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Item 39 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF 38 C/RESOLUTION 72 AND 201 EX/DECISION 31 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 38 C/Resolution 72 and 201 EX/Decision 31. It provides a progress report on developments since the 201st session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 30.

1. The present document reports on assistance provided by UNESCO to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant Palestinian stakeholders. The reporting period is from February 2017 to June 2017.
2. Further detailed information on UNESCO assistance in Gaza, in particular its response to the current humanitarian crisis, is provided in document 202 EX/38 (Occupied Palestine).

Education

3. While indicators show some satisfactory progress towards targets related to basic education, challenges remain with regard to secondary education and literacy rates,¹ transition from secondary to tertiary education, and transition from education to work and teacher training. UNESCO is helping to address these challenges.
4. Occupation continues to impair the ability of children and youth to access schools in Palestine, with a shortage of school buildings in Area C and in East Jerusalem and a negative impact on the rate of children dropping out of school.²
5. UNESCO continued to support vulnerable university students in Palestine through the activities of the ten community libraries (eight in the West Bank and two in the Gaza Strip) "Prince Nayef bin

¹ See *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016. Education for people and planet*. UNESCO 2016.

² See United Nations Country Team in the oPt. Common Country Analysis 2016. Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine. UNCT 2017, available at the following web address: http://www.unesco.org/Documents/Special/UNCT/CCA_Report_En.pdf



Abdulaziz”, funded by the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, with the provision of study and research library facilities, textbooks and other resource materials. Since the last reporting period, libraries have continued to increase the number of beneficiaries and to conduct activities within the Right to Higher Education Advocacy Campaign.

6. UNESCO also continued its support to enhancing inclusive early childhood education and to higher education, both through policy and technical advice (as the co-chair of the sub-thematic working groups on Inclusive Education and on Higher Education) and through planned interventions on the ground (as the coordinator of a proposed inter-agency joint programme on inclusive and child-friendly schools in Palestine, which would build on the successful outcomes of the previous “Education for All Package”, 2013-2016).

7. UNESCO continued to support the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (“Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”). UNESCO plays a key role in the SDG taskforce led by the Prime Minister’s Office, in the National Committee for SDG 4 of MoEHE and in the various thematic groups that have been set up as part of the education reform. As part of the overall implementation of SDG 4, UNESCO is assisting the government in the delivery of its priorities related to education as stated in the draft National Policy Agenda (2018-2022). Special focus is given to pre-school education, technical and vocational training (TVET), inclusive education, as well as higher education.

8. UNESCO supported the participation of the Deputy Minister of Education and of the focal point of the National Committee on SDG4 within MoEHE in the “Second Arab Regional Meeting on SDG 4 – Education 2030 (ARMED II)”, held on 6 and 7 March 2017 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. At the meeting key issues and themes central to SDG 4, such as skills, learning, inclusion and equality were discussed at the regional level.

9. In its capacity as technical advisor of the Education Working Sector Group (ESWG), within the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat, UNESCO coordinated two meetings of ESWG, chaired by the Minister of Education and Higher Education and co-chaired by Finland, on 23 February 2017 and on 11 May 2017. The session of ESWG held in May was organized within the framework of the Annual Sector Review (ASR), a yearly event bringing together policy and decision-makers, donors and partners, effectively engaging in policy dialogue and monitoring and evaluation recommendations on the implementation of the Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP 2014/2019).

10. Jointly with MoEHE, UNESCO celebrated the Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) in the last week of April 2017, gathering education stakeholders, civil society and youth, with a number of advocacy activities on “Accountability for SDG4 and citizen participation” held in the UNESCO-supported community libraries in the West Bank and in Gaza. The GAWE closing conference was held with the Minister of Education and Higher Education on 3 May 2017 in Ramallah.

11. As part of its support to TVET and within the framework of the NET-MED Youth Project, funded by the EU, on 23 May 2017 UNESCO, together with the Ministers of Labour and of Education and Higher Education and the EU, launched the “First Skills Forecasting Model” in Palestine. The model is a tool that provides quantitative projections on future supply and demand of skills in the Palestinian labor market, with the aim to support the anticipation and identification of skills needs and to translate this into *curricula* and training programmes as well as employment policies and strategies.

12. Within the same framework, UNESCO also supported the participation of two senior officials of MoEHE in the international conference on TVET *Skills on the move: global trends, local resonances*, held from 4 to 6 July 2017 in Tangshan, China.

13. As part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Palestine, UNESCO was actively involved in the preparation of the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the State of Palestine, 2018-2022, signed by the United Nations and the Government of Palestine on 15 June 2017. UNESCO, together with UNICEF, is the coordinator of Strategic Priority “Leaving

No One Behind: Social development and protection” within the UNDAF, which includes all United Nations interventions in the field of education, health, water and sanitation, social protection, clean energy.

Culture

14. Within the framework of the project “Local Development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of historic built environment in Palestine”, funded by the Government of Sweden through the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), UNESCO organized on 22 and 23 March 2017 in Amman, Jordan, a workshop on the management of cultural heritage sites in Palestine benefitting 27 Palestinian professionals from line ministries, municipalities, universities and cultural heritage organizations. This activity was followed by a dedicated session focusing on the preparation of conservation and management plans for the World Heritage properties of the *Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem* and of *Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir*, through the World Heritage International Assistance Fund.

15. On 10 April 2017, UNESCO trained on-site management of natural heritage sites 19 Palestinian professionals from the Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority, involved line ministries, universities and non-governmental organizations working in the field of environment and natural heritage.

16. On 18 May 2017, UNESCO and the Consulate General of Sweden in Jerusalem inaugurated the rehabilitated cultural heritage sites in the Historic Town of Beit Iksa village, restored by Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation as part of the rehabilitation and revitalization project coordinated by UNESCO and funded by Sida.

17. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), UNESCO has been supporting the preparation of a new national legislation for the protection of cultural heritage Law since 2015. This process involved extensive consultation of representatives of relevant line ministries, civil society organizations working in the field of culture, national and international academics and professionals. Both through its technical expertise and its convening power, UNESCO coordinated the review of the drafts prepared by the national committee tasked with the preparation of the draft Cultural Heritage Law, aligned with the international standards for conservation and with the UNESCO Conventions accessed by Palestine. This effort was culminated in June 2017 with the submission by MoTA of the draft “Tangible Cultural Heritage Law” to the Palestinian Cabinet for endorsement.

Communication and Information

18. Thanks to the support by the Government of Sweden through Sida, as well as co-financing through the EU-funded NET-MED Youth Project, UNESCO continued its support to Palestine to become the first country to pilot a *Model Course on the Safety of Journalists* in the Arab region, through a curriculum developed by UNESCO in partnership with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Ten media departments of Palestinian universities (six in the West Bank and four in Gaza Strip) made plans to include the Course their *curricula* in the new academic year starting in September 2017.

19. As part of this activity, UNESCO trained teachers from eight universities and colleges in Gaza on practical sessions of the Model Course, to facilitate their application in the educational plans of involved higher education institutions (27 March-01 April 2017).

20. To mark the global celebration of World Press Freedom Day (WPDF) on 3 May, under the theme *Promoting the media's potential as a catalyser of peace and mutual understanding*, UNESCO and OHCHR jointly organized two parallel events in Ramallah and in Gaza, within the framework of the NET-MED Youth project. The events were held in the form of round-table discussions with

Palestinian youth working in media professional outlets on how media can contribute to peace, dialogue and mutual understanding.

Gender Equality

21. UNESCO's activities to support and promote gender equality in Palestine are implemented through its Gender Policy Institute (GPI), funded by the Government of Norway.

22. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and in close liaison with the Prime Minister's Office and UN-Women, UNESCO is facilitating the setting-up of GPI as a semi-independent institution working as a monitoring and evaluation think tank of gender-related national policies.

23. Since January 2017, UNESCO has been developing the intellectual capital of GPI, through the recruitment and hiring of three key staff members (Executive Director, Research and Policy Officer and Finance and Administrative Officer).

24. To strengthen the relevance and network of GPI, UNESCO, throughout the first semester of 2017 has activated key partnerships: on the one hand with MoWA, as a lead institutional national partner, and, on the other hand, with the Institute of Women's Policy Research-IWPR (a gender policy think tank in Washington DC), for the support to research on and review of gender policies.³

25. UNESCO had also secured a policy fellow from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), to be seconded to MoWA to undertake a baseline mapping and critical analysis of gender related national policies. However, the fellow could not start her assignment due to visa restrictions.

Youth

26. UNESCO's support to youth in Palestine is carried out through the implementation of the intersectoral "Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) Project", funded by the European Union. Up until June 2017, UNESCO supported the Higher Council for Youth and Sports in the preparation of the *National Youth Strategy 2017-2022*, with the active participation of partner youth organizations. The Strategy was launched on 8 June 2017.

27. As part of the celebrations of the World Radio Day under the global theme "Radio is You!", UNESCO conducted youth targeted activities through a wide national radio campaign from 1 to 13 February 2017. The campaign included an online radio survey, to better understand to which extent radio represents young people and reflects their concerns, and Vox and a radio episode broadcasted on 13 February 2017.

28. Within the framework of the World Press Freedom Day (WPDF), UNESCO supported the participation of two young Palestinians in the "WPDF Youth Newsroom" set up at the 2017 WPDF global event, which took place from 1 to 4 May in Jakarta, Indonesia. UNESCO also supported the participation of two members of the Palestinian NET-MED Youth working groups at the regional event entitled *An Overview of the Youth of the Mediterranean Region*, organized in Casablanca, Morocco, from 3 to 5 April 2017, by NET-MED Youth and the "Réseau Euromed France". To foster the participation of Palestinian Youth in the regional youth networks established through the NET-MED Youth project, UNESCO also supported the participation of representatives of the Palestinian NET-MED Youth working groups and of the Higher Council for Youth and Sport in a regional seminar entitled "Researching Youth in the Maghreb: From marginalization to opportunity", held on 7 and 8 March 2017 in Rabat, Morocco. Finally, UNESCO invited two representatives of partner youth organizations to participate in the NET-MED Youth Strategic Planning and Evaluation Retreat, held in Marseille (France) in April 2017, with a view to identify priorities and lay the ground for the second phase of the Project (2018-2020).

³ More information on IWPR is available at the following web address: <https://iwpr.org/>

Occupied Syrian Golan

29. 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

30. 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 202 EX/39,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 204th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.