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PRESS RELEASE

The Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East (MAP) is Launched in Jerusalem

Jerusalem, November 15, 2005 — The Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East (MAP) was launched last night in Jerusalem, at an event that took place at the American Colony Hotel. Speakers at the event included the Chairman of MAP Mr. Wim Deetman, Mayor of The Hague and Chairman of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG); the Mayor of Jericho, Mr. Hassan Saleh, representing the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA); the Mayor of Rishon Lezion, Mr. Meir Nitzan, representing the Union of Local Authorities of Israel (ULAI); and Mr. Timothy Rothermel, UNDP Special Representative.

“We are very grateful for this opportunity to assist in whatever way we can in this important initiative, which we hope will not only assist in the development of the municipalities, but also just as significantly, contribute towards peace,” said Mr. Rothermel, who hosted the event.

MAP is a practical framework via which Israeli and Palestinian municipalities, supported by international partners, can initiate projects covering a variety of areas including culture and youth, environment, economic development and municipal management.

This important Israeli/Palestinian peace-building initiative is being spearheaded by APLA and ULAI, and supported by VNG and the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP).

“MAP intends to facilitate the implementation of practical, realistic projects between Israeli and Palestinian municipalities and municipalities from elsewhere in the world,” said Mayor Deetman. “Such on-the-ground initiatives aim to mobilise local political leaders, civil society organisations, local business communities, [and] the media...to jointly create a broad-based, pro-active movement at the municipal level that will ensure practical local action and political lobby.”

Representing APLA, the Mayor of Jericho Mr. Hassan Saleh expressed his hopes for the alliance.

“I sincerely hope that we will be able to live out this shared vision of peace...With efforts invested from all sides, I look forward to the day when we can see how this alliance has benefited Palestinians and Israelis on the ground.”

ULAI’s representative, veteran Mayor of Rishon Lezion Mr. Meir Nitzan, spoke of the importance of carrying on the work of late presidents Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, towards achieving peace in the region.

“I firmly believe that the majority of Palestinians and Israelis want to live in peace, and we have to do everything in our power to convince the governments that that is the will of the people,” said Mayor Nitzan.

Mayor Deetman, a former Dutch Minister of Education and Science, explained that “the Municipal Alliance for Peace wants to make a meaningful contribution to building trust and peace in the region, by setting in motion a municipal movement that will bring Palestinian and Israeli municipalities and their citizens closer together.”

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