased dependency of beneficiaries to humanitarian short-term delivery system. As far as emergency housing solution is concerned, every effort should be made to ensure full participation of targeted community in the design of the most appropriate response, systematic inclusion of public/private basic services (such as CMWU for WASH services) and a multi-sectorial approach to each specific local situation.

In the West Bank, a consolidated and systematic humanitarian response mechanism to demolitions under the inter-cluster framework that is transparent, coherent, accountable, cost-effective and reactive

²³ <http://www.echo-visibility.eu/>

will continue under the framework of the current consortium with a guaranteed level of harmonisation between the consortia members and other stakeholders involved in the response to demolitions. The nature of the response should be based on existing vulnerabilities, needs and risks, and remain flexible against overly bureaucratic structures and rigid assessment tools. A focus on advocacy and messaging in parallel with contingency planning for the swift delivery of assistance is fundamental.

Increased scrutiny (i.e. risk/legal analysis) should promote “do no harm” in the delivery of assistance in order to ensure the safety and protection of beneficiaries rather than being counter protective and exposing them to further risk or danger.

4. LRRD, COORDINATION AND TRANSITION

1) Other ECHO interventions

In case of natural disasters or epidemics and according to the needs, other humanitarian actions could be financed either through the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) or under the HIP for small scale humanitarian response or the HIP for epidemics.

2) Other services/donors availability (such as for LRRD and transition)

During the last five years, the steady decrease of EU humanitarian funding to Palestine corresponds to a re-focus towards more support to protection of the people affected by IHL violations (demolitions, eviction, the blockade, settlers' violence) and humanitarian advocacy, while transferring classical basic service delivery to development instruments. Prolonged occupation constitutes a strong challenge in promoting LRRD and the transition to development. Despite these constraints, ECHO encourages partners to present interventions that link the proposed interventions with development projects funded by other donors. Such an approach from the partners will further strengthen ECHO's efforts in trying to overcome the isolation in which humanitarian assistance is delivered in Area C of the West Bank.

Close collaboration with other Commission services and Member States will be sought in order to promote a transfer of some ECHO funded projects to more structural and sustainable funding mechanisms.

In Area C of the West Bank, ECHO has pursued a joined up approach with Member States in response to the above mentioned IHL violations. The EU Heads of Mission report on Area C and Palestinian State Building from July 2011 proposed a rationale for EU interventions in Area C while shifting the general approach from a purely humanitarian response to longer-term and development-oriented activities. The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) of May 2012 put forward a comprehensive EU policy for Area C. It insisted on the needs to support social and economic developments in Area C and to improve access and control by the PA over Area C. The FAC of July 2015 reiterated the EU's strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access. These most recent FAC conclusions also identified the grave humanitarian and socio-economic situation in the Gaza Strip as an immediate priority.

EU current programming takes all the above into consideration. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) supports the Palestinian communities in Area C in the development of statutory outline plans and investment plans for small scale infrastructure projects. DG NEAR also funds infrastructure projects identified by the communities as priority interventions. Moreover, DG NEAR supports Palestinian agro-businesses in Area C to enhance the access to and the utilisation of land and water with the aim to support agriculture growth and profitability. The EU and MS set up a comprehensive system of monitoring of demolitions, threat of demolitions, stop working orders by Israeli authorities affecting their financed projects. Through DG NEAR's contribution (€ 82 million) to UNRWA's 2015 General Fund, the EU also supports the

delivery of essential public services to Palestinian refugees in the areas of health, education, and social services provided across UNRWA's five fields of operation (in Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon). A top-up of €20 million is currently in the process of approval.

The necessary political support to encourage actions in East Jerusalem has been regularly reiterated in EU Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process since 2010. Increased support is being provided from DG NEAR to sustain and develop the living conditions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, with the aim to prevent the population from being further coerced into leaving the city, thus pre-empting possibilities for future talks on the final status of East Jerusalem. Within EU current programming interventions are/will be supported annually in the frame of a multi-sectoral non-focal sector. This includes interventions in sectors such as legal assistance, disability, socio-economic development and empowerment of vulnerable groups, protection and promotion of cultural identity.

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) supports several programmes aimed at stabilisation in Gaza. Through UNRWA, IcSP supports the Job Creation Programme (€19.3 million and an additional €3 million in the approval process) and a psychosocial support (€5.2 million). Through the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the IcSP contributes at reducing the threat of explosive hazards (€0.8 million, starting shortly). Finally there is also a new IcSP programme with the World Health Organization (WHO) (€5 million) currently in the approval process which will address the mental health emergency response in Gaza.

Additionally, actions supporting the protection and promotion of human rights and the socio-economic development of vulnerable groups are being implemented under the European Instrument for democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and Civil Society Thematic programme.

3) Exit scenario

While full transition to development assistance will only be possible when IHL is fully respected in Palestine, long-term chronic vulnerabilities need to be addressed by development actors pending a just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict. Humanitarian aid however remains essential in addressing needs and vulnerability resulting from the policies and practices linked to the occupation and improving access of the population to basic services during emergencies by supporting local structures and by developing emergency response capacities.