**The Vision of the Technology and Services Cluster**

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The current Palestinian government, led by H.E. Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Shtayyah, is continuously seeking to develop models that achieve the highest developmental results in a range of economic fields including agricultural, industrial, technological, trade, IT, etc. The concept of ‘Clusters’ is used as a grouping tool which relies on the capitalizing of the relative merits and competitive advantages that every Palestinian geographical area offers. For instance, the agricultural Cluster is seen in locations with availability of fertile land, water and farmers’ skills, as in Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Jenin and Tubas. Furthermore, the industrial Cluster is determined in both Hebron and Nablus, the tourism Cluster in Bethlehem and Jericho, the diversified Cluster in Gaza and the Cluster of Palestine’s capital: Jerusalem.

As for the central area of the West Bank -Ramallah and Al-Bireh, the government has recently created the “Technology and Services Cluster” that is compatible with the Palestinian youth capabilities and the businesses. The core of this cluster revolves around the IT sector, banking institutions, government entities, and other service providers specialized in providing management, financial, and technical solutions. In Palestine, approximately 400 companies work in IT services and telecommunication and employ about 8000 citizens, all representing 6% of the GDP (3% for each of IT and telecommunication).

The new method is tailored to support Palestinian products, increase local production, create new job opportunities, and strengthen Palestinian youth resilience. In cooperation with local and international stakeholders, this plan will be implemented through direct investments in the Palestinian human capital and through marketing and promoting their products and services.

**What is the Technology and Services Cluster? Who are the key stakeholders? How will the desired outputs be achieved? What are the results we seek to achieve?**

Innovation

Security

Connectivity

Content delivery

Home & office

Wireless systems

Interoperability

Among this year’s (2020) top priorities of the current government is the youth sector. The Technology and Services Cluster is a governmental effort targeting our nation’s innovative human resources and capabilities for producing and marketing services (technology, engineering, administration and finance) that can be sold and delivered to international markets. This assists in overcoming the continuing Israeli obstacles impeding the entry of raw material and the export of finished products into and from Palestine. The end products of the service industries, whether it be technical solutions, documents, consultancies, plans or virtual programs and applications can all be delivered via the internet.

Therefore, the government has established this cluster through a steering committee that consists of the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the General Personnel Council, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and the Palestinian Monetary Authority. This committee operates to construct strategies for building and directing a Palestinian eco-system that will assist in developing the sector in all its technical, legal, human and financial aspects.

The Technology and Services Cluster is a multidimensional governmental effort that is targeted at developing the IT and the services sector with a vision of achieving global competitiveness and allowing international presence and reputation in this sector. The general goal of this cluster is helping to enhance and empower Palestinian economy through maximizing production in services, providing sustainable jobs, boosting service exports, and strengthening our capabilities to penetrate international markets.

This committee, in collaboration with all members and stakeholders, aims to achieve numerous objectives such as increasing competitive advantages for companies working in the sector and opening new markets through connecting to international companies (especially in Europe and Northern America). One objective includes increasing and diversifying exports to help increase the IT share of the GDP from 10% to 12% within three years and reducing unemployment levels among university graduates.

In order for Palestine to become a distinctive exporting base and a destination for international clients, we must work towards having 15,000 to 20,000 programmers, designers, developers and directors, as well as companies that are strong both administratively and financially. Note that the current number does not exceed 3000 persons in these domains. Therefore, achieving our objectives requires strong collaboration among all local and international players such as The Palestinian Information Association of Companies – PITA and the companies working in the ICT sector, Universities, Palestinian Banks, Development and Employment Institutions and other relevant institutions.

One of the most important interventions assigned to the partners of this cluster is preparing and ensuring the implementation of a strategy to develop the Palestinian technology and services sector, and providing specialized training in various applied technological tools that increase the opportunities for exporting services in programming, fashion design, environmental solutions, renewable energy services, etc. Work will be done with governmental entities and higher education institutions to modernize and create the necessary technological knowledge and systems, such as high-speed internet and relevant university programs, to remain informed on the latest global developments in this rapidly advancing world.

Our work will also include working with governmental entities to change the structure of the legislation system such as the intellectual property, funding, companies, trade, taxes, judiciary, etc. This will lead to the preparation of policies, working guides and manuals, electronic systems to manage the ministries’ operations, training the ministries' cadres and documentation of their outputs. Success stories and case study reports showing results and benefits from the work done will be published as part of this cluster.

The government’s endeavors serving this cluster are remarkable. Some initiatives are already in progress such as the training program (running for the next three years) targeting 5000 graduates in the fields of software technologies and software industry management. Another initiative of the government is establishing a Governmental Development Bank aiming to empower Palestinian Youth to create new start-ups and market them globally. Last but not least, we are now working towards electronic and smart governmental services for the Palestinians, including the current government E- Payment System Project, which is a key component of this cluster to facilitate the provision of services to citizens and companies.

These joint efforts led by the government as directed by H.E our President Dr. Mahmoud Abbas- Abu Mazen for boosting and promoting Palestinian products and economy need the most possible cooperation among all stakeholders in this sector at all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This team effort is seen as a golden opportunity for establishing, recognizing and maintaining a Palestinian IT identity in the world, enabling it to eventually act as a driving wheel for the Palestinian economy at large in the medium to long term.