

THE HIGHER COUNCIL FOR INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE (HCIE)

Introduction

Having a vision of a Palestinian society rich in innovation, distinguished in performance, in all aspects of life, and believing in the potential innovative energies of the Palestinian people, and acknowledging the vital role of innovation in the establishment of the State of Palestine, his Excellency the Palestinian President *Mahmoud Abbas* has established the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence (HCIE) in the year 2013. The HCIE pursues to play a leadership role in consolidating a culture of innovation and excellence within the Palestinian society, empowering innovators and strengthening a national innovation system as the main pillar of the knowledge economy that we seek. *HCIE belongs directly to the President's office who shows great interest and continuous follow up of the development and achievements of the council.*

The HCIE has strategic goals of disseminating and entrenching a culture of innovation and excellence among the Palestinian people, strengthening the governance of national innovation system, effectively representing Palestine in regional and international organizations and institutions that work in innovation, building up effective communication channels with the Palestinian competencies in the Diaspora, and working with the relevant national institutions to identify the national priorities in the field of innovation and excellence.

Innovation initiatives in Palestine

Several initiatives on innovation and entrepreneurship have been started in Palestine in the past ten years by the private sector, higher education institutes and civil society. These initiatives take the form of awards, incubators, accelerators and centers of excellence. In addition to that, almost every higher education institution has its own center of excellence. These centers share the objective of providing the students and recent graduates with the necessary skills, training and guidance to start their own business or find the right career. These centers also maintain strong linkage and interaction with industry and focus on research of interest to this sector.

Structure of the HCIE

The general supervision on the council is assumed by a board of directors and a chairman of the board (council's chairman). To facilitating the fulfillment of the council's strategic objectives, the forty five member board of directors represents almost all innovation stakeholders and institutions present in West Bank, Gaza and the Diaspora. Palestinian universities, non-governmental organizations, innovation institutions, government ministries, research centers, the presidential office, banks association, businessmen association and industry association are all represented in the board. Those

bodies are represented by high-level, decision-making representatives. The board members are subdivided into the following specialized permanent committees (Technical Development & evaluation, Incubation, fund & investment, International cooperation, policies and Exploration). Each committee is assigned specific responsibilities, including formulating the necessary plans and special programs for the council. The committees also provide the guidance for the council and monitor its performance and achievements.

The strategic objectives of the HCIE

The following strategic objectives were adopted:

- 1) Dissemination and entrenchment of a culture of innovation and excellence among the Palestinian people, especially among youth through:
 - a) Setting up a code of values, directives, and standards conducive and stimulating to innovation and excellence.
 - b) Providing the necessary incubation and various kinds of support to innovators.
 - c) Working with the relevant ministries to develop policies, regulations and stimulating and supportive programs for innovation and excellence, especially at the level of primary education and higher education.
- 2) Strengthening the structure of innovation system in various sectors through:
 - a) Supporting institutions that work in the field of innovation and excellence, strengthening their institutional capacities and stimulating the coordination and concerted efforts and the integration of their roles in order to maximize the collective impact, and putting an end to the duplication and fragmentation of efforts.
 - b) Encouraging private sector in Palestine and in the Diaspora on increasing its investment in the field of innovation and creativity,
 - c) Building up information systems, knowledge resources, and providing information services that are supportive to the individuals and public corporations working in innovation field.
 - d) Providing legal, stimulating and supportive environment for innovation and creativity.
 - e) Cooperating with the concerned parties in preparing legislation projects related to innovation and excellence.
- 3) Adequate and effective representation of Palestine within the innovation and creativity system, regional and international;
- 4) Building up effective communication channels with the Palestinian competencies in the Diaspora, creating innovative methods and programs to facilitate and stimulate the use of their various resources in the areas of excellence and innovation.

5) Working with related establishments in determining the national priorities in the field of innovation and excellence.

The achievements of the HCIE

During the **past three** the HCIE have been focused on organizational and foundational activities, yet there have been some achievements, mainly are:

- 1) Through the council's strategic partnerships with the Palestinian universities and research institutions, numerous joint initiatives have been started to boost research in areas of national priority, such as energy, nanotechnology, medicine, agriculture and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the council endeavors to build linkages between the academic, research sector and the industrial and business sectors.
- 2) The establishment of the Palestinian Incubator for Energy (PIE), in partnership with Jerusalem District Electrical Company. Its objectives include supporting entrepreneurs through the early stages of business development, stimulating innovation and new initiatives in energy technology, encouraging investment in the energy technology sector and the creation of new jobs.
- 3) The council in the year 2015 conducted the first innovators forum, where selected Palestinians and Palestinian friends entrepreneurs from Palestine, the Diaspora and all over the world, will be invited to present and show their success stories. Its objectives were to motivate Palestinians especially youths by exposing them to these success stories and to encourage the participant entrepreneurs to invest in Palestine. Hundreds of projects introduced to the forum, tens of them received succeed had a seed fund and **incubation** just started in cooperation with private sector.
- 4) As an official body responsible for building, organizing and supporting the innovation ecosystem, a coordination workshop with the national institutions involved in innovation, such as, incubators, accelerators and centers of excellence for the purpose of organizing this sector, providing them with the needed support and creating the essential coordination among the different parties on one hand and among these parties and the council on the other hand.
- 5) **Memberships, memorandums of understanding or coordination meetings with the following regional and international organizations: Arab Council for the Gifted & Talented (ACGT), International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (MILSET), Arab Robotics Association (ARA), World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC), Arab Innovation Network (AIN) , the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), World Bank, the Korean agency for international cooperation, Global Communities (formerly CHF International), the Indian and Chinese representatives in Palestine. And recently with THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF TURKEY (TUBITAK).**
- 6) Funding and providing incubation for innovative projects: about hundred of projects have been received directly through the council. After appropriate evaluation by the evaluation committee,

about twenty successful projects were selected. Some of them were financed, others were accepted for incubation (energy-related projects) and the rest were provided with the necessary networking and linkage with the relevant institutions.

- 7) The council has started coordinating with the concerned parties including governmental institutions, academia, and private sector and innovation institutions for the purpose of formulating a national innovation strategy. Moreover, the council has addressed the minister's council requesting the inclusion of innovation in the sectorial strategies of the individual ministries.