

IP/06/973  
Brussels, July 11, 2006

## **Fuel for Palestinian Hospitals: first Commission action through the Temporary International Mechanism**

***The European Commission is taking its first action through the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), in response to an urgent appeal from the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas. From today, the TIM is providing fuel for hospitals in Gaza. Following the destruction by the Israeli Defence Force of the 6 transformers of the Gaza Power Plant, 45% of the population of Gaza is without electricity. The power shortage affects all essential aspects of Palestinian life, in particular hospitals, which have now to rely on emergency generators. The fuel reserves of most hospitals are about to run out and President Abbas has asked the European Commission to provide Gaza hospitals with the necessary supplies. This will allow hospitals to continue functioning, albeit under difficult circumstances. Providing the Gaza hospitals with fuel will cost an estimated €600,000 a month.***

The Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner said: "The current situation is very critical, but we are determined to bring relief to the Palestinian people. This first action through the Temporary International Mechanism, will make a tangible contribution to the continued provision of essential health services. My staff are working intensively to bring other elements of the TIM on stream".

She added: "We remain extremely concerned about the situation in Gaza. The kidnapped soldier should be released without delay, and all sides should refrain from actions that further jeopardize the prospects of a return to dialogue. All parties have a responsibility to protect civilian lives and nothing should be done to tip the current humanitarian situation deeper into crisis".

All public hospitals in Gaza will benefit from this first action under the TIM. Ensuring the continued supply of fuel is urgent as the consequences of hospitals operating without electricity would be severe: Chronic diseases such as kidney failures depend on regular machine-based treatment. Drugs and other medical supplies must be kept in constant temperatures.

The Temporary International Mechanism, developed by the EU at the request of the "Quartet" (EU, US, UN and Russia) and endorsed by the European Council has three "windows" covering the health sector, utilities and social allowances. The Commission has allocated €105 million to the TIM bringing the total made available from the Community Budget so far this year to the Palestinian Territory to €259 million.