

PARIS, 17 March 2017
Original: English

Item 31 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF 38 C/RESOLUTION 72 AND 200 EX/DECISION 26 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 38 C/Resolution 72 and 200 EX/Decision 26. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 200th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 24.

1. The present document reports on assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant Palestinian stakeholders. The reporting period is from July 2016 to January 2017.
2. Detailed information on UNESCO assistance in Gaza, in particular its response to the current humanitarian crisis, is provided in document 201 EX/30 ("Occupied Palestine") and is therefore not reported on in the present document.

Education

3. As the technical advisor for the Education Sector Working Group in Palestine (ESWG), UNESCO continues 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 the 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 early childhood care and development, to inclusive education as well as technical and vocational training (TVET). In the latter area, UNESCO is working with the Ministries of Labour and of Education and Higher



Education and the leading economic think-tank “Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)” for the development of a national skills forecasting model designed in the course of 2016 to bridge the gap between job supply and demand and to better link educational choices with the labor market needs.

4. UNESCO coordinated two meetings of the ESWG, chaired by the Minister of Education and Higher Education and co-chaired by Belgium, on 21 September and on 12 December 2016. The first meeting was preceded by a field visit to schools in Gaza, with the participation of a number of international donors and partners.

5. As part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Palestine, UNESCO is actively involved in the preparation of the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), 2018-2022. In this context, UNESCO is the lead of the group on Education and the co-Chair (together with UNICEF and UNDP) of the working group on “social protection and social resilience” (covering the delivery of basic services, such as water, sanitation and education).

6. UNESCO continues to support vulnerable university students in Palestine through the activities of twelve community libraries (ten in the West Bank and two in the Gaza Strip), funded by the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, with the provision of study and research library facilities, text books and other resource materials. Since the last reporting period, the libraries have continued to increase the number of beneficiaries to approximately 24,000 students.

7. UNESCO continued to support inclusive and child-friendly education, through pilot child-led activities and innovative teaching/learning methods, in 49 schools and benefiting additional 1,722 children and 173 teachers and supervisors in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

8. Jointly with the MoEHE, UNESCO celebrated World Teachers' Day (WTD) on 5 October 2016 and launched the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM) on 17 November 2016, gathering education stakeholders, donors and representatives of the Prime Minister's office to discuss unified efforts towards reaching the education goals for 2030.

9. By letters addressed to the Secretariat on 1 April, 5 April, 6 September, 3 October, 22 November, 14 December 2016 and 23 January 2017, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO expressed concerns regarding alleged violence and damages to educational institutions in Palestine. The Permanent Delegation of Palestine reported alleged damages to the universities of Al Quds, Tulkarem and Birzeit, as well as reported destruction of the school of Khirbet Tana, the school of the Bedouin community of Abu al-Nuwaar, and the primary school of Khan El-Amar. By letter dated 25 January 2017, UNESCO forwarded these concerns to the Permanent Delegation of Israel and asked the latter for more information in this regard.

Culture

10. During the period under review, UNESCO Ramallah office continued its cooperation with Palestine in the field of culture, providing technical support, strengthening national capacities of relevant Palestinian institutions, and implementing projects on the ground.

11. The fifth 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 its Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), has been completed with successful achievements on the ground. The project helped developing technical capacities of local architects, engineers and young professionals in the field of cultural heritage preservation through the completed rehabilitation of five historic sites in the Palestinian cities and rural localities, adding to overall number of 46 sites rehabilitated and handed over to beneficiaries (community institutions providing public social services). The interventions in the historic environment in Palestine facilitated access to cultural heritage assets and contributed to the socio-economic development of targeted communities, providing 5,700 working days as temporary jobs. Seven

architects and engineers completed internships and on job training programmes, adding to the overall 200 professionals and technicians already trained in the previous phases of the project.

12. Within the drafting process of a Palestinian Cultural Heritage Law, conducted in close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and relevant civil society organizations, a new draft law has been developed and submitted to an *Ad Hoc* Technical Group (comprised of academics, local organizations specialized in cultural heritage preservation, involved line ministries) for review and submission to the Cabinet for its endorsement.

13. On 2 December 2016, UNESCO and the Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority signed an agreement to support the “Riwaya Museum” in Bethlehem, aimed at the finalization of Phase III of the museum’s project, focusing on the completion of the renovation of the interior and exterior of the museum premises. This generous grant was made possible after the institutionalization of the museum by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Municipality of Bethlehem, achieved in cooperation with UNESCO. However, the museum could be inaugurated only after the completion of the final phase of the project, which requires additional extra-budgetary funding. Located in the close vicinity of the World Heritage property “Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem”, this museum will contribute to the local development of the Palestinian society and the enrichment of the cultural scene in Palestine as a venue for safeguarding and promoting cultural diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue.

14. UNESCO is providing technical support to the Ministry of Culture and to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for the preparation of the sector strategies for Culture and Heritage 2017-2022. These strategies will be part of the Palestinian National Policy Agenda for 2017-2022 as priority key areas.

15. The Permanent Delegation of Palestine sent two letters to the Secretariat expressing concerns regarding alleged destructions or damages to the cultural heritage of Palestine, notably to the Cremisan Valley (by letter of 18 April 2016), as well as to the historic city of San Sebastian and its cultural landscape (by letter of 19 April 2016). By letter dated 8 June 2016, UNESCO forwarded these concerns to the Permanent Delegation of Israel and asked the latter for more information in this regard.

Communication and information

16. UNESCO is supporting Palestine to become the first country to pilot a Model Course on the Safety of Journalists, developed by UNESCO in partnership with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) specifically for the Arab region. Following the presentation of the Model Course to Palestinian universities at the national seminars organized by UNESCO in Ramallah in September 2016 and early October 2016 in Gaza, the heads of several media departments welcomed the course and committed to adopting it as of 2017. On 18 October 2016, the Course was formally adopted by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

17. Ten media departments (six in the West Bank and four in Gaza Strip) are making plans to include the Course within their educational plan. On 25 January 2017, UNESCO and the IFJ held a three-day training workshop for the teachers who are expected to deliver the course in the various universities in Palestine. This activity has benefited from support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the NET-MED Youth Project, funded by the European Union.

Gender equality

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

19. On 27 July 2016, UNESCO signed an agreement with the Norwegian Representative office in Palestine to support the transition of the PWRDC into Palestine's first Gender focused Policy Institute (GPI), as a leading think-tank on monitoring and evaluation of gender-related policies. Over the past six months, UNESCO has made progress in the following three result areas:

- First, UNESCO is facilitating the movement through the procedures and processes required by law to establish formally the Gender Policy Institute. This has included preparing the necessary legal documents to submit to the Cabinet and Office of the Prime Minister for endorsement, and undertaking advocacy at the ministerial level to support this initiative;
- Second, UNESCO is developing the intellectual capital for the Institute including completing the recruitment and hiring process for the project staff, and developing job descriptions and initiating the recruitment processes for the Executive Director and senior GPI staff;
- Third, UNESCO is cultivating partnerships to support the start-up of the GPI including developing a MoU with the Ministry of Women's Affairs as a lead partner, a contractual arrangement with the Overseas Development Institute to acquire an international Fellow to support initial work related to the GPI and outreach to a range of other potential partners.

Youth

20. UNESCO's support to youth in Palestine is carried out through the implementation of the Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) Project", funded by the European Union. With this project, UNESCO has supported the organization of 14 specialized thematic and consultation workshops in both the West Bank and Gaza, as a participatory support to the Government in the preparation of its National Youth Strategy 2017-2022, involving youth organizations, experts and representatives of civil society and international organizations. NET-MED Youth is a unique three-year project implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union with the aim of building the capacities of youth, enhancing networking among them, engaging them in dialogue with national stakeholders and in the development and revision of public policies. Youth organizations from ten countries along the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean Sea participate in the project (Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia).

21. A communication and advocacy campaign was launched to mainstream youth across national policies and raise the public's awareness on the importance of youth-related issues, including radio and outdoors advertisement. The radio campaign included 15 weekly radio episodes tackling different youth issues, such as youth employment and economic empowerment, technical and vocational education, civic and political engagement, support to entrepreneurship by youth, people with disabilities, and the role of youth in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. The radio campaign aimed at creating a platform for young people to express their concerns and make sure that their voices are heard and contributing to the public dialogue. It also contained episodes on the key United Nations days such as the International Youth Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

22. UNESCO facilitated the participation, via Skype live, of a member of the NET-MED Youth working group from Gaza at the Mediterranean Forum organized by the Anna Lindh Foundation in Malta on 24 and 25 October 2016. She was a panelist during a NET-MED Youth co-run session, where she spoke about her involvement in media activities implemented under the project. Between 2 and 5 November 2016, a member of the NET-MED Youth working group from the West Bank also participated in the Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Week Feature Event in São Paulo, Brazil. She was a speaker at the opening session of a youth-focused day, which also

included the screening of a video produced by members of the NET-MED Youth working group in Gaza.

Occupied Syrian Golan

23. 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

24. 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 201 EX/31,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 202nd session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.