



Executive Board

Hundred and ninety-sixth session

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OCCUPIED PALESTINE

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to [195 EX/Decision 5 I \(D\)](#), by which item entitled "Occupied Palestine" was included in the 196th 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.

1. Pursuant to the 195 EX/Decision 5 I (D), the present document provides a report on recent developments since the 195th session of the Executive Board.

I. JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 37 C/RESOLUTION 44

2. As indicated in previous documents on this item, only one project, concerning the conservation of the church of St John Prodromos, has been funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation of Cyprus under the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem (2007). Based on UNESCO's study and project design for the restoration of the Church, the A.G. Leventis Foundation and the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate cooperated in the implementation of the restoration works. A mission by the World Heritage Centre to Jerusalem was carried out from 27 November to 1 December 2013 in order to proceed with the closure of the project on the Church of St John the Baptist, which was launched in 2009. The project has now been terminated and the remaining funds were returned to the donor in December 2014.

3. 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.

4. The project "Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of the Haram al-Sharif and its Collection" started in 2008 with funding from 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 with the inventory process and the digitization of the collections. From 2011 to present, nine training sessions were held and permanent staff members have been trained in conservation and museum management, English language and computer programmes. In addition, a storage room was set up and the archives were digitized. The electronic and photographic inventory was completed. The museological phase started in September 2012, with the consultant team selected by UNESCO, and is finalising the scientific concept and design planning of the museum, in consultation with the authorities. An audience development team produced a report on the expectations of the public. Selected artefacts were cleaned and conserved, in view of the production of a new permanent exhibition of the museum. Progress review as well as planning for future activities in 2015 was undertaken during the UNESCO consultation missions in October 2014 and in February 2015.

5. During the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee, Decision 38 COM 7A.4 on the state of conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls was adopted. By this decision, the World Heritage Committee expressed inter alia its deep concern over the persistence of the illegal excavations and works conducted in the Old City of Jerusalem and on both sides of its Walls; as well as its concern on Israel's plans to build a two-line cable car system to connect the Mughrabi Quarter with the Mount of Olives.

6. The State of conservation reports on the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls are currently being prepared in view of the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee (Bonn, June-July 2015).

7. By letter dated 27 January 2015, the permanent delegation of Palestine has brought to the attention of the Director-General that on 20 January a delegation of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs entered the Temple Mount/Haram-es-Sharif, stating that "*this is a flagrant violation of the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols*".

By letter dated 5 March 2015, the Permanent Delegation of Israel has provided clarification about the visit, stating that *"no Israeli diplomat entered the compound in order to damage the site and their entry to the compound did not risk at all the authenticity or the integrity of the Old city of Jerusalem"*.

II. THE ASCENT TO THE MUGHRABI GATE IN THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM AND 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

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Regarding the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem, by 195 EX/Decision 5 Part I (D), the Executive Board requested the Director-General to dispatch the necessary expertise to assess damage incurred through the conduct of recent Israeli works on the site. At the time of the preparation of this document, UNESCO was not in a position to undertake such an assessment.

11. 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, the Executive Board by 195 EX/Decision 5 Part I (D) invited the Director-General to take the necessary measures to implement the reactive monitoring mission and experts meeting in accordance with World Heritage Committee decision 34 COM 7A.20 and prior to its 196th session. The Executive Board also requested that the report and recommendations of the mission, as well as the report of the technical meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent in Paris, be presented to the concerned parties before the 196th session of the Executive Board. At the time of the preparation of this document, this monitoring mission and experts meeting could not be undertaken.

III. THE TWO PALESTINIAN SITES OF AL-HARAM AL-IBRAHIMI/TOMB OF THE PATRIARCHS IN AL-KHALIL/HEBRON AND THE BILAL IBN RABAH MOSQUE/RACHEL'S TOMB IN BETHLEHEM

12. This matter has been on the agenda of the Executive Board since its 184th session at the request of a number of Member States.

13. Further to the decision of its 194th session to inscribe this item on its agenda at its 195th session, the Executive Board, by 195 EX/Decision 5 (I) (D): "deplored 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 urged Israel to end these violations, in compliance with provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions.

14. The Executive Board decided to discuss this matter at its 196th session, and invited the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.

15. By letters dated 16 February and 20 February 2015, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine brought to the attention of the Secretariat its concerns about a visit by the President of Israel to the historical centre of Al-Khalil/Hebron in February, and about a possible visit by Prime Minister of Israel to the same location, claiming this in an act which is *"in total contradiction with the provisions of the 1954 Convention"*. This preoccupation has been transmitted to the Permanent Delegation of Israel for appropriate clarification.

16. At the time of the present report, the Secretariat has not been informed of any further developments on this matter. 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 196th session of the Executive Board.

IV. THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA

17. At the 195th session of the Executive Board, the Director-General reported on UNESCO's

response to the Gaza crisis, covering the period until early October 2014 ([document 195 EX/29 and its Addendum](#)). This part of the document therefore provides an update on UNESCO's response, covering the period from October 2014 onwards.

18. Pursuant to 195 EX/Decision 5.D, the Director-General has convened on 11 March an information meeting on UNESCO's action regarding the reconstruction and development of Gaza in the context of the United Nations system-wide response.

19. With technical support from UNESCO, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, through the National Partners Committee finalized the EFA National Assessment for Education for All report.

20. UNESCO and the Ministry organized the National EFA Consultation meeting for Palestine under the title "National Education for All Consultation for Palestine: inclusive and quality education post-2015" in both Ramallah and Gaza on 8 December and gathered around 270 participants from the education community.

21. With financial support from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, libraries were established in Gaza City and in Khan Younis to support vulnerable students by providing the necessary textbooks and other resource materials. In addition, a toolkit was developed for the implementation of the right to higher education advocacy campaign, and each library will implement it according to its work-plan. Both library premises have been designed and equipped to be accessible for people with disabilities.

22. Between September 2014 and January 2015, in collaboration with Enabling Education Network (EENET) and in close coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNESCO conducted the assessment of damages to higher education institutions and facilities in Gaza. The exercise supported the Ministry as well as Higher Education Institutions in the identification of critical needs after the war in Gaza in July-August 2014, and in the development of a response plan for the higher education sector.

23. With the support of UNESCO, the Education Sector Working Group finalized in January 2015 the Education chapter of the Gaza Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA), assessing the impact of the recent conflict in Gaza on the Education Sector as a way of laying the groundwork for a recovery strategy.

24. UNESCO proposed intervention in Gaza was included in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, with the objective of ensuring that schools and higher educational institutions are able to fulfil their crucial role as protective spaces for students and communities.

Culture

25. Further to the preliminary assessment of damage to culture heritage sites and in response to the request of the Palestinian government to the United Nations, UNESCO has participated in the preparation of the Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) for the Culture sector in Gaza Strip after the July-August 2014 conflict. UNESCO undertook field surveys and sites' observation to assess damage and losses in built cultural heritage and cultural institutions in Gaza, and proposed, in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Culture and in consultation with the relevant local cultural institutions, a three-year recovery framework that targets cultural heritage sites and cultural institutions for restoration, reconstruction and resumption of services. The total recovery needs for the coming three years in the culture sector is estimated at \$12.5 million.

Communication and Information

26. UNESCO supported Filastiniyat, an NGO promoting women's rights in the media, in providing psychological counselling and capacity

building on gender-sensitive reporting in the aftermath of the conflict in Gaza. This was achieved within the framework of an IPDC-funded project to empower Filastiniyat's Female Journalists' Club to promote freedom of expression and introduce women's discourse into the public sphere. The target group of this project were 265 female journalists and their families, who benefitted indirectly from the psychosocial counselling workshops and related activities.

27. UNESCO also supported Wattan TV in providing training on social media techniques, communication and networking. The project's participation was 10 core staff and 10 volunteers (out of which, five were from Gaza). Additional skills imparted included writing and storytelling skills, filming techniques, and basic editing of images, video and text. The project marked the first step towards the establishment of the Wattan Citizen Journalist Network, which aims to provide an open and democratic platform for active social media users, bloggers and citizen journalists in Palestine and enable them to publish articles and media content having undergone professional editing treatment.

Gender Equality

28. Through the Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre, 21 representatives of non-governmental organizations from Gaza completed a 192-hours capacity development program for master researchers on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The focus of this training was on policy-oriented research from a gender perspective. The selected participants now form a core master researchers' network. A training toolkit has been developed in partnership with the Institute of Women Studies of the Birzeit University and is being finalized in English and Arabic.

29. UNESCO is supporting psycho-social support and recreational activities for women and children in the UNRWA shelters, building on the outcomes of the advocacy campaign on Gender Based Violence through community theatre at the governorate levels, which was conducted in the West Bank. The activity, conducted in partnership with the Theatre Day Productions TDP in Gaza, will start in February 2015.

30. UNESCO is also supporting research on the impacts of the July-August 2014 Gaza conflict on gender relations in Gaza, focusing on women's economic situation and their role as actors of transformation and reconstruction. The activity is conducted in cooperation with UN Women and UNFPA.

Youth

31. Within the framework of the regional EU-funded "Networks of the Mediterranean Youth" Programme, the national mapping to identify active youth organizations has been finalized in Gaza. The mapping was conducted through a workshop of youth organizations in Gaza, held on 30 November 2014 in cooperation with UNFPA, and an online mapping tool targeting Gaza youth organizations working in the areas of youth policies, legislations, employment, media and advocacy.