

May 2006

Message from Mrs. Maha Abu Shusheh, PSC Chairperson

It is with great honor that I announce the establishment of the Palestinian Shippers' Council (PSC), to represent and protect the interests of Palestinian shippers (importers and exporters) that are end-users of maritime shipping, air freight and land transport. The PSC's core purpose is to solve problems facing Palestinian traders at regional and international ports and reduce transaction costs accrued at major crossing points.

The PSC has already succeeded in increasing the number of free storage days accorded to Palestinian traders at Israeli ports from 4 to 6 days. Future plans involve establishing agreements with shipping companies, regional and international forwarders, customs brokers and warehouse operators to obtain competitive rates and predictable transport conditions.

The PSC will also furnish Palestinian shippers with accurate and timely information on ports, maritime and other conditions affecting merchandise trade, customs rules, regulations and rates. It will build relationships with major shippers' council across the globe, provide training to its members on international shipping / transport issues and promote integrated logistical solutions for trading companies, in addition to representing the shippers' views on transport policies.

I would like to thank the European Commission and its Technical Assistance Office (ECTAO) in Jerusalem for its financial support and the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for its technical support. My sincere thanks also go to PalTrade that will be hosting the PSC till the end of this year and for the members of the Preparatory Committee.

Message from Mr. Majdi Haj Khalil, PSC General Manager

Getting the voice of Palestinian traders heard is not an easy task. Getting your proposals accepted and acted upon is even harder. The PSC intends to take on these challenges and bring concerned parties around the table to find real, workable solutions to problems, concerns and issues.

Our strength as an institution and your strength as the backbone of the trade community will make the PSC a formidable voice for the Palestinian shippers' community around the world. We are confident that with your support, along with the constructive and pragmatic nature of our policies and initiatives, we will be able to make a real difference.

If you want your voice heard, your views listened to and your needs catered for, you should be part of the PSC. No matter how small or large your trade operations are, we will be there for you.

Special points of interest

- PSC was launched on April 11th 2006.
- Established offices in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- Four free days of storage was extended to 6 days at ports.

Inside this issue

Message from the Chairperson	1
Message from the Manager	1
The structure of the PSC	2
Summary of Roles & Services	3
Importance of the Shippers' Councils Worldwide	3
Workshops	4
PSC's Achievements	4
Work in Progress	4



The structure of the Palestinian Shippers' Council

The PSC was established to form a national shippers' council that is capable of addressing the needs of Palestinian importers and exporters (the shippers' community) and supporting Palestinian reform and long-term trade development efforts. The establishment of the PSC was achieved through a technical cooperation project between:

- the European Commission and its Technical Assistance Office (ECTAO) for the West Bank and Gaza, which is funding the project;
- the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which is implementing and providing technical support to the project;
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and
- The Palestinian Trade Center (PalTrade), which is providing local outreach and logistical support for the PSC during its start-up period.

The PSC Preparatory Committee (Prep Com) was established to guide the project and ensure national ownership at an early stage; it was an early outcome of consultation with Palestinian Ministry of National Economy (MNE), PalTrade, UNCTAD and major Palestinian shippers. The Prep Com is constituted of seventeen member's representative of various regions and import/export sectors. Four of these members are from Gaza and the rest are from West Bank. The PSC Prep Com is acting as UNCTAD's counterpart in the implementation of the project activities. It will be dissolved by the end of 2006. By then an independent, formally registered and functional PSC will be established, with an elected Management Committee that will assume the functions of the Prep Com.

Once fully constituted, the PSC is expected to have a General Assembly of full (voting) members (shippers) and associate (non-voting) members (forwarders, transporters, trade-promotion and industrial or professional associations etc). Its Management Committee will work through standing Working Groups composed of active members on specific issues/sectors.

The PSC aims to represent and protect the interests of all Palestinian shippers that are end-users of maritime shipping, air freight and land transport, in their dealings with:

- Transport services providers (shipping companies, forwarders, customs brokers, inland transportation and warehouse operators).
- Relevant government authorities (Customs authorities, Port authorities, Standards Institutes).
- Relevant regional and international bodies.

Objectives:

- Constitute and register the PSC as a legally established and recognized shippers' council and a representative of the Palestinian shippers' community.
- Contribute to Palestinian economic development and trade expansion through measures that promote trade efficiency and facilitation at all stages of the maritime and related transport logistical chain.

Mission:

To promote the interest of Palestinian shippers', represent them in dealings at the national and international levels with transport providers, regional and international port authorities and relevant Palestinian National Authority institutions and to coordinate with different trade facilitation projects targeting the shippers' sector.

Vision

To become a compliant viable shippers' council, serving its members, working towards upgrading the infrastructure needed to handle trade logistics, and promoting a coordinated and coherent voice for Palestinian shippers.

Preparatory Committee Members

- Maha Abu Shusheh-
Chairperson
 - Khalid Al Wadeya-Deputy
 - Nasar Nasar
 - Iyad Masrouji
 - Omar Haj Abed
 - Khalil Kharaz
 - Sameh Al Masri
 - Samer Al Sab'a
 - Hani Qurt
 - Ahmad Abu Al Naja
 - Mohsen Sonokrot
 - Feisal Al Shawwa
 - Dina Al Masri
 - Mohammad Abu Ramadan
 - Tareq Saqaf Al Hait
 - Majed Hirbawi
 - Basem Khoury
-

The following figure shows the structure of the Palestinian Shippers' Council:



Summary of Roles & Services

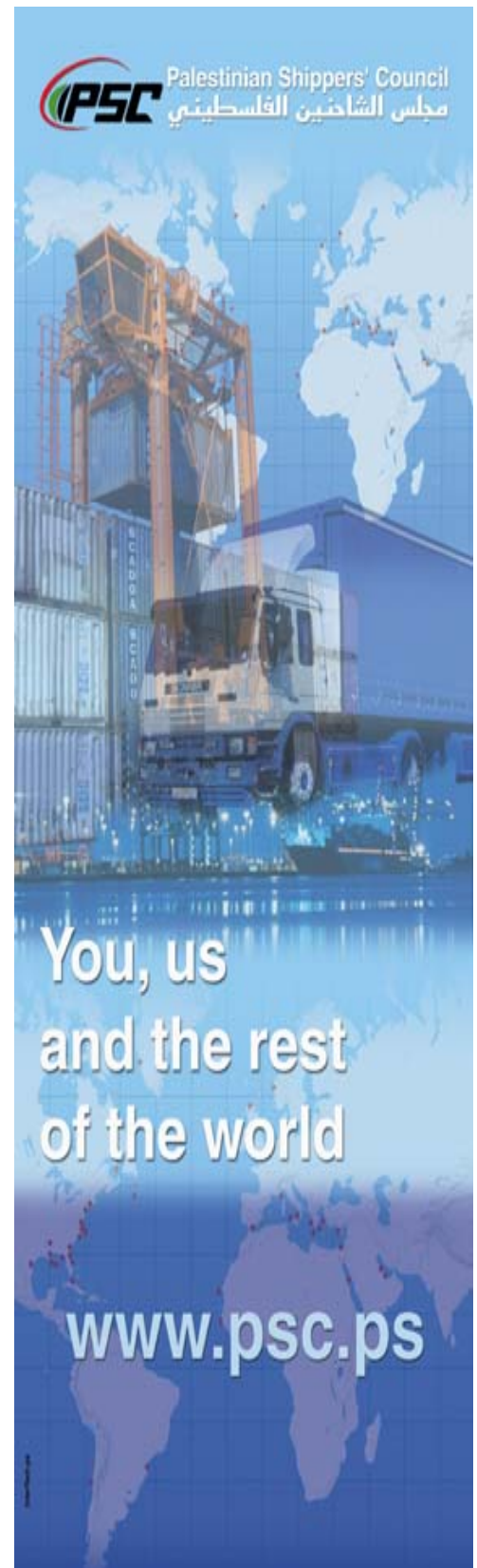
The PSC will play an important role in familiarizing the Palestinian shippers' community with the different aspects of maritime transport and trade facilitation and the different projects targeting the Palestinian shipping sector.

It will also represent members in their collective dealings with shipping lines, shipping conferences, government, as well as regional and international organizations; improve shipping services and conditions; obtain competitive rates and promote the optimum growth of Palestinian international trade.

Importance of the Shipper's Councils Worldwide

Shippers' councils are established worldwide to protect and promote interests of its members on matters related to transportation of merchandise by sea, land and air. The importance of worldwide shipping councils lies within the following tasks that they seek to accomplish:

- Improve efficiency of transport & logistical chain.
- Secure and maintain adequate, efficient, economic and reliable shipping and port services at stable prices.
- Address the shippers' challenges and provide them with immense benefits that the economy needs.



Workshops

The PSC will organize various training workshops for PSC staff and members on specific issues identified by its members. The following workshops were already conducted with the participation of UNCTAD experts:

- 8/4/2006 a workshop was held at Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce on movement restriction of goods, which was amongst the issues discussed.
- 9/4/2006 a workshop was held at Nablus Chamber of Commerce on issues concerning traders including crossing points.
- 10/4/2006 a workshop was held in Ramallah & in Gaza via Video Conference to discuss issues of concern with Prep Com members and other traders.
- 11/4/2006 Launch of the PSC along with a workshop "Mission & Organization" was held in Ramallah & Gaza via Video Conference.

PSC's Achievements

- Free storage days for Palestinian goods at ports were extended from four to six days; as of 1st of April 2006.
- Laws, regulations, and procedures applicable to Palestinian imports and exports are being disseminated by PSC to the Palestinian shippers.
- PSC established itself as a focal point for regional port authorities and various Palestinian institutions.
- The PSC has launched its institutional website (www.psc.ps)

Work in Progress

- Furnish Palestinian shippers' with accurate and timely information on ports, maritime and other conditions affecting merchandise trade, customs rules, regulations and rates.
- Negotiating freight rates with line conferences.
- Reducing charges imposed by the customs brokers.
- Studying the offer presented by Ashdod Port Authority on having an office in Ashdod Port for PSC.

Contact Information

West Bank:

UNDP Building, 3rd floor
Tokyo Street
Bietunia – Ramallah
Tel: 00970 (2) 2976286
Fax: 00970 (2) 2976287

Gaza:

Bank of Palestine Ltd Building
Paltrade office, 10th floor
Omar Almukhtar Street -Alremal
Tel: 00970 (8) 2884474
Fax: 00970 (8) 2833549

Email: info@psc.ps Web: www.psc.ps



*PSC Launch at Grand Park Hotel
on April 11th*



*PSC Launch at Grand Park Hotel
on April 11th*



*Prep Com meeting with UNCTAD
experts on April 10th*



*Meeting with Bethlehem Chamber
of Commerce on April 8th*