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## IMPLEMENTATION OF 36 C/RESOLUTION 81 and 187 EX/DECISION 41 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

### SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 36 C/Resolution 81 and 187 EX/Decision 41. It summarizes the progress UNESCO made since the 187th session of the Executive Board in providing assistance to the Palestinian people and their educational and cultural institutions, as well as to such institutions in the occupied Syrian Golan.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

No decision is proposed.

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present document reports on progress UNESCO achieved in providing assistance to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant stakeholders in the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, from August to December 2011.

### II. UNESCO'S ASSISTANCE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

2. UNESCO continued working in close cooperation with the rest of the United Nations system. Education and culture are recognized as priority areas in the three-year United Nations Mid-Term Response Plan (2011-2013) for assistance to the Palestinian people and its institutions. UNESCO continued coordinating activities in these fields, and promoting the development of joint programmes in both culture and education.

### EDUCATION

3. During the period under review, UNESCO continued its assistance to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education and Higher Education in priority areas agreed upon during the eighth Joint UNESCO/PA Committee (March 2008). These areas include teacher education, educational planning and management and science education, and strengthened new assistance in the field of inclusive education and early childhood development. UNESCO also reinforced its emergency education programmes for both West Bank and Gaza (for more information see 189 EX/20 "Report on the reconstruction and development of Gaza").

4. Within the programme on "Quality Systems for Quality Teachers" funded by the European Union (€3.6 million), technical assistance was provided for developing systems and operational frameworks needed for the implementation of the Teacher Education Strategy, particularly through support to the Commission for Developing the Teaching Profession. During the period under review, further support was provided to finalize national professional standards. Teachers' Standards Guides are being developed and Principals' Standards are being piloted to ensure that those standards are realistic and usable. Job descriptions of First and Expert Teachers have been developed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Support for Ph.D. students continued to be provided. During the period under review, five Ph.D. students out of the 22 have already defended their thesis while others are in process of doing so. A group of 15 Ministry of Education and Higher Education staff and university members attended a training course in Norway on specialized topics on education, namely on the use of information and communication technologies in education and special needs education. This activity comes under the umbrella of improving and developing professional development of teacher training programmes. In addition, a group of nine

participants attended a specialized international conference in Germany on the use of information and communication technologies in education. This will contribute to the development of capacities for effective deployment of information and communication technologies and e-Learning for teacher professional development. In addition, World Teachers' Day was celebrated on 5 October 2011 with a focus on promoting gender equality.

5. In the area of **educational planning and management**, UNESCO continued to support the strengthening of national education planning capacities in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly regarding the scaling up of basic services in Area C. In collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, UNESCO provided further technical support to finalize a situation analysis as a basis for a strategic plan for Area C to be part of the Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP). The assessment and planning of education provision in Area C is part of the two priorities identified in the revised United Nations strategy (coordinated by UNESCO in the education sector). It is important to note the increased ownership of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the achievements made at policy level as a result of this support: the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has developed a list of 183 schools in Area C and marginalized areas (Hebron old city, Jerusalem suburbs) and new monitoring and evaluation qualitative indicators for marginalized areas including Area C (e.g. fragility indicators). During the annual Education Sector Review with donors (November 2011), it was decided to include Area C in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's yearly plan and monitoring and evaluation report. This support enabled the increased participation of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the Education Cluster, which will contribute to bridging humanitarian and developmental dimensions.

6. As a follow-up to the assessment of existing programmes focusing on **early childhood development and inclusive and child-friendly education** and as the lead agency of the United Nations Education Strategic Area Group in the occupied Palestinian territory, UNESCO, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the United Nations Country Team, finalized the development of the education package to address some gaps of technical assistance within the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in providing quality education for all. The education package, to be implemented in the next two years and covering the West Bank and Gaza, includes clear targets to improve capacities for the development of inclusive and child-friendly programmes from early childhood to adolescence. In addition to capacity and institutional building and community involvement, the package will focus on increasing access to early childhood development services and quality education in inclusive and child-friendly settings through the establishment of 46 pre-schools attached to existing basic education schools in Area C and other vulnerable areas in the West Bank and Gaza. The activities outlined in the United Nations package will be implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in cooperation with UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNSCO, WFP and WHO – with UNESCO as coordinating agency. On behalf of the United Nations agencies and as coordinator of the United Nations Education Strategic Area Group, UNESCO initiated resource mobilization for this education package in December 2011.

7. In the field of **science education**, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in collaboration with UNESCO, the Consulate General of France and the Palestinian association of scientific mediation Al Nayzak, organized the second edition of the Palestinian Science Festival in October 2011. In echo with the United Nations World Science Day for Peace and Development and the yearly science festival organized in France, the Palestinian Science Festival was held, successively, in Ramallah, Hebron, Nablus, Abu Dis and Gaza. Almost 10,000 children from the West Bank and Gaza were able to develop their skills of observation and deduction by approaching scientific experiments proposed by their elders, science students in three major Palestinian universities. Several major scientific fields were discussed during the event: medicine, chemistry, biology, food chemistry, environment, mechanics, genetics, geology, computer science, irrigation and water management, through activities designed and led by university students.

8. In the framework of its work to provide **learning opportunities for marginalized communities**, UNESCO continued its collaboration with the NGO Right to Play to conduct play activities in 13 government schools located in the restricted access area of Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The activities were implemented by training facilitators from the 13 schools, emphasizing youth leader capacity-building, and enabling the implementation of safety, sport and play activities with the children at the targeted schools. This activity was also linked to the Crisis Planning and Management project, as well as the crisis-Disaster Risk Reduction project of the UNESCO – Her Highness Sheikha Mozah's Office programme for Emergency Support to the Education System in Gaza (for more information see 189 EX/20 Report on the reconstruction and development of Gaza).

9. Through its activities in the West Bank and Gaza, UNESCO is providing **psychosocial support to teachers and students**. UNESCO also continued cooperation with the Multipurpose Community Resource Centre, a non-formal education centre in Nablus. The Centre organized various educational activities during summer camps. One hundred and forty-three children benefited from catch-up courses (English, French, science, mathematics), games and sports activities. A group of 30 children aged between 7 and 13 from the Old City, Balata village and Balata Refugees Camp participated in the activities of rehabilitation of the archaeological site of Tall Balata, together with a group of 20 young men and women aged 15 to 18.

10. UNESCO also continued to be an active player in **United Nations coordination structures**, where it harmonized its humanitarian work with other actors through the Humanitarian Country Team and its subsidiary structures, mainly the Education Cluster, as well as through specific working groups of the Protection Cluster, such as the Child Protection Working Group or the Displacement Working Group. In this regard UNESCO took active part in the preparation of the 2012 Consolidated Appeal, the drafting and the implementation of the Humanitarian Country Team's advocacy strategy, and the inter-cluster rapid response strategy. Activities were conducted with a view to consolidate a solid and seamless linkage between humanitarian and development activities; in this regard, useful lessons learned from the intervention in Gaza are being collected to inform similar interventions in the West Bank as appropriate, particularly those concerning Area C. The experience with the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies' Minimum Standards is called to be particularly useful and will be an important contribution to concerted efforts by all actors.

## CULTURE

11. The UNESCO Ramallah Office continues its strategic cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, mainly through the provision of technical assistance as well as building national capacities of relevant institutions. Alignment to national priorities in the field of culture (Palestinian National Plan 2011-2013) aims at building the Palestinian State and contributing to the attainment of MDGs 1, 3 and 7.

12. Over the past nine years, following the adoption by the World Heritage Committee of decision 26 COM 6.1 to safeguard Palestinian cultural and natural heritage (Budapest, 2002), UNESCO has been undertaking capacity-building and preparatory efforts to increase cooperation in the field of culture. These efforts are now coming to fruition: a nomination dossier for the cultural heritage site *Birthplace of Jesus: the Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem* has been finalized, and a number of local professionals have been trained in preparing World Heritage-related documents. In the area of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO provided technical assistance to develop the framework for the inventory of folktales, traditional dance, fishing culture and traditional agricultural knowledge as part of the implementation of the MDG-F Programme for Culture and Development, partially financed by the Government of Spain and UNESCO's regular programme budget.

13. A four-day workshop for "**Developing a National Charter for the Conservation and Management of Palestinian Heritage**" was carried out in December 2011, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, ICCROM, and several local cultural heritage organizations, with the support of the MDG-Fund and the Government of Malta. The workshop produced agreed guidelines and material for the definition of the Palestinian Heritage Law for the effective protection of cultural properties.

14. Within the framework of the MDG-Fund, the **Sebastiya Integrated Conservation and Management Plan** gathers all relevant information on the

protection of archaeological sites and features, historic urban fabric and cultural landscape, and is expected to be completed by March 2012. The design of the light tourist facility at the entrance of the archaeological site of Sebastiya was approved by the relevant authorities, while salvage excavations are ongoing at the building site. UNESCO through the MDG-Fund also continues to support the Freedom Theatre Acting School in Jenin Refugee Camp – a three-year training programme of high professional standards covering all aspects of theatre and drama (students are trained to become actors, directors, producers, theatre managers, playwrights and drama teachers).

15. During the period under review, three projects were brought to completion, namely: (i) “Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan”, funded by the Government of Italy, the results of which will be published in March 2012; (ii) the “Nablus Old City Centre Renovation, Restoration and adaptive re-use of Khan al Wakala” funded by the European Union, expected to be inaugurated in March 2012, which includes the rehabilitation of the khan (caravanserai) and its refurbishment as an urban facility and incubator of compatible economic activities, is contributing to the revitalization of a quarter of the Old City particularly affected by marginalization; and (iii) the “Safeguarding Historical and Environmental Resources Towards Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate”. Within the latter, the key output, namely the “Battir Cultural Landscape Plan”, was awarded the “Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes. Celebrations for the prize took place in Battir in October 2011 in the presence of the Greek authorities.

16. Within the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS, mainly funded by the Government of Japan) the Joint Programme on “Livelihood Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable Rural and Refugee Communities in the Jordan Valley”, has pursued and the first building has been completed. Its aim is to show the advantages of earthen architecture through the use of mud-bricks produced locally. The second National Advisory Forum, held in November 2011 at Akbet Jaber Refugee Camp (UNRWA), near the newly built community centre for women and children, enabled the visit of the Resident Coordinator and other United Nations heads of agencies, who could appreciate the execution and involvement of women in the production of the mud-bricks, job creation and acquisition of skills for members of marginalized communities, on-the-job training for young architects. (See Facebook page [www.facebook.com/pages/Reviving-Earth-Architecture-in-the-Jordan-Valley-Palestine/248639418496868](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Reviving-Earth-Architecture-in-the-Jordan-Valley-Palestine/248639418496868)). The programme is planning to build five other mud-brick structures for the benefit of local communities.

17. In November 2011, UNESCO commissioned a study for the sustainable use of resources and technology for earthen architecture (e.g. recycling of water, solar and wind energy), whose principles and applications will be employed in the buildings to be constructed within the framework of the programme.

18. In the field of museum development, Phase III of the “**Riwaya Museum – Bethlehem**”, funded by the Government of Norway, has been concluded. During autumn 2011, major renovation works were completed and the foundations for future governance were laid. In December 2011, after endorsement of the document by the Steering Committee, UNESCO submitted the proposal for the finalization of the intervention, focusing on the multimedia production (Phase IV).

19. Activities are ongoing for the enhancement of two archaeological sites of potential “Outstanding Universal Value”, such as Tell Balata in Nablus (funded by the Dutch Government) and Hisham’s Palace in Jericho (supported by the Swiss Government). The design of the visitors’ centre at Tell Balata and the House of the Mosaics at Hisham’s Palace are progressing.

20. During January 2012, UNESCO was able to negotiate with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) a three-year programme for “Local Development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of the Palestinian historic built environment”, which put together the four key cultural heritage organizations active in the country since several years (Riwaq Centre for Architectural Conservation, the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation in Bethlehem, the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, and the Welfare Association Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Programme). The agreement will enhance cooperation between civil society and the Palestinian government in a vital sector for socio-economic development.

## **SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES**

21. Thanks to the Government of Norway, as well as through the MDG Trust Fund “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the occupied Palestinian territory” programme, UNESCO continued supporting the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Palestinian society through the activities of the Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre. During the period under review, the centre accomplished four studies linked to education: the conditions of community college students and their professional and academic future; investigation of representation of gender in Arabic textbooks used at the 4th grade in Palestinian governmental schools; the analytical study of educational policies and its effect on gender power relations; and the effect of family socio-economic characteristics on inter-gender differences in university fields of study. In addition, two fact sheets were completed on social attitudes towards people with disabilities from a gender perspective and on Palestinian legislation and laws.

22. The Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Centre continued its capacity development interventions and finalized four long-term training courses; action research, project management, gender units training and the gender audit. A manual was also produced to be used by women NGOs in campaigns on combating violence against women, as well as a manual on gender analysis, needs, roles, mainstreaming, gender audit and gender budget to be used by gender units at the Palestinian ministries. Several workshops were organized by the Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Centre to advocate on women’s rights, notably in collaboration with the Palestinian Legislative Council to present fact sheets on “Laws that are preventing women from participating in the labour market”, and “Laws that prevent women from decision-making and call for actions”.

23. Within the framework of the MFG Trust Fund Programme, several activities continued such as training for national counterparts and women’s organizations on research findings, regulatory frameworks and advocacy, awareness-raising activities for teachers, students and parents on gender equality and violence against girls and boys. Finally, a manual on combating violence in schools was developed to be implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

## **COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

24. Under a wider project financed by the Finnish Government, the Communication and Information Sector continued to support the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms. During the reporting period, MADA launched its new website, published press releases and monthly reports on press freedom violations, developed two research studies, and delivered five lectures for media students. Notably, the Centre has created, jointly with other organizations, the Arab Network on Freedom of Expression. Also under the Finnish-funded project, Birzeit University’s Media Development Centre facilitated internships for women journalists in the West Bank and Gaza. In turn, Filastiniyat supported networking through the Palestinian Female Journalists’ Club through meetings focused on professional experience sharing, the use of social media and the challenges faced by female journalists. Filastiniyat also facilitated a videoconference connecting journalists in Gaza and the Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate in Ramallah, as well as internships for women journalists in the West Bank and Gaza. It produced a Palestinian female journalists’ directory and a women professionals’ directory for the media, among other actions also financed through the Finnish contribution.

25. The project "Strengthening Palestinian Participatory Democracy and Dialogue" (\$290,000), funded by the United Nations Democracy Funds was successfully completed, while UNESCO's main partner AMIN Network complemented this project with the International Programme for the Development of Communication funds for 2011; "Citizen Media: a tool for change", an ongoing project which shall end by March 2012, included workshops on advanced social media techniques targeted journalists, community members and bloggers in the West Bank and Gaza, aiming at providing an alternative media platform to promote freedom of expression, pluralism, social change and active participatory dialogue. In the same context of IPDC-funded projects, "Enhancing women's roles and voices in media", has been also successfully completed by the first women's community radio in the occupied Palestinian territory, Nissa FM radio station, aiming towards strengthening the skills of female community reporters, especially those from rural areas.

26. With regular programme funding, UNESCO supported training on conflict-sensitive reporting in the West Bank and Gaza, in partnership with Birzeit University. UNESCO also contributed to build capacities for coverage on humanitarian issues and development assistance within the Palestine News and Information Agency (WAFA).

### **III. UNESCO's ASSISTANCE IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN**

27. The scholarship programme for Syrian students in the occupied Syrian Golan financed from the Japanese Funds-in-Trust was launched in July 2009 to grant 24 scholarships for four academic years to the students from the occupied Syrian Golan. Implementation of the project continued over the reporting period. For the 2010-2011 academic year, there were a total of 16 student beneficiaries. However, only four students from this group were found eligible for the current academic year (2011-2012). The advertisement for the available scholarship for the 2011-2012 academic year was announced in September 2011. The Ministry of Higher Education received only six applications from currently registered students, two of which were found to be eligible as per the selection criteria set in the project's manual of procedures. Therefore, for the 2011-2012 academic year, a total of six students will be granted scholarships.