PALESTINIAN SCHOOLBOOKS

In September 2000 Palestinian Authority and UNRWA schools introduced the new Palestinian school curriculum and a first set of textbooks (grades 1 and 6) published by the Palestinian Authority, that were to replace the previous textbooks. At the beginning of the 2001 academic year, books for grades 2 and 7 were introduced. This replacement process will be gradually implemented over the coming years.

Parallel to this process, allegations of anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish bias and incitement contained in Palestinian textbooks were made, directly or indirectly based on documentation prepared by the CMIP (Centre for Monitoring the Impact on Peace). CMIP based those claims on specific quotations from these books inciting anti-Semitism and urging the destruction of Israel.

A number of EU donors support the Palestinian education sector and a few of them sponsored the preparation of the first Palestinian curriculum and the production of new textbooks.

Information gathered by the EU missions on the ground, as well as independent studies carried out by Israeli and Palestinian academics and educators that have examined the new textbooks, show that:

1.- Quotations attributed by earlier CMIP reports to the Palestinian textbooks are not found in the new Palestinian Authority schoolbooks funded by some EU Member States; some were traced to the old Egyptian and Jordanian text books that they are replacing, some to other books outside the school curriculum, and others not traced at all. While many of the quotations attributed to the new textbooks by the most recent CMIP report of November 2001 could be confirmed, these have been found to be often badly translated or quoted out of context, thus suggesting an anti-Jewish incitement that the books do not contain.

2.- New textbooks, though not perfect, are free of inciteful content and improve the previous textbooks, constituting a valuable contribution to the education of young Palestinians. Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education has accepted the need for ongoing review, revision and improvement.

Therefore, allegations against the new textbooks funded by EU members have proven unfounded.

In the line with the EU's political and financial commitment to help establish a sovereign, peaceful, democratic and viable Palestinian State, continued support to the Palestinian education sector is essential.

EU missions on the ground will keep the issue under review and assist in the task of monitoring the content of Palestinian Authority textbooks as they are published. In the framework of the UNESCO Executive Board Resolution of June 2001, Israeli and PLO representatives agreed to undertake a joint review of Israeli and Palestinian textbooks.