

Bethlehem Declaration
On
Organizing Public – Private Dialogue and Partnership

Stemming from:

the Palestinian authority's deep seated conviction in the leading and complimentary role of the Palestinian private sector in meeting the aims of economic development and the achievement of the general benefit of Palestinian society.

Aiming towards:

realizing real national partnership and cooperation between the public and private sectors,

Desiring to:

achieve sustainable economic recovery and socio economic development through the provision of the appropriate enabling business and investment environment in Palestine

Resulting from:

the appreciation of the government for the ongoing initiatives and efforts of the private sector in building the national economic agenda, being the main engine for economic growth and development and the main employer within the economy.

The government has decided to form a standing ministerial committee, headed by the Prime Minister, which formulates the counterpart for the committee named by the Private Sector Coordination Council and headed by its Secretary General in order to institutionalize the relationship within a framework that allows for open discussion on issues of concern to the national economy.

This decision confirms the positive response of the government to the private sector initiative and its willingness to go the extra mile in order to ensure that the needs of the private sector are met.

In this spirit, the first meeting of the ministerial committee and its private sector counterpart was held in April and resulted in the adoption of a joint agenda which included the details of the following areas of dialogue:

1. The development of the legal and regulatory framework in order to meet the requirements of the business community.
2. Planning and reform of governmental administrative services
3. Israeli impediments facing Palestinian trade and economic development

This joint declaration expresses the joint strategic vision of the government and the private sector, not only in order to institute the coordination and complementarity between them, but also to create an organized and institutional relationship, which allows for joint shouldering of national responsibilities in order to invigorate the national economy and support the leading role of the private sector within the process of economic development.

Hence, the government hereby announces its commitment to expanding the role of the private sector in the implementation of the Palestinian Development and Reform Plan (PRDP), thus reflecting the role and requirements of the private sector in effective and forward looking programs, and guaranteeing that development priorities and requirements are reflected in the implementation of the plan within the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

This would also ensure additional support by the donor community and aid the removal of Israeli impediments to economic development. The participation of the private sector in this process would also play a significant role in the activation of economic and trade agreements with members of the international community, thereby reaping the benefits from these agreements for the further betterment of the national economy.

The government confirms that it is committed to ensuring the enforcement of the rule of law and the establishment of stability as basic requirements for providing a positive environment for growth of business and investment. In order to speed up this process and make it a reality, the government has devoted itself to the immediate enforcement of a series of procedures and decisions which were agreed to with the private sector.

In light of this, we shall jointly continue, and within the realm of organized institutional dialogue and ongoing coordination, to deal effectively with issues that are presented by the exceptional situation which Palestine goes through in order to guarantee that they are acted upon seriously and effectively. This calls for devoting all efforts both within the private and the public sectors in order to ensure our steadfastness on the road to development, freedom and liberation.

* * * * *