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Gaza City joins major European initiative for energy sustainability

The Gaza Municipality is the second local authority from the Mediterranean region to join the EU Covenant of Mayors initiative, after Salé in Marroco. The objective is to improve the living conditions of Gaza residents and bring new local development prospects to the area.

“I believe that the Covenant of Mayors is the best starting point to shape Gaza’s sustainable energy policies: joining over 4,300 local authorities in Europe, learning from their experience and concentrating efforts towards improving the environmental situation of our region”, said Mayor Rafiq Mekky.

Gaza city has faced several environmental and energy challenges resulting from war and occupation since its establishment in 1893. In this context, shortages of fuel and electricity supplies have been recurring issues which make energy autonomy all the more relevant for the Palestinian city.

The municipality is already taking decisive action to bring a more sustainable and autonomous future to its residents, notably in the fields of waste management and solar energy. Ahmad Hashem, Environmental and Civil Engineer at the municipality, believes the Covenant of Mayors initiative is likely to *“open the door to great investment projects in Gaza City”* and help *“tackle unemployment problems”*.

The city will start now the development of its Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP), a technical document that brings together all measures that the city will implement to reach the Covenant of Mayors objectives. Commenting on the added-value of developing a SEAP, Ahmad Hashem explained that *“the municipal council has implemented numerous projects targeting the environment and energy sectors in Gaza City and these projects will only work effectively if they are integrated into a solid plan.”* Citizens and stakeholders would be closely associated to the process, thus ensuring widespread adoption and ownership of the plan.

The Covenant of Mayors is a voluntary commitment taken by over 4,300 local and regional authorities to improve the quality of life of their citizens through the implementation of sustainable energy policies. The success of the Covenant goes far beyond the EU borders, with signatories in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus region and Central Asia under the “Eastern Partnership”. A similar partnership is under development for the Mediterranean region.

More information:

Covenant of Mayors initiative: http://www.eumayors.eu/index_en.html

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