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Cultural Organization

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OCCUPIED PALESTINE

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 204 EX/Decision 25, by which the Executive Board decided to include the item entitled "Occupied Palestine" in the agenda of the 205th session. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 204th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 18.



Jub. 2018/0018

Sub-item I: “Jerusalem”

1. The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, a site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger, is the sacred city of the three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The historical, cultural and spiritual significance of Jerusalem, as a microcosm of humanity’s diversity is, in itself, an appeal for dialogue.
2. Pursuant to relevant decisions of the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee, which are adopted without debate on a consensual basis by the two governing bodies since October 2017, UNESCO sought to facilitate exchanges between Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian and Waqf experts regarding the protection of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, including to facilitate the UNESCO Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Old City and a UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent. At the time of the preparation of this document, the monitoring mission and experts meeting could not be undertaken.
3. Following the agreement signed between UNESCO and the Norwegian Government in December 2011 on the project entitled “Ensuring the Sustainability of the Centre for 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, 10 staff of the Centre have been granted permanent staff positions and 14 learning modules were implemented, with over 1,538 hours of training on conservation and restoration techniques, 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 seven monitoring and consultation missions during the project implementation period. The stakeholders are currently discussing a possible new phase of the project.
4. The project entitled “The Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of Haram al Sharif and its Collection”, funded by Saudi Arabia, is currently on hold pending 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 will depend on the availability of additional funds, and is foreseen beyond 2018.

Sub-item II: “Reconstruction and development of Gaza”

Education

5. The beginning of 2018 marked the start of an unprecedented financial crisis for UNRWA, which provides schooling to over 240,400 children through 252 UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip. This seriously jeopardizes the delivery of both basic services, such as education and health assistance, and urgent humanitarian assistance to almost one million people in the Gaza Strip. While sufficient funding has been secured to complete the 2017-2018 school year and delivery of other core services into the summer, the severe funding gaps in the UNRWA budget might affect the smooth running of the 2018-2019 school year.
6. As a result of the recent ongoing events, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has been deteriorating gradually, with a significant increase in humanitarian and developmental needs. The 10-year blockade, intra-Palestinian political divide and lack of energy supply, with electricity outages of 16 hours a day, seriously impede the provision of basic services in the Gaza Strip, including education service delivery. Access to education of some 450,000 children in Gaza is currently at risk, the electricity shortage is limiting the study time of students, and the dropout rate is subsequently rising. This also affects a number of vulnerable higher education students who are deprived from studies due to the deteriorating economic situation and the lack of a safe learning environment.
7. In order to ensure SDG 4-related targets on inclusive and quality education during pre- and post-emergency situations, UNESCO, in its capacity as technical advisor to the Ministry of Education

and Higher Education (MoEHE), contributes to safer learning environments by developing inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of children and youth in the Gaza Strip.

8. During the reporting period, UNESCO continued to provide support to MoEHE by strengthening the capacities of 451 teachers and supervisors in 14 public schools in Gaza on the use of inclusive education approach at school-level contributing to delivery of quality education in time of emergency.

9. Currently, UNESCO is tailoring interventions that meet the socio-economic needs of vulnerable higher education students in Gaza, including the provision of fee-waivers and capacity development on ICT and inclusive education. However, these interventions depend on the availability of extrabudgetary funds that UNESCO is seeking to mobilize, in an overall context of steady decrease in international aid fund to Palestine over the last few years.

Culture

10. Within the framework of the International Fund for Promotion of Culture (IFPC), UNESCO supported a series of performing arts and writing workshops and contemporary dance and theatre productions focusing on the resilience of the Gazan population during the on-going protracted conflict. Over 40 youth benefitted from the workshops and approximately 100 youth attended the rehearsals as observers in order to exchange their views on the issues addressed. Showcased in over 40 locations in Gaza before thousands of spectators as well as in a live-streamed production in Amsterdam, the performances were followed by lively discussions with youth audiences, which opened the door for dialogue and reflection. One of the main objectives of this activity, which was completed in March 2018, was to highlight gender-related stereotypes and prejudices through dance and theatre as an innovative form of artistic expression.

11. As part of the implementation of the UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention in Palestine and as a concrete follow-up to the recovery plan of the Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) conducted after the 2014 conflict in Gaza, UNESCO started the update of the national registry and inventory of the Palestinian cultural heritage sites in the Gaza Strip. The update is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

Communication and information

12. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is reported in document 205 EX/29 "Implementation of 39 C/Resolution 55 and 204 EX/Decision 26 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories".

Gender Equality

13. Within the international one-week women's campaign (1-8 March 2018), international development partners in Palestine launched the joint *She Leads the Way campaign* to celebrate the 2018 International Women's Day (8 March). During this week, a variety of activities were carried out across the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. The theme for this year's International Women's Day was *Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives*. UNESCO and the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority jointly organized a visit to Ras Al Auja, a Bedouin community in the Jordan Valley. A parallel visit took place to Beith Lahia in the North-West of the Gaza Strip where the majority of residents are small farmers. In Ras AlAuja, where inhabitants depend mainly on livestock and produce as their source of income for the local Palestinian market, visitors had the opportunity to participate and engage in the daily activities of Bedouin women such as making bread, butter and cheese. In Beith Lahia, visitors were able to experience the strawberry harvest season and engage in picking strawberries with women farmers as the central activity.

14. Within the international one-week (joint *She Leads the Way* campaign mentioned above, UNESCO organized a theatre performance and art exhibition in Gaza. The two events gathered women and men from rural areas, universities, youth organizations and representatives from women's and international organizations. The performed women's stories showed the transformative power of Palestinian women rather than presenting women in the role of victims of violence. The performance show was followed by an open discussion on women's rights.

15. Further information on UNESCO's activities in favour of women and youth is reported in document 205 EX/29 "Implementation of 39 C/Resolution 55 and 204 EX/Decision 26 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories".

Sub-item III: "The two Palestinian sites of *Al-Haram al-Ibrāhīmī/Tomb of the Patriarchs in Al-Khalīl/Hebron* and *Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem*"

16. Following the inscription of Hebron/Al-Khalīl Old Town on the World Heritage List, as well as on the List of World Heritage in Danger, at the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee (July 2017), the Secretariat received an International Assistance request by Palestine on 30 October 2017. This request was approved by the Committee at its 42nd session in Manama, Bahrain (24 June-4 July 2018).

17. Furthermore, the state of conservation of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town was examined by the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee, which adopted without debate and on a consensual basis Decision 42 COM 7A. 28 to retain Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Proposed decision

18. 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 examined document 205 EX/28,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 206th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

ANNEX

During the reporting period, the following correspondence has been received by the Secretariat in relation to this item:

Date	From	Subject
12 July 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalil Old Town
5 September 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO and Moh ammed S. Hindawi, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Permanent Delegation of Jordan to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls