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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Two hundredth session

# 200 EX/25

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Item 25 of the provisional agenda

## OCCUPIED PALESTINE

### SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 199 EX/19, by which item entitled "Occupied Palestine" was included in the 200th session of the Executive Board. The present document provides 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.



## I. Old City of Jerusalem and its walls

1. The state of conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (site proposed by Jordan) is the subject of regular reporting to the Executive Board and to the World Heritage Committee (WHC). It will be examined by the World Heritage Committee in Paris in October 2016 when it will resume its 40th session, which was interrupted in Istanbul due to the prevailing situation in the country.
2. The state of conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls is presented annually to the World Heritage Committee. The 15th Reinforced Monitoring Report dated April 2016 on the Old City of Jerusalem and its walls has been finalized and was sent to all World Heritage Committee members.
3. Moreover, pursuant to 176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting and to the decisions of the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee since 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 a UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent.
4. At the time of the preparation of this document, the monitoring mission and experts meeting requested by the Executive Board and by the World Heritage Committee could not be undertaken.
5. By letter dated 14 June 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO expressed concerns regarding reported impediments to free access to the Al-Aqṣà Mosque/al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf. The Secretariat has forwarded these reports to the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO, for more information. By letter dated 28 July 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO responded to the Secretariat that the reported information is not correct.
6. On 15 July 2016, the Director-General issued a statement on the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls on the occasion of the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee in Istanbul, recalling notably that as per its inscription on the World Heritage list, the Old City of Jerusalem is the sacred city of the three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and that each of its communities has a right to the explicit recognition of their history and relationship with the city.
7. Following the agreement signed between UNESCO and the Norwegian Government in December 2011 on the project for “Ensuring the sustainability of the Centre for the Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem”, UNESCO has deployed its assistance to build the Centre’s staff capacities in the preservation of Islamic manuscripts. Since the outset of the project, five additional staff has been recruited for the Centre and 12 training sessions totalling 1,370 hours of teaching on conservation and restoration techniques have been held so far, in addition to study tours to restoration centres in Paris and Florence in 2013. The project also provided the Centre with conservation equipment and materials. UNESCO conducted four consultation missions in 2014/15. The stakeholders are currently discussing the possible new phase of the project to be implemented beyond 2016.
8. The refurbishment of the Islamic Museum in the Haram Al-Sharif and its Collection is currently on hold as it requires additional funding to complete the proposed museographical and scenographical planning, which was approved in March 2015 by the Awqaf authorities. A follow-up mission took place in June 2015. The re-opening of the Museum depends on the availability of additional funds, and is foreseen beyond 2016.
9. By letter dated 10 May 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO expressed concerns following reports that part of the collections of the Rockefeller Museum located in East Jerusalem had been transferred to West Jerusalem. The Secretariat has forwarded these reports to the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO, for more information. By letter dated 28 July

2016, the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO responded to the Secretariat that the reported information is not correct.

10. 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 200th session of the Executive Board in order to inform the Members of the Executive Board of any new developments in that regard.

## II.

### A. Reconstruction and development of Gaza (*January 2016-June 2016*)

11. This part of the document presents an overview of UNESCO's recovery response efforts in Gaza. A more general overview of UNESCO's technical assistance, capacity building efforts, and implementation of a wide array of development-oriented projects in Palestine, including in Gaza, is provided in document 200 EX/26.

#### Education

12. UNESCO continues to support vulnerable university students in Palestine. With the financial support from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, UNESCO continues to consolidate 12 libraries, two of which are in Gaza. These libraries support vulnerable higher education students through providing them with study and research library facilities, textbooks and other resource materials, about 8,133 students benefited from the libraries' services in Gaza strip. (See further details in document 200 EX/26).

13. UNESCO continued to support inclusive and child-friendly education, through piloting of child-led activities/innovative teaching and learning in 26 schools in Gaza strip (20 government, six United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNESCO implemented these activities through generous support by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) and the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), jointly implemented with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and UNRWA. The project started in August 2014, and in 2016, further support was expanded for another 19 schools in Gaza Strip, benefitting a total of 772 children (280 boys and 492 girls) and 50 teachers and supervisors (24 Female and 26 Male) in Gaza. A series of final capacity-building workshops for more than 50 teachers, principals and supervisors took place in April and May 2016, and certificates were distributed at the completion of the training modules (See further details in document 200 EX/26).

#### Culture

14. As part of its continuous support for the safeguarding and promotion of the archaeological site of Tell um Amer/Saint Hilarion Monastery in Gaza Strip, which is included in the Palestinian Tentative List, UNESCO provided technical support to the campaign organized by IWAN Centre for Architectural Heritage within the framework of the UNESCO World Heritage Volunteers programme 2016 – *Together for Heritage*. The activities of the campaign focused on the maintenance, cleaning and awareness raising activities, involving a number of volunteers from different universities in Gaza, as well as from the local communities. In addition to the recurrent needs for emergency conservation and maintenance at the site, proper site promotion and presentation was also raised by many local stakeholders since the site offers the only archaeological, educational and recreational venue open to and regularly visited by number of students and visitors from Gaza and constitutes an important outlet to showcase the valuable built heritage in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, and while sparing no efforts to raise funds for a holistic conservation, management and promotion of the site, UNESCO will continue its technical and financial support to the realization of information signs to highlight the archaeological features and the importance of the preservation of this unique site.

15. As part of the **#Unite4Heritage campaign in Palestine**, UNESCO realized a three-minute presentation and promotion video aiming at promoting the main activities that have been carried out in Palestine, including those in Gaza Strip. The video is uploaded on UNESCO's social media, Twitter, YouTube channel #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=mr\\_YoT--1mY&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mr_YoT--1mY&feature=youtu.be)

### **Communication and information**

16. With the support of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNESCO Ramallah Office organized on 7 March, 2016 the first meeting of experts in Gaza on the review of existing university curricula on the safety of journalists used in Palestine, building on a proposed model course on safety developed by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and UNESCO. The activity is part of a broader review conducted by UNESCO to assess how the issue of journalists' safety is addressed in journalism curricula in media faculties across the Arab region. Consultations with faculties and schools teaching Media and Journalism in Gaza were the first step towards a national consultation on this issue. This process is being organized by UNESCO in cooperation with all relevant Palestinian universities, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate. The review is aimed at developing a standard course on the safety of journalists, tailored to the needs and conditions of Palestinian students and universities, associating policy- and decision-makers, media institutions, universities, civil society, as well as journalists themselves, in supporting a safer and more professional environment for future journalists.

### **Gender equality**

17. 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. (See further details in document 200 EX/26).

### **Youth (the NET-MED project)**

18. UNESCO Ramallah Office provided a series of capacity development trainings for NET-MED Youth working group members in Gaza in the fields of mainstreaming gender and people with disabilities in youth activities, youth-targeted human rights-based approach and advocacy. These skills will empower the youth-led activities and initiatives to showcase youth main priorities and concerns, and shed the lights on the young generation's achievements and role in the social development.

19. A member of Gaza NET-MED Youth working group participated, along with two other Palestinians from the West Bank, in the Regional Communications and Advocacy Campaign Training that was held in Jordan in February 2016.

20. World Press Freedom Day celebration in Gaza was organized by a group of Net-MED Youth media working group members, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), through a three-day media campaign. (See further details in document 200 EX/26).

21. Youth organizations in Gaza, including some of NET-MED Youth organizations, have participated in the preparatory workshops held by the Higher Council of Youth and Sports for the development of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022. In addition to the capacity-building sessions, three meetings for the NET-MED Youth working group in Gaza were held, one of such

meetings also provided the opportunity to exchange views with a delegation from the European Commission in Brussels.

**B. The two Palestinian sites of al-Ḥaram al-Ibrāhīmī/Tomb of the Patriarchs in al-Khalīl/Hebron and the Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem**

22. This matter has been on the agenda of the Executive Board since its 184th session at the request of a number of Member States, in relation to the decision of the Israeli authorities, announced in February 2010, to include the two above-mentioned sites located in Hebron and Bethlehem in Israel's National Heritage Programme.

23. At its 199th session, the Executive Board adopted 199 EX/Decision 19 by which it reaffirmed that *“the two concerned sites located in al-Khalīl/Hebron and in Bethlehem are an integral part of Palestine”* and reiterated that it *“disapproves of the ongoing Israeli illegal excavations, works, construction of private roads for settlers and a separation wall inside the Old City of al-Khalīl/Hebron (...), and urges Israel, the occupying Power, to end these violations in compliance with provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions”*; It also *“deeply deplores Israeli refusal to comply with 185 EX/Decision 15, which requested the Israeli authorities to remove the two Palestinian sites from its national heritage list”* and *“calls on the Israeli authorities to act in accordance with that decision”*.

24. By letter dated 10 May 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO brought to the attention of the Secretariat reports on construction works and excavations in the Old City of Hebron, which could endanger the site. The Secretariat has forwarded this information to the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO. By letter dated 28 July 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Israel to UNESCO responded to the Secretariat that the reported information is not correct.

25. The Executive Board also decided to include these matters under an item entitled “Occupied Palestine” in the agenda at its 200th session, and invited the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon. No information has reached the Secretariat on these matters to date.

26. 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 200th session of the Executive Board.

**Proposed decision**

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

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling previous decisions concerning “Occupied Palestine”,
2. Having considered document 200 EX/25,
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.