



## Executive Board

Hundred and ninety-seventh session

# 197 EX/32

PARIS, 11 August 2015  
Original: English

Item 32 of the provisional agenda

### OCCUPIED PALESTINE

#### SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to [196 EX/26](#), by which item entitled "Occupied Palestine" was included in the 197th session of the Executive Board. The present document provides a report on developments since the 196th session of the Executive Board. There are no financial or administrative implications. No decision is proposed in the present document.

#### I.

##### A. Jerusalem

1. The Norwegian Government and UNESCO signed in December 2011 an agreement for the project "Ensuring the sustainability of the Centre for the Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem". The project's main objective is to build capacities of the staff of the Centre in a variety of fields of the preservation of Islamic manuscripts. The project activity started in September 2012. Five additional staff members have been recruited under the project and 10 training sessions on conservation and restoration techniques have been held so far, in addition to the field visits to restoration centres in Paris and Florence in 2013. The project also provided the Centre with conservation equipment and materials. UNESCO conducted two consultation missions in October 2014 and in February 2015 in order to review progress achieved and to plan future activities to be implemented in 2015.
2. The refurbishment of the Islamic Museum in the Haram Al-Sharif and its Collection, Jerusalem, is currently under implementation but requires additional funding to complete the proposed museographical and scenographical planning, which was approved in March 2015 by the Awqaf authorities. A follow-up mission took place in June 2015. The re-opening of the Museum depends on the availability of funds and the security situation of Jerusalem, thus is foreseen beyond 2015.

##### B. Al-Aqsa Mosque/al-Haram ash-Sharif and its surroundings

###### (1) Al-Aqsa Mosque/al-Haram ash-Sharif

3. The 196th session of the Executive Board (196 EX/Decision 26) as well as the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee (Decision 39 COM 7A.27) expressed deep concern regarding activities at the al-Aqsa Mosque/alklaram ash-Sharif. They also expressed concern regarding the restricting obstacles on the freedom of access that shall be provided to the competent national authorities, including the Jordanian Waqf experts, to safeguard the Old City of Jerusalem and both sides of its Walls. They furthermore expressed concern on plans to build a two-line cable car system to connect the Mughrabi Quarter with the Mount of Olives. They underlined the necessity to respect and safeguard the integrity, authenticity and cultural heritage of Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as reflected in the status quo, as a Muslim Holy Site of worship and as an integral part of the World Heritage site. The World Heritage Committee also requested the World Heritage Centre to continue applying the Reinforced Monitoring Mechanism to the Old City of Jerusalem on both sides of its Walls and to report on this matter at the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2016. The 14th Reinforced Monitoring Report dated April 2015 was sent to all Committee members.

###### (2) Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in al-Aqsa Mosque/al-Haram ash-Sharif

4. Pursuant to 176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting/Decision and to the decisions of the World Heritage Committee since its 31st session in 2007, the World Heritage Centre has spared no efforts to facilitate exchanges between Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian and Waqf experts regarding the design of the Mughrabi Ascent in the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as to facilitate the UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls and the UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent.
5. These matters were inscribed on the agenda of the Executive Board since the 176th Executive Board Special Plenary meeting, as well as since the 192nd session, and the state of conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls is also presented annually to the World Heritage Committee.
6. Regarding the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem, the 196th session of the Executive Board as well as the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee, "deplored the continuing Israeli unilateral measures and decisions regarding the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate" and expressed "growing concern regarding the continuous, intrusive demolitions and illegal excavations in and around the Mughrabi Gate Ascent", and reiterated their request to enable the Jordanian Awaqf experts — as a part of the competent

national authorities — to maintain and safeguard the site and to facilitate their access with their tools and material to the site in order to enable the execution of the Jordanian design of the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in accordance with UNESCO and World Heritage Committee decision. Moreover, the Executive Board as well as the World Heritage Committee, requested the Director-General "to take the necessary measures in order to enable the execution of the Jordanian design of the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate."

### **C. UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls and UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent**

7. Regarding the follow-up of the UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls and the UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent, a letter from the Jordanian authorities was received by the Secretariat on 12 March 2015, proposing to dispatch at the end of February 2015 the joint World Heritage Centre/ICCROM/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission. In its answer, the Secretariat indicated that this letter had been received after the dates proposed to organize the mission. The 196th session of the Executive Board and the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee took similar Decisions on this subject. By 196 EX/Decision 26, the Executive Board regretted "the continued Israeli failure to act in accordance with UNESCO and World Heritage Committee decisions that request a UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent and the dispatch of a reactive monitoring mission (RMM)". The World Heritage Committee, by Decision 39 COM 7A.27, "deeply regretted the continuous Israeli failure to implement the Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls". They also stressed the need of the urgent implementation of the above-mentioned UNESCO mission and, the Executive Board "decided in case of non-implementation prior to the 197th session of the Executive Board, to consider, in conformity with international law, other means to ensure its implementation". Similarly the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee stressed "the need of the urgent implementation of the above-mentioned UNESCO mission and, in case of non-implementation according to the above mentioned Executive Board decision 196 EX/Decision 26.4, decides to consider, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, adequate measures to have the concerned party implement it". They requested that the report and recommendations of the mission be presented to the concerned parties prior to the 197th session of the Executive Board.

8. At the time of the preparation of this document, this monitoring mission and experts meeting could not be undertaken. Should additional information become available to the Secretariat regarding the above-mentioned matters, the Director-General is prepared to publish an addendum to this document before the 197th session of the Executive Board in order to inform the Members of the Executive Board of any new developments in that regard.

## **II.**

### **A. Reconstruction and development of Gaza (February 2015-June 2015)**

#### **EDUCATION**

9. With technical support from UNESCO, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) finalized its National Assessment for Education for All (EFA) Report (2000-2015) in December 2014. A launch event for this report was organized by the MoEHE and UNESCO on 3 June 2015. The event also featured the launch of the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015* entitled "Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges". The event was held jointly in Ramallah and Gaza and gathered around 200 participants from the education community to present both the global and national progress towards the EFA goals. An open debate was held on especially national priorities related to quality education for the post-2015 agenda. This process provided experiences in implementing the EFA strategies, lessons learnt, emerging issues and challenges, with the aim to accelerate actions to complete the unfinished EFA tasks as well as to inform public debates on the future education agenda for the post-2015 era.

10. UNESCO continues to support vulnerable university students in Palestine. With the financial support from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, UNESCO continues to consolidate the 12 libraries, 10 in West Bank and two in Gaza. These libraries support vulnerable higher education students through providing them with access to study and research library facilities, textbooks and other resource materials. Since the last reporting period, the libraries have registered a continuous increase in the number of users, and have begun to implement a countrywide advocacy campaign on the rights to, in and through higher education in Palestine, with a particular focus on discrimination and disability, in lieu of UNESCO's membership of the *United Nations Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNPRPD) and as an additional support to the national efforts to effectively implement the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) (accessed by Palestine in April 2014).

11. With the support of UNESCO and UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education finalized the chapter on education within the Government's Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA), assessing the impact of the July-August war in Gaza on the education sector (more information on the results of this project in Gaza can be found in a separate report on the reconstruction and development of Gaza (196 EX/26 (IV)).<sup>1</sup> The assessment revealed that a high number of university students were affected by the last war in Gaza during summer 2014. It had a great impact on their economic situation, which consequently affected their survival within the education system. To respond to their needs, UNESCO intensified its resource mobilization efforts and is currently fundraising for projects aiming to help mitigate the impact of the crisis on vulnerable university students, through fee waivers for 6,000 students in total (over 60 months) and through protecting higher education institutions as safe zones to ensure the right to higher education in Gaza.

#### **CULTURE**

12. Tell Umm Amer (Saint Hilarion Monastery): UNESCO in cooperation with "l'Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem", the Islamic University in Gaza and the French General Consulate in Jerusalem and with joint funding from UNESCO regular programme and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is implementing an urgent maintenance and conservation intervention on the site which is inscribed on the Palestine Tentative list. The site's remains were severely affected and damaged due to the heavy rainstorms during the intense winter of 2014-2015 in addition to the neglect and lack of necessary regular maintenance. Several features of the site are subject to many threats such as the gradual deterioration, looting and break-ins. The urgent intervention aims to ensure better protection of the site's features as well as to contribute enhance its usability and accessibility by visitors.

13. The planned set of interventions includes cleaning of the site from dirt and wild vegetation, consolidation of structural features, maintaining safe pathways, installing protection canopies for mosaics as well as providing security rail around the site. Moreover, a capacity-building and on-job training approach is continued though this emergency intervention by utilizing the expertise of previously trained workers and technicians who received training on stonemasonry cutting and building. The on-job training programme will continue to enhance the capacities of these workers on the techniques of archaeological sites' conservation.

14. UNESCO actively supported the preparation of Gaza Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) for the Culture that assesses the impact of the recent escalation in Gaza on the culture sector which includes a recovery framework and needs that target cultural heritage sites and cultural institutions for restoration, reconstruction and resumption of services (more information on the results of this project in Gaza can be found in a separate report on the reconstruction and development of Gaza (196 EX/26 (IV)).

15. At the 36th session of the World Heritage Committee (Saint Petersburg, June-July 2012), the site "Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem", was inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger, on an emergency basis. The site "Old Town of Hebron al-Khalil and its environs" was inscribed on Palestine's Tentative List in 2012.

#### **COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

16. With the support of Sida, UNESCO organized a training seminar for journalists and media professionals on Journalism Ethics and Code of Ethics and Conduct Training, held from 15 to 17 May 2015 in Gaza and from 27 May to 2 June 2015 in Ramallah. Over 40 participants were introduced to best practices in the area of code of conduct and ethical guidelines for journalists. They were also involved in the drafting of a proposed set of ethical guidelines for the local media community. The activity was carried out as a direct follow-up to the relevant recommendations on the need to establish codes of conduct or a self-regulation system, included in the Assessment of Media in Palestine, based on the Media Development Indicators (MDI), launched by UNESCO in June 2014.

## **GENDER EQUALITY**

17. The online library and database of the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre Library (PWRDC), which collects all research and data on gender in Palestine (with relevant regional and international data) is now available to the public through the website of PWRDC ([www.pwrdc.ps](http://www.pwrdc.ps)).

18. An online calendar of activities has been created in June 2015 within the library's website aiming at coordinating and managing the different gender-related activities, events, workshops and seminars in Palestine in order to help the gender institutions to promote their own events and plan their events. It is also a tool to promote PWRDC and its online library. A training workshop was organized for the representatives from the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), academic institutions and civil society organizations on how to use the online calendar and add their own activities to it.

19. A training manual/toolkit for researchers in gender issues has been developed in partnership with the Institute of Women Studies of the Birzeit University, with inputs from the participants in the training courses. The manual will be made available as a tool for researchers across Palestine.

20. UNESCO supported an in-depth research entitled "*Women's and Men's Voices*", focusing on the impacts on gender relations of the July-August 2014 war in the Gaza Strip. The research is being finalized and will be presented to MoWA and to the United Nations Gender Task Force.

21. UNESCO supported a psycho-social activity and advocacy campaign on gender-based violence in Gaza through a community theatre production, entitled *Sharing Stories, Changing Lives*. A team of women storytellers from the Theatre Day Production in Gaza, in their role of community leaders, visited 12 UNRWA shelters offering shelter to thousands of families from Gaza fleeing their houses during the war and still providing accommodation to many of them. Women living in the shelters shared stories from their daily struggle for survival in war time and about facing oppression in family and community. The performances were attended by more than 1,000 women from the shelters, with a special performance held in Gaza on 11 May 2015, attended by the Minister of Women's Affairs, representatives of United Nations agencies, donor community and consulates.

22. As a part of promoting gender equality in Palestine, by ensuring the continuity and sustainability of PWRDC, UNESCO is currently supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs in the institutionalization of PWRDC.

23. With the support of UNESCO, MoWA organized training for its staff on the development of policy papers and on advocacy and campaigning for gender, through training modules organized for the Ministry's staff in both West Bank and Gaza. As direct outcomes of this activity, a number of policy papers and a comprehensive advocacy and campaigning plan for mainstreaming gender in national policies have been developed.

## **YOUTH**

24. The NET-MED Youth Project (funded by the EU) was launched in both the West Bank and Gaza on 27 April 2015 with a view to contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for young women and men in Palestine to develop their competencies, exercise their rights and duties, and meaningfully engage as active citizens, particularly in decision-making relating to political, social, economic, educational and cultural policy and planning processes. The objective of this intersectoral flagship project (SHS, CI and CLT) is to strengthen the networking capacities of youth organizations in Palestine, particularly by increasing their interaction with decision-makers, social partners and media, as well as their use of ICT-based platforms, and also by enhancing their economic inclusion and access to the labour market.

25. A working group consisting of 20 youth organizations in Gaza has been established and held their first meeting, based on the mapping exercise conducted in November 2014.

26. Two working groups, one in West Bank and one in Gaza, comprised of active youth organizations working in the fields of culture, education, and communication and media have been established and will be working together for the upcoming two years in the implementation of the NET-MED project, based on their ongoing projects and activities supporting youth employment, mainstreaming youth policies and advocacy, and youth representation in the media.

27. World Radio Day, World Press Freedom Day: Palestinian youth have engaged in the celebration of the World Radio Day (held on 13 February 2015) and of the World Press Freedom Day (held on 3 May 2015). High-school students produced and presented a two-hour live radio broadcast on youth priority issues.

28. In partnership with Press House-Palestine, an independent, non-profit media institution member of the NET-MED Youth working group, and co-financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), a ceremony was held on 4 May 2015 for the celebration of World Press Freedom Day, including a photography competition for young photographers reflecting the positive image of Gaza. More than 200 journalists have attended the ceremony.

## **B. The two Palestinian sites of al-Haram al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs in al-Khalil/Hebron and the BHA' ibn Rabat Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem**

29. This matter has been on the agenda of the Executive Board since its 184th session at the request of a number of Member States, in relation to the decision of the Israeli authorities, announced in February 2010, to include the two above-mentioned sites located in Hebron and Bethlehem in Israel's National Heritage Programme. Since its 185th session, decisions on this item are adopted following a roll-call vote.

30. At its 196th session, the Executive Board adopted 196 EX/Decision 26.111 by which it reiterated that it "deplores the ongoing Israeli construction of private roads for settlers and a separation wall inside the Old City of al-Khama/Hebron and the subsequent denial of freedom of movement and freedom of access to places of worship, and urges Israel, the occupying Power, to end these violations, in compliance with provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions"; the Decision also reiterated that it "deplores the visit of the Israeli President on 2 February 2015 to the illegal settlement in the historic centre of al-Khalil/Hebron, and requests Israel, the occupying power, to prevent such visits". Furthermore, the Decision "regrets the Israeli refusal to comply with 185 EX/Decision 15 which requested the Israeli authorities to remove the two Palestinian sites from its national heritage list and urges Israel, the occupying power, to act in accordance with that decision".

31. The Executive Board also decided to discuss this matter at its 197th session, and invited the Director-General to submit to it a progress report. No information has reached the Secretariat on these matters to date.

32. Furthermore, by letter of 16 June 2015, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine informed the Secretariat about "illegal excavations

and works" within "the rest area located at the South of Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi" indicating that these acts are "extremely serious", in contradiction with the provisions of the 1954 and the 1972 Conventions, and "endanger the authenticity and integrity of the site, and trigger tensions on the ground". The Delegation of Palestine requested this information to be included in the present document. By letter of 7 July 2015, the Secretariat conveyed the concerns of the Palestinian Delegation to the Israeli Delegation.

33. Should additional information become available to the Secretariat regarding the above-mentioned matters, the Director-General is prepared to publish an addendum to this document before the 197th session of the Executive Board in order to inform the Members of the Executive Board of any new developments in that regard.

#### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> A number of initial and rapid assessments were conducted to assess the situation following the end of the war in Gaza Strip in July-August 2014. This included Government's led sectoral assessments, the Multi-Custer Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) and a rapid infrastructure damage assessment, which included UNESCO's participation and input. The results of these preliminary assessments served as the basis for designing the emergency response to the crisis, as well as the Government of Palestine "Palestinian National Reconstruction and Recovery Plan for Gaza 2014-2016", presented at the donors' conference held in Cairo on 12 October 2014. With the aim to plan interventions and implement the programmes for the reconstruction and recovery of the Gaza Strip, the Government of Palestine requested the support of the United Nations, the EU and the World Bank, for the preparation of a Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA). The DNA is comprised of chapters on: Economic development and employment; Governance and institution-building; Social protection and development (which also include, as for UNESCO's areas of work: education, and culture and heritage); and Infrastructure. The DNA is being finalized by the Government and should be soon released.



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**197 EX/32**  
**Add.**

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#### **OCCUPIED PALESTINE**

#### **SUMMARY**

This addendum contains additional information received after the publication of document 197 EX/32.

The information in question pertains only to Part I B (1) of document 197 EX/32.

#### **I**

#### **B. AL-AQSA MOSQUE/AL-HARAM ASH-SHARIF AND ITS SURROUNDINGS**

##### **1. Al-Aqşa Mosque/al-Haram ash-Sharif**

By letters dated 31 August and 8, 15 and 18 September 2015 respectively, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO and the Jordanian authorities brought to the attention of the Director-General the incidences of violent confrontation and restrictions on access related to the Al-Aqra Mosque/al-Haram ash-Sharif site. Recalling that the Al-Aqra Mosque/al-Haram ash-Sharif formed part of the site "Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls", inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981 and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1982, they reiterated the importance of respecting freedoms of worship, expression and movement in regard to access to the sites. The Secretariat has forwarded this information to the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has also spoken on the subject, on 14 September 2015.



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**197 EX/32**  
**Add.2**

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#### **OCCUPIED PALESTINE**

#### **SUMMARY**

This document contains additional information received after the publication of document 197 EX/32 197 EX/32 Add.

By letter dated 14 October 2015, the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO has requested the Secretariat to bring to the attention of Members of the Executive Board the following information with regard to the situation in the World Heritage site of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, in response to the letter addressed by the Secretariat on the subject.

The Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO stated in its letter that *"Israel maintains the status quo in the Old City by respecting the Jordanian Waqf representatives in the Old City and by respecting the various religious sites and monuments of the city"*. The letter also notes concerns with *"incitement regarding the Temple Mount"*. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities referred to the critical situation that currently prevails at the site of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls.

The Secretariat has forwarded this information to the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO as well as to the Jordanian authorities.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002340/234001e.pdf>