



Executive Board

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IMPLEMENTATION OF 38 C/RESOLUTION 72 AND 199 EX/DECISION 20 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 38 C/Resolution 72 and [199 EX/20](#). The present document provides a report on developments since the 199th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 27.

1. The present document reports on assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant Palestinian stakeholders. The reporting period is from January 2016 to June 2016.
 2. Detailed information on UNESCO assistance in Gaza, in particular its response to the current humanitarian crisis, is provided in document [200 EX/25](#) ("Occupied Palestine"). It is therefore not reported on in the present document.
- Education**
3. During the period under review, the UNESCO Ramallah Office continued its support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in Palestine, providing technical support, building capacities of national institutions, implementing projects in the West Bank and Gaza, and providing support in the areas of planning, management and coordination of the Education Sector.
 4. Building on the Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) 2014-2019 by MoEHE, to which UNESCO actively contributed, and within the reactivation of the **Education Sector Working Group** (ESWG), in its capacity as technical adviser of the Group, UNESCO has been very active in supporting the work of the group in its preparation for the quarterly meetings and in the preparation of the Annual Sector Review. Two ESWG meetings took place as scheduled, in February and in May 2016. The latter meeting also contained the two-day Annual Sector Review (ASR), the most important dates in the calendar of the Education Sector. UNESCO remains a key member of the following sub-thematic working groups of the ESWG: non-formal education; pre-school education; basic education; secondary education; WET; higher education; education in emergency; curricula reform, inclusive education, and management reform. Moreover, UNESCO is the co-chair for the groups on Inclusive Education and on Higher Education.
 5. In May 2016, UNESCO concluded its provision of technical assistance on the new draft law on General Education, drawing on its leading expertise on this issue and, as the convening agency for the UN sister agencies working in the field of education and the Joint Financing Partners of the Education Sector to ensure the full alignment of the law to the UNESCO and United Nations standards and United Nations international legal frameworks and human rights international obligations ratified/accessed by Palestine (such as the *UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (CESCR), the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) and the *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (CRPD). The law has now passed through several readings of the Cabinet and is awaiting formal adoption. The Minister of Education and Higher Education conveyed a special message of gratitude to UNESCO for its continuous support on this issue (See: *The Report on the Annual Sector Review organized by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Palestine*).'
 6. UNESCO continued to support the Palestinian Government in its **reporting to the various international human rights normative instruments** recently accessed by Palestine in close liaison with relevant sister United Nations agencies and other international stakeholders, most notably the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (CESCR), the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) and the *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (CRPD), with special focus on the educational components of the legal obligations to the United Nations Treaty Bodies arising from the accession to such treaties.

7. As part of implementing inclusive education in Palestine, UNESCO has continued to successfully coordinate the **Education for All (EFA) package** in Palestine after the completion of the first phase. An evaluation is now taking place in order to highlight successes and provide recommendations for a possible second phase of the package. In addition, and as part of the implementation of the EFA package, UNESCO continued the implementation of a project funded by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), with further support by Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), and jointly implemented with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The project started in August 2014 and has already benefited some 30,000 students and more than 13,000 teachers. A series of final capacity-building workshops for more than 200 teachers, principals and supervisors took place in April and May 2016, and certificates have been distributed at the completion of the training modules on 28 May 2016. In view of the successes achieved, all partners agreed on the importance of expanding those trainings to a possible phase II of the project, to include another 200 schools both in the West Bank and Gaza.

8. UNESCO continued to support **vulnerable university students** in Palestine. With the financial support from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, UNESCO continued to consolidate twelve libraries, ten in West Bank and two in Gaza. These libraries support vulnerable higher education students through providing them with study and research library facilities, textbooks and other resource materials. Since the last reporting period, the number of users has been constantly increasing, and the libraries are carrying out a country-wide advocacy campaign on the rights to, in and through higher education in Palestine, with a particular focus on discrimination and disability as per UNESCO's membership of the *United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNPRPD) and as an additional support to the national efforts to effectively implement the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD).

Culture

9. During the period under review, UNESCO continued its cooperation with Palestine in the field of Culture, providing technical assistance, building national capacities of relevant Palestinian institutions, and implementing projects on the ground.

10. The fourth year of the project **"Local Development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of the historic built environment in Palestine"**, funded by the Government of Sweden through Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), has been completed with successful achievements on the ground. The project helped to develop technical capacities of local architects, engineers and young professionals in the field of cultural heritage preservation through the completed rehabilitation of eight historic sites and the ongoing works in another four sites in the Palestinian cities and rural localities, added to 40 sites rehabilitated and handed over beneficiaries to provide public uses. The interventions in the historic environment in Palestine facilitated access to cultural heritage assets and contributed to the socioeconomic development of the targeted communities. Thirteen architects and engineers completed internships and on-the-job training programmes, added to 197 professionals and technicians already trained in the previous phases of the project.

11. The process of revision of the **Palestinian Draft Cultural Heritage Law** was pursued in close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities following previous workshops and meetings on the same subject. A new draft law is being developed and will be discussed with governmental and civil society experts.

12. As part of the **#Unite4Heritage campaign in Palestine**, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), An Najah National University and youth institutions in Nablus organized in February 2016 a voluntary community day comprising two events. The first event involved students from the urban design course from the Department of Architecture at An Najah National University, to present their work on developing conceptual designs to conserve and reuse the Roman Hippodrome site in the city centre, while the second event mobilized over 70 local youth for the cleaning work at Tell Balata Archaeological Park in Nablus. Both sites are part of "Old Town of Nablus and its environs" included on the Palestinian Tentative List. In addition, a three-minute presentation and promotion clip were produced aiming at showcasing the main activities that have been carried out in Palestine with the **#Unite4Heritage** campaign, focusing on youth role in the preservation of heritage. The presentation clip is uploaded at UNESCO's social media: Twitter, YouTube channel, and #Unite4Heritage campaign website, and is available through the following links:

<https://twitter.com/UNESCO/status/732952291767136257>;

<http://www.unite4heritage.org/>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_rYoT--1mY&feature=youtu.be

Communication and Information

13. In the context of support provided for the **adoption of a Right of Access to Information Law** for Palestine, and following the training workshops that were held on the right to information, UNESCO organized with the relevant national authorities, during the first six months of 2016, a set of advocacy meetings for the promotion of the draft law, as an integral component towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.10.

14. UNESCO's activities to support and promote gender equality in Palestine are implemented through its Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC), funded by the Government of Norway.

15. An on-line library and database that collects all research and data on gender in Palestine which includes relevant regional and international data has been created and is available at the following web address www.pwrdc.ps, supported by an online calendar for gender related activities.

16. UNESCO supported a broad consultation among key stakeholders and relevant academic, governmental and non-governmental institutions working in the field of gender equality in Palestine, in view of the transition of PWRDC from a research and documentation resource centre towards a gender-related policy think tank (Gender Policy Institute). Preparatory work included draft by-laws for the new phase for PWRDC and the main legal and institutional steps for the setting-up of the centre as a semi-independent institution with its own legal capacity, in accordance with the relevant national legislation. With its new scope of activity, the Centre will be the only one of its kind in Palestine to serve across the region as a unique platform for monitoring and evaluation, policy formulation and exchange between national public authorities, academia and non-governmental institutions working in the field of gender.

17. UNESCO's support included field visits to the PWRDC by: (i) a gender research analyst from the Institute of Women Policy Research (IWPR) in order to assist with addressing outstanding challenges related to the new Centre and as part of building up the international network of the renewed Centre (23-25 May 2016); and (ii) of the Head of the Fellowship scheme from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), in the United Kingdom, a leading independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues, with the aim to explore the possibility of hosting a fellowship for two years to help the transitional phase of PWRDC and build the research units of the Centre and of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). A Fellow has been selected and is expected to assume her functions in September 2016.

18. As a key component of the transition of the PWRDC into a Gender Policy Institute, UNESCO submitted a proposal to the

Government of Norway for an interim phase, while the Centre acquires its greater autonomy in view of reaching a semi-independent status.

19. The new 18-month phase of the PWRDC is expected to start in August 2016. **Youth (the NET-MED project)**

20. UNESCO Ramallah has provided a series of capacity development trainings for Net-MED Youth working group members in the fields of mainstreaming gender and people with disabilities in youth activities, as well as youth-targeted human rights-based approach and advocacy.

21. UNESCO Ramallah, in partnership with UN Women, has supported the March 2016 issue of the widely disseminated monthly magazine "This Week in Palestine". This issue was dedicated to promote gender equality in Palestine. Various partners from civil society organizations have contributed to articles and op-eds on that issue, in addition to United Nations and European Union officials.

22. UNESCO Ramallah has supported Young Palestinian Filmmakers Association through facilitating the participation of two young female filmmakers in Palestine at the twelfth Asian International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) Film Festival in New Delhi, India from 3 to 6 March 2016.

23. NET-MED Youth celebrated World Radio Day (13 February) and International Women's Day (8 March) by holding a live-broadcasted youth debate at one of the radio stations in the West bank, with joint broadcasting to another three university radio stations in the West Bank and Gaza. The debate, which gathered more than 60 university students, discussed the right to gender equality and gender-related laws in Palestine.

24. In 2016, UNESCO partnered with Ashtar Theatre Productions in Ramallah to hold an interactive theatrical performance to celebrate World Press Freedom Day (WPDF) on 3 May. The performance included debates and interactions between the actors and the young journalists, and representatives of youth organizations and media policy-makers on the theme of the freedom of expression and the right to access information. In Gaza, the World Press Freedom Day was celebrated through a three-day media campaign, organized by a group of Net-MED Youth media working group members (See further details in document 200 EX/25). The campaign consisted of a social media contest, radio episodes, and interviews with media professionals and a ceremony to showcase the main challenges and obstacles that hinder freedom of expression and access to information in Gaza. The WPDF celebration in the West Bank and Gaza were organized in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

25. In order to ensure that Palestinian youth are included in the decision-making processes of national youth-related policies, UNESCO, through the NET-MED Youth Project, will be supporting the Higher Council of Youth and Sports (HCYS), in its capacity as the national governmental body in charge of youth and sports in Palestine, to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between HCYS and key youth organizations in the West Bank and Gaza, with a view to ensuring their full involvement and active participation in the development of the *National Youth Strategy (2017-2022)* and its inclusion in the *National Policy Agenda (2017-2022)* by the Government of Palestine, currently being prepared by the Prime Minister's Office.

Occupied Syrian Golan

26. The project for Syrian students in the occupied Syrian Golan launched in 2009 and financed by Japanese Funds-In-Trust, ended in March 2013. Without further extrabudgetary resources, this assistance could not be provided over the reporting period.

Proposed decision

27. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines: The Executive Board,

1. Recalling previous decisions concerning "Educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories",

2. Having examined document 200 EX/26,

3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 201st session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.