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For immediate release

## **Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection revived by ILO-Palestinian Authority Agreement**

*Fund set to create viable employment options for graduates and former Palestinian workers on Israeli settlements.*

Beirut (ILO News) - Palestinian Labour Minister Ahmed Majdalani and ILO Regional Director for the Arab States Nada al-Nashif signed an agreement on Thursday (June 9) for the revitalization of the Palestinian Employment and Social Protection Fund, as part of efforts to boost job creation, private sector development and workers' rights in the West Bank and Gaza.

The agreement was unveiled at the annual International Solidarity Meeting with the People and Workers of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, organized by the Arab Labour Organization on the sidelines of the 100th International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

Palestinian Minister of Labour Ahmed Majdalani welcomed the rejuvenation of the Fund within the framework of the National Development Plan 2011-2013.

'Overcoming economic recession through growth is key to tackling unemployment. The Palestinian economy is in need of large investments to create opportunities for over 250,000 workers, and 45,000 new labour market entrants each year,' Majdalani said.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Fund will receive an annual US\$5 million grant from the Palestinian Authority as of 2011.

With the support of the Government of Kuwait, the ILO will provide nearly US\$600,000 for the implementation of a six-month work plan that involves recruiting and training a core team to lead three pilot projects.

These target some 50 Palestinian workers with viable alternatives to previous jobs on Israeli settlements, the establishment of small businesses that will create jobs for former settlement workers, and job placements for graduates in private sector companies.

ILO Director General Juan Somavia was presented with a medal of appreciation from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas for his support of the Palestinian people less than a week after the launch of the [annual report of the International Labour Office \(ILO\) on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories](#) on Friday (June 3).

"The cause of the Palestinian people has been present at the International Labour

Conference for 35 years. The ILO's annual investigative mission has served to maintain awareness of the situation of the workers and people of Palestine, and other Arab occupied territories," said Ahmed Luqman, Director General of the Arab Labour Organization in reference to the report.

Somavia noted the recent calls of young people in the West Bank and Gaza for greater national unity and an end to occupation, and said that their voices must be heard.

"The changes that have taken place in the broader Arab world will have a significant, and probably decisive, impact on future developments in the (Arab) occupied territories," Somavia said. "These movements are essentially about freedom, social justice, jobs and fundamental rights. This is something to keep in mind during the state-building process. Decent work and social justice are not just key socio-economic objectives. They are key political pillars of a future Palestinian State."

The ILO provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour, the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and other social partners for the advancement of decent work, institution-building and workers' rights in the occupied Palestinian territory.

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