Within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on Spanish-Palestinian cooperation, signed in Tunis on July 29, 1994, the fifth meeting of the Spanish-Palestinian Joint Commission for Cultural, Educational, Scientific and Technical Cooperation was held in Madrid on January 22, 2008.

The delegations of both Parties, the list of which is enclosed as Annex I, were chaired as follows:

For the Spanish Government, by H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

For the Palestinian National Authority, by H.E. Dr. Riad Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The fifth Spanish Palestinian Joint Commission meeting was held in a highly positive manner, whereby both parties reaffirmed the strength of the links between the Palestinian and the Spanish People rooted in the common historic, cultural and democratic values both share. Both parties underlined their full engagement in the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, the first Forum of which has been recently held in Madrid, as a means to provide a platform to promote dialogue, tolerance and peace and security in the region.

Both Co-chairs started the meeting by stressing their commitment to a peaceful and just solution of the Question of Palestine in accordance with International Law and relevant U.N. resolutions leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian sovereign state living side by side with Israel in peace and security within recognized borders, thus ending the occupation that started in 1967 on the basis of the relevant U.N. resolutions, specially of the Security Council, the Terms of Reference of the Madrid Conference, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In this regard, both Co-chairs welcomed the historic opportunity and responsibility created by the Annapolis Conference held on November 27, 2007, in particular the decision by the parties to launch meaningful, direct negotiations towards the achievement of a just and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and ultimately the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole for the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Both parties praised the courageous political will displayed at the Annapolis Conference and highlighted the need for concerted action by all partners
including that of the Israeli and Palestinian civil societies to exert all efforts necessary to halt the deterioration of the situation, and to sustain and accelerate direct peace negotiations towards the conclusion of a final peaceful settlement on the basis of the relevant U.N. resolutions, specially of the Security Council, the Terms of Reference of the Madrid Conference, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Spanish party underlined that the cooperation of Spain with the Palestinian people has always been geared towards the creation of a viable Palestinian state. This main goal has been implemented through two strategic lines of action which have been strengthened in the recent past years, following the principles established in the Master Plan of the Spanish Cooperation 2005-2008: on one hand, capacity building for State institutions and support to good governance; on the other hand, support to civil society activities tending to promote democratic values, peace building and cultural identity.

In addition to both strategic lines, emergency and humanitarian assistance has been provided since it became necessary in 2000. The deep humanitarian crisis that the Palestinian people are suffering, specially in the Gaza Strip, makes it essential to continue providing this kind of assistance as long as the situation requires. Humanitarian aid interventions will be implemented in the most needy sectors according to the situation, and will be carried out following the guidelines established by the Consolidated Appeal Process of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In compliance with the provisions of the fourth Joint Commission, a joint follow-up and evaluation meeting was held in Ramallah on December 3, 2007, at the Palestinian Ministry of Planning. Both parties acknowledged the increase of Spanish financial contributions, the growing importance of Spanish decentralized actors of cooperation (Regional and Local Governments) as well as the improvements made in terms of quality in response to the needs of the Palestinian people, despite the unstable political situation and the humanitarian setbacks experienced in the past two years. During the period 2004-2007, Spain has extended over 167 million Euros of non refundable assistance to support actions in the fields of provision of essential needs, land and heritage preservation and institutional support to the PNA (including financial support to the General Delegation of Palestine in Spain and budget support to the Office of the President in 2006 and 2007).

This assistance has been carried out mainly through bilateral cooperation with Palestinian institutions and with local Non Governmental Organizations and through contributions to multilateral agencies (specially UNRWA as far as refugees are concerned). On the other hand, a significant part of Spanish AOD is channeled through Spanish Non Governmental Organizations, specially through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) pluriannual agreements which have been signed in the last two years with some of them.

At the Donors Conference held in Paris on December 17, 2007, Spain pledged a global amount of 240 million Euros as assistance to the Palestinian people for
the three-year period 2008-2010. Out of this global amount, and following a specific request made by President Abu Mazen in Paris, a yearly amount of 20 million Euros will be allocated to budget support programmes in order to meet the needs and the priorities established in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP). As a consequence, in the frame of this Joint Commission, budget support has turned to be the main instrument for Spanish financial assistance, which will be channeled mainly through the new PEGASE mechanism of the European Commission or any other mechanism that might be agreed upon in full consultation with the Palestinian Ministry of Finance.

Both parties agreed that, recognizing the specificity of the Palestinian situation, the use of these funds by the Palestinian Government should tend to promote economic and social recovery, having in mind the UN Millennium Goals Declaration, which is the main frame of reference of the Spanish Cooperation Master Plan. In this respect, the Spanish party informed that, in the frame of the Spain-UN MDG Achievement Fund created last year, important programmes are being prepared by UN agencies to be implemented in the Palestinian Territory related to Gender Equality (about 7.4 million Euros) and Culture and Development (about 2 million Euros); a third proposal for the Youth and Employment window is now under examination.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to comply with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the European Union Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy in the Palestinian Territory, supporting Palestinian national strategies, improving coordination and harmonization structures among donor community and focusing on a few specific sectors of cooperation. In order to review the Spanish cooperation role among the whole community of donors, and to go forward on alignment, harmonization and coordination between donors and with the Palestinian Government, both parties agreed to carry out a joint evaluation during the drafting process of the new Country Strategy Document, which will follow the approval of the oncoming Master Plan for the Spanish Cooperation 2009-2012. At regional level, Andalusia Government is also willing to negotiate a 4-year Operative Plan of Cooperation with Palestinian authorities, once their Master Plan 2008-2011 is approved.

Both parties recognized the relevance of refundable aid as a concurrent development tool. On one hand, Spain declared at the Paris Conference her intention to resume, as soon as conditions allow it, the financing of projects included in the national priority sectors, specially infrastructures and equipment, through the remaining funds (40 million euros) of its Financial Programme with the Palestinian National Authority. On the other hand, both parties agreed to work actively towards the implementation of the microcredit programme agreed and signed in December 2005, in order to contribute to the economic recovery of microbusiness in the Palestinian Territory and hence to the improvement of the population living conditions. In relation to refundable aid, both parties decided to create a joint committee that includes all relevant Ministries from both sides, to decide on the projects and programs supported in the framework of this development tool.
In accordance with the above-mentioned principles and considerations and taking into account the outcome of the preparatory meetings held in Ramallah and in Madrid with the different actors of Spanish cooperation, both parties agreed on the following cooperation programme for the three-year period 2008-2010:

1. ESSENTIAL SERVICES

1.1. Health

Spain has been working actively in this sector (both at the central administration and at decentralized level) through specialized NGOs. Building on past achievements and considering the added value of Spain in certain medical specializations, both parties agreed on the need to continue supporting the provision of quality services outlined in the PRDP, in line with the Health Quality Improvement programme. Priority will be given to strengthen the Ministry of Health’s policy and to support its managerial and coordination role with other health care providers, mainly through the following interventions:

1.1.1. Ministry of Health capacity building

Through the available Spanish funding mechanisms, financial support will be provided for the acquisition of essential drugs, consumables and laboratory reagents of the Ministry of Health. Support to the Ministry’s pharmaceutical management capacity will be provided through specific capacity building and training programmes.

Building on ongoing interventions, both parties noted the significance of supporting the Palestinian Red Crescent Society/Ministry of Health managed health centers through the training of health professionals for the diagnosis and treatment mainly of chronic diseases and the improvement of home care services.

1.1.2. Improvement of access to efficient quality primary health care services, including community and preventive services

Both parties agreed that new interventions will aim at strengthening the coverage, quality and access of the Palestinian population to the primary health care system, as well as consolidating mechanisms used to overcome the lack of access, including decentralization of services, mother and child health care programmes, and sustainable and cost-effective community and preventive services. Special focus will be placed to upgrade health information systems as well as protocols and standard procedures of the Ministry of Health and other health care providers. Most of these interventions will be carried out by Spanish and Palestinian NGOs, in close coordination with the Ministry of Health.

1.1.3. Support to disabled people programmes

Both parties acknowledged the achievements made in the last years through the partnership established between Spanish and Palestinian NGO’s, in close coordination with the Palestinian Ministry of Health, for the support of
rehabilitation and disabilities interventions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Both parties agreed to extend further assistance to community based rehabilitation programmes and improve services for the disabled within a holistic and participatory approach.

1.2. Education

Both parties, recognizing that education is a basic human right and a vital tool to achieve human and socioeconomic development, agreed to continue supporting programmes geared towards guaranteeing universal access to a comprehensive quality and equitable education system and both stressed the role of public institutions as providers, coordinators and monitors of educational services.

1.2.1. Support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and guarantee for universal access to a quality and equitable education system

The Spanish party emphasized its commitment with the strengthening of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, mainly by considering the funding of the Quality Education for All Programme of the PRDP as one of the priorities of its budget support to the PNA.

Interventions aimed at most vulnerable areas, specially East Jerusalem, and at vulnerable children and children with special needs, will continue to be implemented by specialized NGOs and multilateral institutions as long as the context prevents public institutions to guarantee universal and equitable access to education.

1.2.2. Human Resources Programme

Both parties highlighted the importance of the annual Spanish Scholarship Summer and Postgraduate Programme sponsored by the AECID and both welcomed the 37 scholarships awarded for Palestinian students during 2007. Scholarship programmes are also sponsored and funded by decentralized actors (such as Andalusia and Navarra Governments). The Spanish Party will continue promoting and widely disseminating these scholarship programmes among Palestinian governmental institutions, Universities and university Palestinian students as a whole. Both Parties agreed on the importance of promoting studies on key priority sectors for economic and social development of the Palestinian Territory, specially in those identified under the present Joint Commission and in the PRDP. Both parties agreed to closely coordinate with each other as to ensure an optimum selection of candidates.

The Spanish Party informed that the AECID is currently funding two teachers of Spanish language in Bethlehem University. The Spanish Party will undertake its utmost to further expand and consolidate this Programme in the Palestinian Territory based on the feasibility and interest of other Palestinian Universities. Moreover, both parties agreed to closely monitor the security situation in the Gaza Strip for an eventual reactivation of the Spanish Teaching programme at Al Aqsa University which was temporarily suspended in 2006.
The Spanish party will also contribute to the training of Palestinian teachers of Spanish language. In this respect, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science will grant annually a maximum of two teachers, preferably at non-university levels, for summer courses at Spanish Universities.

Given the high demand detected within the community in the Ramallah District, the Palestinian party requested the Spanish party to explore the possibility of expanding the Spanish teaching programme at a community level with the establishment of an “Aula Cervantes” in the city of Ramallah.

In order to further promote the learning of the Spanish language in the Palestinian Territory, the Spanish Party will maintain Bethlehem University as the official examination centre of Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE Certificate) in Palestinian educational institutions. The Spanish Party requested from the Palestinian Party the recognition of the DELE certificate as the official one proving the knowledge of Spanish as a foreign language, issued by the Cervantes Institute.

2. AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Both parties concurred with the PRDP in the role of agriculture as a critical productive sector with a high potential to stimulate immediate economic recovery and generate a positive impact on food security, while preventing environmental degradation.

Past Spanish funded interventions within the Azahar Programme were positively evaluated by both parties because their impact on human development has been fully compatible with the preservation of natural resources. As long as the context makes it necessary, specialized NGOs will keep implementing interventions aimed at the optimization of agricultural sustainable production and water management. The Spanish party will also exert its utmost efforts to continue engaging other Spanish regional governments in this initiative.

The Palestinian party welcomed the role of the Government of Spain as Co-chair of the Agriculture Sector Working Group (ASWG), and requested the Spanish party to continue co-leading with the Ministry of Agriculture this donor coordination structure, with the technical assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization. This co-leading role will include the provision of technical assistance aimed at reinforcing the relevance and performance of the Ministry of Agriculture in the ASWG and at the development of information, management and planning tools including the Agricultural Projects Information System (APIS) funded by the Spanish Cooperation, which will be progressively assumed by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture.

Building on past achievements and considering Spain experience and know-how in this field, priority will be given to the following activities:

2.1. Capacity building
Both parties agreed to identify specific technical assistance to empower the Ministry of Agriculture in its regulatory and policy planning functions.

In the framework of the Azahar Programme, specific technical assistance aimed at well defined needs will be provided to government institutions, NGOs and other Palestinian entities. On the other hand, the level of attendance of technical staff of public and other Palestinian institutions to advanced seminars abroad will be strengthened. The Spanish party underlined that Azahar-related fields are considered a priority in the scholarship programme of the AECID.

2.2. Sustainable production

2.2.1. Sustainable land and water management

Due to the shortage of suitable water for agriculture, both parties will study interventions in the field of wastewater treatment using low maintenance technology, use of treated wastewater for irrigation purposes and water saving irrigation techniques. Continued attention will be paid to the rehabilitation of damaged agricultural wells, water pipes, distribution networks and other water infrastructures as a means to reduce water loss and vulnerability. Given the positive results observed in the last few years and the active participation (Baleares and Murcia regions) and interest (Catalonia) of several Spanish regional governments, the Palestinian party requested the Spanish party to continue supporting the Job Creation Programme in Gaza.

Both parties will study actions foreseen in the Water and Wastewater Management programme of the PRDP, including support for the improvement of policy, coordination, regulatory and engineering capacities.

Both parties agreed on the need to promote sustainable land management including the environmental (specially, adequate use of fertilizers and pesticides), technical and economic optimization of its use for agriculture, in order to ensure food security, incomes increase and preservation of soil. Priority actions will include strengthening of the Ministry of Agriculture’s extension services, crop diversification of key agricultural products, increased irrigation efficiency, improvement of the livestock sector and urban agriculture, and research and management of agrobiodiversity aimed at ensuring food security. Special attention will be given to labour-intensive projects in small and medium-size holdings.

2.2.2. Mitigation of soil and water degradation and promotion of environmentally safe production methods

Both parties acknowledged the appropriateness and urgency of actions to mitigate soil and water degradation caused by an excessive and irrational use of pesticides and fertilizers. Special attention will be given to strengthen the technical capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture extension services in the field of environmentally safe production alternatives, Integrated Pest Management and other cultivation methods leading to the obtention of international certifications.
(Good Agriculture Practices Certifications-GAP-Organic certifications, etc.) with the double aim of consumer’s safety and facilitation of exports.

2.3. Use of renewable energies

In the framework of the Azahar Programme, small scale actions have been undertaken; both parties agreed to further explore with relevant stakeholders the use of alternative energy sources (e.g., solar power), specially for electrification of isolated rural areas in the West Bank.

As far as electric infrastructures are concerned, the Spanish party stressed that the aforementioned soft loans programme of the Spanish Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade could contribute to the completion of the objectives of the Electricity Sector Investment programme outlined in the PRDP.

3. CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Both parties identified culture as a means not only to preserve national identity but also as a catalyst for economic and social development, specially considering the potential links between the preservation of cultural heritage and the establishment of a sustainable tourism industry in the Palestinian Territory, and finally for conflict prevention and peace building.

3.1. Heritage for Development Programme

Cultural heritage has enormous symbolic value as a focus of identity, continuity and shared values, and for building social cohesion and stability. Both parties highlighted achievements made in the past in this area and in particular in the rehabilitation and restoration of the old city of Hebron. They agreed to further expand the programme of integral restoration of dwellings and urban infrastructure in the city of Hebron and welcomed the recent incorporation of the regional government of Catalonia to it. Continued support will be given by the municipality of Barcelona in the field of urban rehabilitation at local level.

Both parties also identified the establishment of a Palestinian Vocational Training School in cultural heritage restoration (“Escuela Taller”) with the involvement of several line Ministries and other relevant stakeholders as one of the priorities of the Heritage for Development programme.

Aimed at strengthening the public management of the Palestinian cultural heritage, the Spanish party will support the development of an integrated strategy for cultural heritage preservation that includes restoration and maintenance, regulatory frameworks, capacity building, documentation, citizens and stakeholders’ participation and awareness, and that takes into consideration the links between cultural heritage and the tourism sector.
3.2. Support to the reactivation of cultural life in the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

In addition to the yearly programme implemented by Spain to promote Spanish culture, revitalize the cultural life in the Palestinian Territory, and support local institutions, efforts will be exerted to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority (mainly the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities) in the design, implementation and evaluation of effective public policies and equitable cultural practices through the future Culture and Development programme of the MDG Achievement Fund.

The Palestinian party requested the Spanish party to provide support to reactivate cultural life in East Jerusalem, and specifically to the cultural activities that will be organized within the framework of Jerusalem as Arab capital of culture in 2009. The Palestinian party also singled out the urgent need to support the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Jerusalem, for the rehabilitation and equipping of suitable premises in Jerusalem, and capacity building activities.

Both Parties agreed to set up a follow-up and evaluation Committee to monitor progress and evaluate results of the projects identified under the present Joint Commission. This Committee may revise the adequacy and feasibility of the projects in line with the political context and propose, if needed, alternative projects and actions. This Follow-up Bilateral Committee will be composed of representatives of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the active participation and cooperation of the Ministry of Planning; it will meet annually or as often as both Parties consider it necessary. On a technical level, the Ministry of Planning, together with the AECID, will identify, monitor, coordinate and evaluate the projects and programmes included in the present Joint Commission; the Ministry of Planning will also be consulted by the AECID during the drafting process of its Country Strategy Document 2009-2012. Both parties agreed that enhanced coordination is required as to foster complementarity among the various Spanish funded programmes.

In addition to the interventions specified in the present Minutes, new ones may be considered for funding by the Spanish Party if both parties deem it necessary. These interventions will be agreed upon at a later stage during the meetings of the Follow up and Evaluation Bilateral Committee.
Upon concluding the meeting, both Parties expressed their satisfaction for the excellent climate of friendship, cordiality and mutual understanding that characterizes the relations between the Spanish and the Palestinian People.

Signed in Madrid, on January 22, 2008, in two original copies in English and Spanish languages, the English text being the official and reference version.

For the Government of the Kingdom of Spain

H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Palestinian National Authority

H.E. Dr. Riad Malki
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Annex I

Spanish Delegation:

1. Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

2. Ricardo Martínez Vázquez, General Director for Cooperation with Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe

3. Ramón Ansoaín Garraza, Consul General of Spain in Jerusalem

4. Carolina Mayeur Dawel, Deputy Director General for Cooperation with Mediterranean Countries and Eastern Europe

5. Alberto Ucelay Urech, Deputy Director General for the Middle East

6. Isabel Casado López, Technical Advisor for Cooperation with the Middle East

7. Miguel Pérez Alvarado, Desk Officer for Cooperation with the Palestinian Territories and Jordan

Palestinian Delegation:

1. Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister

2. Riad Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs

3. Musa Amer Odeh, Ambassador, General Delegation of Palestine in Spain

4. Mazen Jadallah, Director General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Finance

5. Hala Rashed, Prime Minister’s Advisor

6. Manal Zidan, Prime Minister’s Office

7. Mohammed Amro, Counsellor, General Delegation of Palestine in Spain