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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication from the Delegation of the United Kingdom in reply to the enquiry made concerning the Palestine Museum in Jerusalem.  
The following communication and enclosure has been received on 5 February 1948 from Mr. Fletcher-Cooke of the United Kingdom Delegation.

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COPY

UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Empire State Building  
New York 1, N.Y.

4th February 1948

Dear Bunche,

May I refer you to your letter of 29th January in which you enclose, a letter from the President of the Rockefeller Foundation on the subject of the Palestine Museum in Jerusalem.

I have now received the following information from Jerusalem, which you will no doubt bring to the notice of the Commission:

- (1) The Museum was built at the entire cost of Mr. John D. Rockefeller Junior on the understanding that responsibility for the erection of the Museum would be assumed by the Government of Palestine, who were also to be responsible for its subsequent administration.
- (2) The land on which the Museum was built was contributed by the Government of Palestine.
- (3) In 1930, the Museum was endowed by Mr. Rockefeller in sums originally amounting to one million dollars (at that time LP 205,000).
- (4) On 30th June, 1947, the endowment fund was valued at LP 320,000, and this produces an annual income of approximately LP 9,500.
- (5) If the donor's intentions have been correctly interpreted, the project was not only to endow, an archeological museum in Palestine but also a Research Centre for the whole Middle East.
- (6) For these reasons, the Museum and its endowment fund have been considered as one of the ordinary assets of the Government of Palestine and should not now be regarded as falling automatically to whatever successor administration may be set up in Jerusalem.
- (7) As the endowment fund did not provide sufficient to pay for the full cost of maintaining the Museum, additional funds have been provided from the General Revenues of Palestine.

The Government of Palestine is at present in consultation with the President of the Rockefeller Foundation as to the future of the Museum and I enclose for the information of the Commission a copy of a letter to the President of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Yours sincerely,  
(Signed) J. Fletcher-Cooke

Dr. Ralph J. Bunche,  
Principal Secretary to the United Nations  
Commission on Palestine,  
United Nations,  
Lake Success.

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4th February, 1948

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I have been instructed by the Government of Palestine to address you on the subject of the future of the Palestine Museum in Jerusalem.

In view of the termination of the Mandate, it appears to the Government of Palestine to be desirable that the Museum should be placed in an independent position. With this end in view, the Government of Palestine is prepared, if the Rockefeller Foundation agrees, to introduce legislation providing for a Board of Trustees to hold the building, its contents the land upon which it stands and the endowment fund, and to administer the Museum and the fund. It is proposed that this Board should be international in character and should include representatives of the principal archeological institutions interested in the Near East, namely, the Oriental Institute of Chicago, American School of Oriental Research, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, the British Museum, the British Academy, Scandinavian Institution, together with two Palestinian and two Near Eastern representatives.

You will appreciate that these are merely suggestions as to the composition of the board and the Government of Palestine could value your observations on this point.

Since time may not permit of the establishment of a full Board of Trustees before the termination of the Mandate, the legislation proposed might include provisions for an interim Executive Committee to assume general responsibility to take over the endowment fund and to expend the interest derived there from on the safe custody of the Museum and its contents.

It is understood that if an approach was made to Mr. L.S. Iliffe, the present Keeper of the Museum, he would be willing to remain in Jerusalem after the termination of the Mandate.

The interest from the endowment fund will require to be augmented from some source if the full activities of the Museum are to be maintained, but the interest alone will provide for one British officer, two competent Arab assistants and about twenty subordinate care-taking staff, which should be sufficient to safeguard the Museum over a short period.

I am to add that the Government of Palestine would be grateful for an early indication as to whether these suggestions commend themselves in principle to the Foundation. If you would be good enough to address your reply to me, I will arrange for it to be telegraphed to the Government of Palestine so that the necessary action can be taken in Jerusalem without undue delay;

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
(J. Fletcher-Cooke)  
Under Secretary, Government of Palestine

The President,  
Rockefeller Foundation,  
49 West Forty-Ninth Street,  
New York 20,  
New York.

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