



SPEECH
For UNDP/PAPP Special Representative
Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen

Speaking event:	APLA Conference
Date and time:	Wednesday, 12.12.2007; 09:00 – 16:15
Venue:	Cultural Palace Ramallah
Participants/audience:	PA President (or his representative) Minister of Local Governance Ziyad al-Banadak APLA Chairman Majid Abu-Ramadan 400 mayors and local council heads Head of German Representative Office Jorg Ranau or his representative
Length of speech:	3-4 minutes
Context of speech:	Opening remarks, no question and answer session
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Your excellencies: -- Mr. President -- Minister Al Banadak

- **Chairman of APLA, Mr. Abu Ramadan**
- **Distinguished Mayors**
- **Head of the German Representation Office, Mr. Jorg Ranau**
- **Colleagues and friends**

It is my pleasure and an honor to address you today on the 10th anniversary of APLA's establishment and to seize this opportunity to meet so many mayors gathering under one roof and to pledge UNDP's continued commitment to support.

It is sad that not all of your colleagues from the Gaza Strip could join us here today.

Today's gathering is important for many reasons but primarily because - when local governments unite by combining efforts to develop a common vision, strategy and voice -- their message becomes clear, stronger and heard. It also signals a compelling collective and coordinated representation of your constituencies.

A strong local governments' representation not only delivers a clear message to the international donor community but also and, most importantly, carries a sign of strong commitment to work in partnership with the central government, civil society and the legislative bodies in order to best address the needs of the Palestinian people.

Next week, the Palestinian government will be presenting the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (the PRDP) at the International Economic Conference in Paris, attended by the international community at the highest levels.



Local governance is central to the Palestinian plan in recognition that good governance is indispensable in order to deliver inclusive, accountable and responsive support services to the communities you represent.

Here, APLA and the individual councils are essential as front line actors dealing directly with the needs of the communities. You are also on the frontline when confronting the adverse effects of poverty and marginalization.

Here I may be lecturing to the converted since I am aware that on a daily basis you are dealing with difficult and overwhelming challenges. The management of expectations is a formidable task that you must master, particularly during difficult times.

I believe that we are at a critical juncture, in which the Palestinian local governments must seize the opportunity to perform their fundamental obligations coherently and effectively. This not only requires strong central support to the local government units but also that local government units are capable and strong.

In this context, a strong APLA representing the collective experience and advise of its members, is critical in ensuring constructive dialogue among all national parties responsible towards the Palestinian people.

As your association, APLA must play this important role by voicing your constructive concerns and advise in improving tangible municipal services' delivery.

Excellencies, Chairman of APLA, Distinguished Mayors,

Your organization, with your voice and support, has a crucial part to play in the success of the national development plan – a plan which is not cut in stone but will evolve over time.

I am pleased that steps are being taken to strengthen APLA in order for it to play its full role as an effective and active development partner.

The decision to develop a strategic plan for the years 2008-2010 coinciding with the PRDP, is an excellent and commendable course of action.

There are many tasks and issues that need to be addressed and resolved, in close collaboration with the central government.

Among these challenges one could name but a few, namely:

- a) fiscal decentralization and municipal financing,
- b) the overall public administration reform process and its implications for municipalities and
- c) local governance and decentralization related legislation, policies and strategies.



UNDP/ PAPP has established a Local Governance Support Programme office in Ramallah to support the Palestinian Authority in its goal to advance local governance and decentralization.

In this context, UNDP/PAPP will continue to support the Ministry of Local Government and all ministries involved in the decentralization and local governance process, in their efforts to achieve efficiency and responsiveness.

Likewise, we plan to continue working with APLA in 2008 in support of its evolving objective to serve as an effective representative body of Municipalities.

Excellencies, Chairman of APLA, Distinguished Mayors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me end by wishing you all a fruitful conference and thanking you, again, for this opportunity to speak to you.