



Press Release

MAS Hosts a Press Conference During Which the UNCTAD Annual Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People Was Released

Ramallah, 6 September 2016. Today the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) hosted a press conference during which UNCTAD released its annual “Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory” for the year 2015. This press conference was convened simultaneously with similar press conferences in Cairo and



Geneva. The event in Ramallah was facilitated by Mr. Raja Khalidi, Research Coordinator at MAS, while the report findings were presented by Dr. Samia Al-Botmeh, Assistant Professor of Economics at Birzeit University.

In sum, the UNCTAD report emphasized that 2015 was another difficult year for the Palestinian economy and the Palestinian people. The growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) after the 2014 recession was insufficient to improve per capita income, while unemployment remained high despite the low labor force participation rate. According to UNCTAD, if discouraged workers who have dropped out of the labor force are taken into account, the actual unemployment rate would be significantly higher than now reported. In turn, weak economic growth and persistently high unemployment have exacerbated chronic food insecurity. House demolitions accompanied by the expansion of Israeli settlements pose yet another problem to the Palestinian society and economy.

The UNCTAD report highlighted that despite the ongoing efforts of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to narrow the budget deficit, fiscal sustainability is unlikely without rolling back the occupation. Meanwhile, Palestinian trade continues to be dictated by Israel which increases the costs, exposes the PNA to further vulnerability, sets one main trade partner, and establishes a large deficit with this partner. In Gaza the situation is particularly tough due to the ongoing Israeli blockade, the dual-use list imposed by Israel, and the disappointing pace of reconstruction.

UNCTAD devoted a special section of its 2015 report to the economic cost of the occupation for the Palestinian people. The report took stock of the recent attempts of various Palestinian and international stakeholders to calculate the actual cost of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian economy. According to UNCTAD, all such estimates are rather on the conservative side as they are only partial and performed on an ad hoc basis instead of within a single comprehensive framework. Nevertheless, adding up all estimates means that the Palestinian economy could have



been at least twice its current size, driving unemployment and poverty to significantly lower levels.

To read the report follow this [link](#).