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# 36 C

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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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### JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 35 C/RESOLUTION 49

#### OUTLINE

**Source:** 35 C/Resolution 49, 186 EX/Decision 11.

**Background:** By the above-mentioned resolution, the General Conference invited the Director-General to present, at its 36th 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 36th session. By its 186 EX/Decision 5 (II) and 186 EX/Decision 11, the Executive Board invited the Director-General to submit to it a progress report on this matter at its 187th 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 35th session.

## CONTEXT

1. At its 35th session, the General Conference examined document 35 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 35 C/Resolution 49 in which it decided, *inter alia*, to include this item on the agenda of its 36th session.

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

2. By its 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 from the Government of Spain. With the agreement of the concerned parties, the Action Plan was elaborated and welcomed in 2007 by the Executive Board and the General Conference, as well as by the World Heritage Committee.

3. With the remaining funds, two activities were implemented in 2009 and 2010-2011. Within the framework of the UNESCO Special Project “Young People’s Participation in World Heritage Preservation and Promotion”, cultural activities such as awareness workshops, lectures, and site visits were organized in Jerusalem, with the participation of 10 to 16 year-old young people, and teachers and educators from different Jerusalem schools. In addition, the Housing Rehabilitation Manual prepared during the first phase is being tested in the Al Saha compound within the framework of a project carried out by the Franciscan Custodia of the Holy Land.

4. UNESCO has received a donation of €270,000 from the A.G. Leventis Foundation in Cyprus for the restoration of the Saint John Prodromos church in Jerusalem. Following the approval by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of the commencement of work, the project was initiated by the World Heritage Centre in mid-2009. The activities of the first phase focused on technical studies and archaeological research in order to elaborate a detailed restoration project which has been finalized and its implementation should begin shortly. However, the archaeological soundings revealed structural disorders due in particular to sanitation issues which will require additional funding to be solved in the future.

5. At its 186th session, the Executive Board was informed (186 EX/11) of an initiative by the Director-General to convey a brainstorming session which took place on 14 October 2010 with Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian experts, with the aim of reactivating the Action Plan and designing the potential framework for a UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS mission to Jerusalem that had been requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session (Brasilia, 2010). The group of experts recommended the following priority actions:

- (a) building confidence and find ways to establish cooperation;
- (b) updating the Action Plan, its work plan and timetable;
- (c) With reference to paragraph 11 of Decision 34 COM 7A20, identifying appropriate mechanisms for UNESCO (e.g. a technical team and/or unit) to improve technical assistance for the implementation of the Action Plan and the safeguarding of the values of the site, by providing advice and support for the process of granting permits and facilitating safeguarding work and site access;
- (d) Develop awareness-raising programmes, academic cooperation and cultural activities, targeting youth and women.

### **Development of an architectural heritage conservation institute**

6. The project for the development of an Architectural Heritage Preservation Institute in Jerusalem, funded by the European Commission (€700,000), and implemented in partnership with the Welfare Association, has been completed. On the basis of the curriculum developed by ICCROM, the Welfare Association has organized several short intensive training workshops and long-term core courses for contractors and practitioners. It also produced two publications and training manuals, created a project database, technical library and website, and carried out awareness-raising sessions. A closing workshop was organized in Jerusalem on 23 February 2011 to review the achievements of the project and discuss future action. It is expected that the Welfare Association will pursue the activities launched during the project, notably in collaboration with Palestinian universities.

### **Establishment of a centre for the restoration of Islamic manuscripts**

7. The project for the Al Aqsa Centre for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts, located in the Madrasa al-Ashrafiyah within the Ḥaram ash-Sharīf and funded by the Welfare Association and the United Arab Emirates, was completed in February 2009. In June 2008, conservation equipment, delayed for three years in Ashdod Port, was finally delivered to the Centre, thanks to the cooperation of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Jordanian authorities which agreed to bear the cost of the storage fees. Two UNESCO missions were then dispatched, in August and November 2008, to supervise the equipment installation and provide staff training. A second phase of the project funded under the regular budget was started in 2009 and was completed in June 2011 with the completion of six training modules in conservation for the staff members of the Centre. A third phase to be funded by Norway will be launched in September 2011. This phase foresees additional training modules in conservation as well as study placements in international partner institutions and further improvements to the conservation laboratory.

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

8. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia approved the use of US \$1,300,000 from its funds-in-trust deposited within UNESCO to refurbish entirely the Islamic Museum located close to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The project foresees the re-opening of the museum once staff members have been fully trained and have carried out an inventory of the entire collection. Now that four permanent staff members have been recruited for the museum by the Jordanian authorities, the project is progressing well. Expert consultants were contracted in 2010 to assess the inventory needs of the collections, including data management. Two training modules have taken place in January and June 2011. Basic computer equipment has been procured to ensure that an electronic inventory can take place.

### **The Mughrabi Ascent to the Ḥaram ash-Sharīf**

9. Since early 2007, the archaeological excavation and further design for a new access to the Ḥaram ash-Sharīf through the Mughrabi Gate, carried out by the Israeli authorities, have been considered as a specific issue within the overall context of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee requested the Director-General and the World Heritage Centre to facilitate the professional dialogue between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts in order to discuss the proposed design of the Mughrabi ascent and that no measures, unilateral or otherwise, should be taken which will affect the authenticity and integrity of the site.

10. Two technical meetings took place in Jerusalem, between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts, with the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and ICOMOS, in January and February 2008. The discussions were conducted in a spirit of collaboration and showed the importance of technical dialogue between experts to address complex issues that require consultation and consensus. However, despite further requests from the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee, it has not been possible to organize a follow-up meeting since then.

11. In May 2011, the World Heritage Centre received two plans for the reconstruction of the Mughrabi Ascent, one from the Israeli authorities and one from the Jordanian authorities. It appears that negotiations at high level have taken place between the Jordanian and Israeli authorities in this respect and thus further examination of these plans by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory bodies will need to be undertaken in consultation with the concerned parties.

### **Sessions of the Executive Board and of the World Heritage Committee**

12. At the 184th session of the Executive Board (April 2010), draft decisions on both the Old City of Jerusalem and the issue of the Mughrabi Ascent were submitted by a number of Member States. After considerable effort to reach a consensus, 184 EX/Decision 5 and 184 EX/Decision 12 were adopted, to which the original draft decisions were attached, and by which the examination of these two agenda items was postponed to the 185th session of the Executive Board.

13. At the 185th session of the Executive Board in October 2010, two new draft decisions were submitted respectively on the Old City of Jerusalem and on the Mughrabi Ascent. Despite considerable efforts, no consensus could be reached. Consequently, 185 EX/Decision 5 and 185 EX/Decision 14 were adopted after a roll-call vote.

14. At its 186th session in May 2011, the Executive Board adopted 186 EX/Decision 5 (II) and 186 EX/Decision 11 by consensus, recalling the previous decisions concerning Jerusalem and inviting the Director-General, guided by the principle of decision-making by consensus, to implement related decisions. The two items relating to the Old City of Jerusalem and on the Mughrabi Ascent are also part of the agenda of the 187th session.

15. Since 2004, the World Heritage Committee receives a state of conservation report on the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981 and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1982.

16. At its 34th session (July 2010, Brasilia, Brazil), the World Heritage Committee adopted Decision 34 COM 7A.20 which was the result of negotiations leading to a consensus, by which it “welcomed the Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem developed in the context of the Director-General’s comprehensive initiative for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls” and “strongly supported its implementation in coordination with the concerned parties”. Concerning the issue of the Mughrabi Ascent, the World Heritage Committee, in its decision 33 COM 7A.18, requested “that the Israeli authorities continue the cooperation commenced with all concerned parties, in particular with Jordanian and Waqf experts” and called “on the Director-General to organize a follow-up meeting of experts as soon as possible, once the parties concerned have reached an agreement”.

17. At that same session, the World Heritage Committee also requested a joint World Heritage Centre/ICCROM/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission” to the property as referred to in the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention 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. During the meeting of 14 October mentioned in paragraph 5 above, the participants stressed that, as the first step, the foreseen mission should define a new baseline for the Action Plan, by updating the 2004 Report presented to the Director-General, the Executive Board of UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee. A potential framework for the terms of reference of the mission was discussed, and agreed upon as follows:

- (a) review the ongoing or foreseen projects in the property, based on the information provided by the parties concerned, and assess the state of conservation of the

property, according to paragraphs 169 to 177 of the Operational Guidelines, and in particular paragraph 172;

- (b) assess and advise on progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan to date;
- (c) hold consultations with the parties concerned with a view to identifying appropriate operational and financial mechanisms and modalities to strengthen technical cooperation with all concerned parties in the framework of the Action Plan;
- (d) report thereon to the Director-General.

18. On 1 February, 13 April and 27 July 2011, the World Heritage Centre wrote to the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO, in order to follow-up on the Reactive Monitoring Mission requested by the World Heritage Committee. On 28 July 2011 the Israeli authorities, while reiterating their intention to move towards agreed Terms of Reference for such a mission, to which they remain committed, informed the World Heritage Centre that it would receive comments in the near future.

19. At its 35th session (UNESCO, June 2011), despite efforts, no consensus could be reached on a text submitted by seven States Parties, and the World Heritage Committee adopted Decision 35 COM 7A.22 without amendment or debate.

#### **Other issues**

20. Among the various issues related to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, the question of the archaeological excavations carried out by the Israeli authorities is repeatedly brought up. During the period considered, UNESCO continued to bring to the attention of the Israeli authorities the potential impact of the archaeological excavations undertaken in the Old City on the integrity and authenticity of the site.