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## ***Bilateral forum between The Netherlands and the Palestinian***

**Under the auspices of Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Dr. Rami Hamdallah the Prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, VNG International and the City of Rawabi signed a Memorandum of Understanding, expressing the ambition for future cooperation.**

On December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> a high level bilateral forum between The Netherlands and the Palestinian Authority took place which focused on strengthening the ties between Dutch and Palestinian education, business and government institutions. An initiative of local government cooperation between VNG International and the new city of Rawabi was announced on Saturday.



A delegation consisting of prime minister Rutte and the Palestinian Minister for Planning Affairs Mohammad Abu Ramadan visited the new city of Rawabi. Rawabi is the first planned Palestinian city constructed on the West Bank. The building of a new city and the creation of a successful local government is inspiring, but of course brings with it some challenges as well. Part of the visit was the signing of a memorandum of understanding between VNG International, represented by VNG board member Andries Heidema, and the mayor of Rawabi, Majed Abdulfattah (see picture).

In this MoU Rawabi and VNG International have agreed to investigate possibilities for cooperation by starting a pilot project in 2014 that aims to support the development of the new city of Rawabi by the fostering exchange of knowledge and experiences between Rawabi, VNG International, the city of Almere and other Dutch local government institutions.

The pilot project will be funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the Local Government Capacity Programme implemented by VNG International.

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