

communities, the media and other actors to create a broad-based municipal lobby for peace even while national politics may remain at a standstill. Needless to say, it is a courageous step for all participating mayors to engage in dialogue and concrete cooperation with representatives from what is seen by many local citizens as the enemy.

The involved municipal leaders are convinced that local authorities are a critical first-order partner in paving the road to peace and mutual understanding between Palestinians and Israelis. Israeli and Palestinian municipalities together can set in motion a municipal movement that will bring citizens closer together, despite stalemate and political tension at the national level.

The first MAP pilot projects are scheduled to begin in January 2007, and will involve cities including The Hague and Emmen in the Netherlands, and Bethlehem, Tubas, Nazareth and Ra'anana on the Palestinian and Israeli sides. The projects will help build the Bethlehem region's capacity to manage environmental and natural resources

The program aims, through local projects, to create a broad-based municipal lobby for peace even while national politics may remain at a standstill.

through the creation of a Geographic Information System and associated human resource capacities.

The future will show whether the international community is prepared to build a partnership with local governments in Israel and the Palestinian Territories to contribute to peace and conflict resolution from below. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the MAP will be able to contribute to resolution of the region's complicated situation of insecurity, and that perhaps safer and more integrated cities — including stronger bonds between people on all sides — will help to forge a durable and equitable peace at the national level. ●

CITY DIPLOMACY

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City diplomacy refers to the growing cooperation among cities and their associations, often in close conjunction with non-governmental organizations and the business community, on international initiatives to promote peace and conflict resolution.

Some key city diplomacy initiatives have included solidarity missions (e.g. between European Union cities and cities in the North Cauca region of Colombia), awareness raising, lobbying for international financial support and engagement, bringing conflict parties together in dialogue, and developing projects to support peacebuilding in conflict areas.

The international organization of local governments, United Cities and Local Governments, has designated city diplomacy as one of its priority themes.