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37 C/16
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Item 5.2 of the provisional agenda

JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 36 C/RESOLUTION 43

OUTLINE

Source: 36 C/Resolution 43, 191 EX/Decision 5 (I), 191 EX/Decision 9.

Background: By the above-mentioned resolution, the General Conference invited the Director-General to present, at its 37th session, a progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and to include this item in the agenda of its 37th session. By its decisions 191 EX/5 (I) and 191 EX/9, the Executive Board invited the Director-General to submit to it a progress report on this matter at its 192nd session.

Purpose: The Director-General informs the General Conference about the current situation and the steps taken to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem since its 36th session. After examination of this matter by the Executive Board at its 192nd session, the Director-General is prepared to submit an addendum to the present document.

Decision required: No draft resolution is proposed in the present document.

Context

1. At its 36th session, the General Conference examined document 36 C/16, which presented a report by the Director-General concerning the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, and adopted 36 C/Resolution 43 in which it decided, *inter alia*, to include this item on the agenda of its 37th session. Since the 36th session of the General Conference, the matter was discussed on several occasions (documents and decisions 189 EX/5, 189 EX/8, 190 EX/5, 190 EX/13, 191 EX/5, 191 EX/9, WHC-12/36.COM7A and WHC-13/37.COM7A).

The Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem

2. By 32 C/Resolution 39, the General Conference requested the Director-General to set up a committee of experts to propose guidelines for the establishment of an Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. The World Heritage Centre fielded several technical missions to Jerusalem to elaborate this Action Plan, thanks to the generous financial contribution from the Government of Italy, as well as assistance provided by the Government of Spain. With the agreement of the parties concerned, the Action Plan was elaborated and welcomed in 2007 by the 176th session of the Executive Board and the 34th session of the General Conference, as well as by the World Heritage Committee.

3. The Action Plan comprises 18 projects of which only one has received funding, namely the project for the conservation of the Saint John Prodromos Church funded by the Leventis Foundation of Cyprus in 2009. However, the funds available have proved insufficient to undertake the overall restoration project, and

UNESCO is seeking additional resources to this end.

Establishment of a centre for the restoration of Islamic manuscripts

4. The agreement for the third phase of the project for the establishment of the Centre for the Restoration of Manuscripts of the Haram al-Sharif funded by Norway was signed by the Director-General and the donor in December 2011. The activity was launched in September 2012 and is progressing well. Five additional staff members (including two women) financed by the project have been recruited, and five training sessions on conservation and restoration techniques have been completed. Conservation material has been shipped, and study field trips to restoration centres abroad are being organized for the staff members.

Project for the safeguarding, refurbishment and revitalization of the Islamic Museum

5. Within the framework of the project "Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of the Haram al-Sharif and its Collection" funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the premises of the Islamic Museum have been repaired, and the necessary equipment has been purchased in order to help the inventory process and the digitalization of the collections. The permanent staff members recruited have received training in conservation and museum management, English language and computer skills. The artefacts are being cleaned and conserved, the electronic and photographic inventory is nearly completed, a storage room has been set up, and the archives have been digitalized. The museology phase has also been initiated. The Director of the Museum of Islamic Art in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, selected by UNESCO as coordinator, has proposed an action plan and is currently elaborating the scientific conception of the museum. A development team has produced a report on the expectations of the public, and an architect is working on the design of the museum.

The Mughrabi Ascent to the Haram al-sharif

6. Since early 2007, the archaeological excavations and design for a new access to the Haram al-Sharif through the Mughrabi Gate, carried out by the Israeli authorities, led the Executive Board at its 176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting to request consideration of a separate item concerning the Mughrabi Ascent within the overall context of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee requested that the Director-General and the World Heritage Centre facilitate the dialogue between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts regarding the proposed design of the Mughrabi ascent and that no measures, unilateral or otherwise, should be taken that will affect the authenticity and integrity of the site.

7. In January and February 2008, two technical meetings took place in Jerusalem, between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts, in the presence of representatives from the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and ICOMOS. Despite further decisions from the Executive Board at its 189th, 190th and 191st sessions and by the World Heritage Committee at its 36th session, it has not been possible to organize a follow-up meeting on the subject since 2008. The Israeli and the Jordanian authorities prepared distinctive plans for the reconstruction of the Mughrabi Ascent, which were transmitted to the World Heritage Centre in May 2011. Information received by the Secretariat from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO indicated that the Israeli authorities had resumed work at the Ascent since May 2012. Following 191 EX/Decision 5 (I) of the Executive Board, a meeting between Israeli and Jordanian authorities was to take place at UNESCO Headquarters on 27 May 2013. However, failing to agree on the terms of reference of the reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem to be carried out from 20 to 25 May (see below, paragraph 8), the Israeli authorities considered the meeting to be premature. At the time of drafting of the present document, the meeting recommended by the Executive Board has not taken place.

Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Old City of Jerusalem

8. The World Heritage Committee requested at its 34th (Brasilia, 2010), 35th (UNESCO, 2011) and 36th (Saint Petersburg, 2012) sessions respectively, "a joint World Heritage Centre-ICCROM/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property as referred to in the *Operational Guidelines* to assess and advise on progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan and, in cooperation and consultation with the concerned parties, to identify appropriate operational and financial mechanisms and modalities to strengthen technical cooperation with all concerned parties in the framework of the Action Plan". No response was received to the letters on this matter addressed by the World Heritage Centre to the Israeli authorities on 1 February, 13 April and 27 July 2011 and 9 February 2012.

9. During the 190th session of the Executive Board, Member States expressed their concern about the lack of progress in the implementation of the Executive Board's decisions concerning the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. A meeting of the Bureau of the Executive Board convened by the Chairperson took place on 7 and 8 March 2013 and requested the Director-General to deploy her efforts to achieve progress on this matter. At the 191st session, a consensus was reached among the parties concerned for a mission to the Old City of Jerusalem to take place in May 2013, as acknowledged in 191 EX/Decision 9. The mission was scheduled to be carried out from 20 to 25 May 2013. However, no agreement could be reached on the terms of reference of the mission by the parties concerned. At the time of drafting of the present document, the mission has not yet taken place.

10. At its 37th session (Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2013), the Secretariat presented a state of conservation report on the Old City of Jerusalem (document WHC-12/37 COM7A Add.2), summarizing the information received from the Israeli and Jordanian authorities. Despite many efforts, no consensus could be reached among the concerned parties and the World Heritage Committee adopted Decision 37 COM7A.26 by roll call vote (10 in favour, three against, eight abstentions). The Decision regretted notably the postponement of the above-mentioned mission and requested the Israeli authorities to cease its archaeological excavations in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.

11. Following the adoption of Decision 37 COM7A.26, the Chairperson presented a statement for the record requesting the implementation of a joint WHC/ICCROM/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem as soon as possible and inviting the Director-General to take "necessary measures" to this end. The statement by the Chairperson also requested for it to be brought to the attention of the Executive Board for the record.
