One Million and A Half participated in the activities of the Global Campaign for Education in Palestine
The Closing ceremony of the Global Action Week for Education for All

Ramallah – 09/05/2012

The Palestinian coalition for a safe teaching and learning environment organized today the closing ceremony for its Global Action Week events, held in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The ceremony reflected on the coalitions achievements in general, with the participation of high-profile Palestinians including, Sabri Saidam, the President’s Advisor for Communications and Informatics; Wasel Abu Yousef, Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Front; Qais Abdel-Karim Abu Layla, Palestinian Legislative Council member; Muhannad Baidas, head of the education program at UNRWA; Sahar Ghosheh, member of the central committee for popular struggle; Omar Anbar, general manager of education at the Ministry of Education; Hisham Abu Qteish, TCC board member; representatives from the Palestinian Coalition for a safe teaching and learning environment in addition to crowds of educators and media personnel.

Omar Anbar discussed the ministry's interest towards the rights of children and in providing optimal preparation of children in their early years. He focused on the importance of the Ministry of Education in supporting all spectrums of society be it at the community, familial, politicians and educators level, in the promotion of early childhood education. Anbar followed by presenting some of the achievements of the ministry highlighting the most important achievement thus far, such as the near completion of a national strategy for the early childhood sector in Palestine as well as the establishment of a national fund to support early childhood. He highlighted the establishment of 46 kindergarten classrooms with a specific focus on marginalized and remote areas and the establishment of additional training centers for kindergarten teachers.

Dr. Muhannad Baidas underlined the importance of schools serving the community and the need to institutionalize compulsory early education enrollment in kindergarten due to its significance in developing students academically and personally prior to elementary school enrollment. He pointed to UNRWA's long standing establishment in offering specific training for kindergarten teachers at the Women’s Community College, which aims to provide Kindergarten teachers with high quality training, experience and academic knowledge in the field. Baidas emphasized the need for safe educational environments that encompass the academic, emotional, physical and intellectual development of children which has long been part of UNRWA’s development plan that strives for the advancement of education in Palestine or in Diaspora refugee camps.

Nabil Sob Laban followed by issuing the final statement on behalf of the Palestinian coalition for a safe teaching and learning environment, he stated that, each year in Palestine, in parallel with approximately 180 countries in the world, the Global Campaign for Education firmly takes off with the collective efforts of the coalition which brings together multi-sector institutions, including, education, women, health, youth and agriculture, in conjunction with schools, its students and educational staff, to remind and prompt officials of the promises made towards Education for All. He further asserted the various events carried out during the Global Action Week for Education, the marathons in Jenin and Hebron, the train tour event in Tulkarem, the awareness and vigil tent in Ramallah, the open day and entertainment events for children in various localities in Palestine, in addition to the various activities in Nablus, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin and Gaza, the big picture event which amplified the voices of the children through their
drawings, its colors and imagery, which carried messages related to their dreams and aspirations, in content and in form, highlighting the school that they want and are eager to learn in; sending out one clear and united message, demanding the rights of children from the start. He followed by highlighting the importance of the mass rallies carries out in Ramallah that took place on the 28th of April which addressed the violations of the Israeli occupation against the education sector in Jerusalem; the right to compulsory early childhood education; and the necessity of decent work conditions which includes the right to fair minimum wages for kindergarten teachers and educational personnel/staff.

Within the statement, Nabil revered to the achievements of the coalition, most notably the prime minister’s support of rejecting the Israeli authority’s consistent attempt to distort the Palestinian curriculum in Jerusalem and the importance of placing greater emphasis on supporting Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem. The Palestinian Authority confirmed channeling its commitment and efforts towards a social dialogue, particularly with regard to the rights and minimum wage for kindergarten staff, as confirmed by the Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad. He asserted that the activities of the Global Action Week for Education contributed to the vast mobilization of media focus on the early childhood sector, on the need of institutionalizing the rights of children’s in addition to raising the budgets allocated to early childhood education and care.

Dr. Wasel Abu Yousef similarly confirmed national concerns over Israel’s attempts to distort the Palestinian curriculum in Jerusalem and added that similar focus must be placed on following up on the cases of Palestinian child prisoners held in Israeli jails; the suffering of students in the Old City of Hebron due to settler violence and army harassment; in addition to the educational obstacles faced by schools located behind the apartheid separation wall or those suffering as a result of settlement expansion.

Mr. Qais Abdul Karim, "Abu Laila", followed by greeting and honoring the Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli jails who are fighting for their freedom and dignity. He also called on all Palestinians to take responsibility for the lack of investment in early childhood education despite it being a critical juncture in the educational system.

Dr. Sabri Saidam on his part highlighted the importance of introducing technology in education, especially in early childhood and in basic educational stages, in order to keep students in tuned with technological developments as well as its relevance and effectiveness in the education of students. He also called upon the expansion of the coalition to include a wider and more comprehensive cross-sector approach, since early childhood education is a fundamental in order to proceed towards a better future.

The closing ceremony was anchored by Ali Abu Zaid, director of public education, and organized by Intesar Hamdan, social responsibility program manager at Teacher Creativity Center, incorporated the viewing of short film focusing on the activities of the Action Week and exhibited some of the drawings and all the murals carried out by the students, all of which urged the importance of early childhood education.

Global Action Week for Education in Palestine which was held from the 22nd till the 28th of April under the slogan “Rights from the start, early childhood education and care now”, enjoyed the collective participation of 1.5 million people in Palestine, including children in public schools, UNRWA schools as well as the participation of some private schools. The mobilization aimed to prompt local decision-makers to commit to the needs of early childhood education and care in Palestine and linking the needs to the rights of children as drafted and protected international, by international treaties, and locally, by the Palestinian law; particularly the right of children to compulsory quality education.