



## Donor Conference kicks-off implementation of desalination plant project to supply water to 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip

- The desalination plant will supply drinking water to 2 million Palestinian inhabitants, thereby ensuring a sustainable solution for the chronic and longstanding water shortage and humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, where over 95% of the water is not drinkable due to the over-pumping of a polluting Coastal Aquifer.
- International donors pledged €456 million to the project (80% of the total cost), which will make possible to start the biggest ever infrastructure project in the Gaza Strip.

**Brussels, 20 March 2018.** Today, the European Commission and the Government of Palestine, in partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), hosted in Brussels, an international donor Pledging Conference to consolidate high-level political and financial support for the construction of a [large-scale desalination plant and its associated water supply infrastructure in the Gaza Strip](#), a UfM flagship project. The Conference was opened by the Head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Minister Mazen Ghunaim and the EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, with the presence of the UfM Deputy Secretary General for Water and Environment, Miguel García-Herraiz. It brought together country representatives and major international stakeholders, including the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank (WB), and the Office of the Quartet.

International stakeholders welcomed the progress achieved to date. They conveyed their support to the project and pledged a total of €456 million out of the €562.3 million required (80% of the total cost), which will make possible to move forward with the next implementation steps. The success of the Conference paves the way for the launch of the design and construction phase. The EIB will launch the tendering procedure on 15 April.

This landmark operation will be the largest infrastructure project ever built in the Gaza Strip. It consists of three integrated projects: the construction of a 55 million-m<sup>3</sup> desalination Sea Water Reverse Osmosis (SWRO) plant, a North-South conveyance system and a Non-Revenue Water reduction project, as well as an associated solar power energy plant. The project is now ready for implementation since all significant milestones in all the preparatory stages have been completed, including on governance, completion of the required feasibility studies, as well as solutions for the energy supply and the financial mechanism for donor contributions.

The availability of fresh water in the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated places in the planet, is among the lowest in the world. Currently, 2 million Palestinians in Gaza rely almost exclusively on the coastal aquifer as the only source of freshwater in the region, which is inadequate to meet demand from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Only 3% of the water pumped from the aquifer and consumed by an ever-increasing population complies with the World Health Organization drinking water quality standards.



## Statements

*“The overall programme, which is closer than ever to realisation, will have a direct impact on the public health and the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. In addition, it will contribute to the regeneration and sustainability of the coastal aquifer. It will also provide prospects for jobs and economic development which contributes to the stability of the region”, said Miguel García-Herraiz, UfM Deputy Secretary General for Water and Environment. “With the support of the UfM Co-Presidency, we are proud as Secretariat to have played a key role in facilitating and coordinating efforts among all the involved stakeholders, which led to today’s important achievement”, he added.*

**Minister Ghunaim, Head of the Palestinian Water Authority**, welcomed the outcomes of the Conference and reaffirmed that this project is a priority for the Government of Palestine. He stressed *“the pressing need to help stabilise the socio-economic situation for the 2 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip under unacceptable environmental and health conditions”.*

**Commissioner Hahn** said: *“This project will meet the most urgent water needs in Gaza, providing drinking water and at the same time contributing to economic growth, environmental sustainability and stability. I am proud that the EU pledged €70 million for the desalination plant plus €7.1 million for management costs. Today’s successful pledging conference takes us a step closer to make a reality of this project, improve living conditions in Gaza and remove obstacles to economic development there”.*

## More Information

In June 2011, the 43 Member States of the UfM unanimously endorsed the [Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip project](#), promoted by the Government of Palestine as a strategic development project for the region. The project has been developed in partnership with all major international stakeholders, including the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank as the most sustainable option to stabilise the aquifer and secure the water supply of Gaza.

- [Infographic](#)
- [Donor’s Handbook](#)
- [Factsheet Project](#)

## The Union for the Mediterranean: building bridges for the future

**The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** is the intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation that brings together all 28 countries of the European Union and 15 countries from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The UfM provides a forum to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue, as well as the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives with tangible impact on the citizens, with an emphasis on young people, in order to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development and integration.

## Media Contact

Isabel Pardillos

[media@ufmsecretariat.org](mailto:media@ufmsecretariat.org)

T. +34 935 214 198

M. +34 692 975 676



<https://twitter.com/UfMSecretariat>



<https://www.facebook.com/ufmsecretariat>



The UfM Secretariat is  
co-funded by the European Union