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Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

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206 EX/32

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Item 32 of the provisional agenda

OCCUPIED PALESTINE

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 205 EX/Decision 28, by which the Executive Board decided to include the item entitled "Occupied Palestine" in the agenda of the 206th session. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 205th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 19.



Job: 201903124

Sub-item I: “Jerusalem”

1. “The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (Site proposed by Jordan)”, is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and 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 have been adopted without debate on a consensual basis by the two governing bodies since October 2017, UNESCO has sought to facilitate exchanges between Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian (including Jordanian 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 had not yet been 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, 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 Amman, Paris and Florence carried out in 2013. Ten staff of the Centre have been granted permanent positions by Jordan. The project provided the Centre with conservation equipment and materials. UNESCO conducted seven monitoring and consultation missions during the project implementation period, between 2011 and 2015. The project stakeholders are currently discussing a possible new phase of the project in which Jordan would be a cost-sharing partner.

4. Concerning the project entitled “The Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of Haram al Sharif and its Collection”, which is funded by Saudi Arabia, the Jordan Jerusalem Awqaf and Ta’awun, a new phase is under discussion with the Jordan Jerusalem Awqaf, for the further rehabilitation and restructuration of the museum, and exhibition plans.

5. Following a letter received on 3 December 2019 from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO regarding developments related to the building of a cable car over the Old City of Jerusalem, the Secretariat addressed a letter to the State Party of Israel asking for information regarding this project. In the letter, the Secretariat stated that should this development be verified as true, this would be a worrying development as it may have a visual impact on the integrity of the world heritage site of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls.

6. Altogether, since the 205th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat has received four letters on the situation of the world heritage site “The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls” and one letter on the situation of the world heritage site “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir.” Following these letters, the Secretariat invited the State Party of Israel to provide information on the situations mentioned.

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

Education

7. In Gaza, unemployment has reached an all-time high rate of nearly 55%, including 70% among youth (reaching a rate of 78% among female youth).¹ As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the relevance of learning vis-à-vis rapid changes in the labour market needs and to equip Palestinian youth with digital skills and 21st century Skills (21CS), UNESCO trained a number of Information Technology (IT) teachers and 675 students in both the West Bank and Gaza from grades 8-12 with programming skills, to develop mobile applications and integrate these skills in their e-learning process, through its

¹ See ILO, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_629263.pdf

project “Empowering youth in 21st Century Palestine with innovative digital and entrepreneurial skills for jobs in a digital economy”.

Culture

8. Considering the current dire situation in Gaza, which prevents youth to access opportunities for recreational and cultural exchange, supporting the development of cultural creative industries is of even greater importance. To this effect, in October 2018, within the framework of UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the EU-funded project Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth), UNESCO organized the first Jazz Concert in Gaza in years, which gathered musicians from Europe and from Gaza.² The event, part of a broader “Jazz journey” initiative, offered a platform for musicians and youth associations in Gaza to engage with professional musicians from Europe. The concert was followed by some music performances in primary school in Gaza, as part of UNESCO's activities in the field of non-formal education initiative, which are scheduled to be extended to other schools in Gaza and in the West Bank in the course of 2019. The “Jazz Journey” initiative consisted of different activities, including a policy discussion session between musicians from Austria, Finland and Switzerland and from Gaza, exchanging views on policies, challenges and opportunities of music as both a performing art and as a creative industry, with a potential as income-generator in the Gaza Strip. The outcome of these discussions and consultations will feed into the preparation of tailored nation-wide policies and recommendations to better support creative industries, and mainly the music industry in Palestine.

9. In the framework of its Regular Programme in support of the effective implementation of the UNESCO 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in Palestine, UNESCO continued the upgrading of the national inventory of the Palestinian cultural heritage sites in the Gaza Strip. This activity is implemented in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), civil society and national experts and will be finished by October 2019.

Communication and information

10. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 206 EX/33 “Implementation of 39 C/Resolution 55 and 205 EX/Decision 29 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories”.

Gender Equality

11. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 206 EX/33 “Implementation of 39 C/Resolution 55 and 205 EX/Decision 29 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories”.

Youth

12. Within the framework of the EU-funded project Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) and in partnership with the UN Thematic Group of Young People, the International Youth Day in Palestine was celebrated in August 2018 under the theme “Safe Spaces for Youth”, through creative and inspiring activities in Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, in partnership with the Social Developmental Forum, 60 young men and women visited the archaeological cultural sites of Tell um Ammer/Saint Hilarion Monastery, Maqam Al Khader and The Byzantine Church. These activities created a safe space for youth to actively engage in their community, enhance social cohesion through cultural heritage and effectively contribute to development and peace.

13. In July 2018, a three-day workshop on the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security was organized in Gaza, in cooperation with UNFPA. The workshop aimed to raise the awareness of youth councils and youth-led organizations on UNSCR 2250,

² To read more on the “Jazz Journey” event, please visit: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/jazz_journey_in_palestine_let_music_speak/

increasing the effective participation of young people in conflict prevention and peace-building processes and helping them to integrate UNSCR 2250 messages and findings into their plans and programmes.

14. During the Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Week 2018 in October, a MIL capacity development camp was held in partnership with the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA). This event benefited 100 young women and men in Gaza, including university students and NET-MED Youth member organizations. In December 2018, within the joint United Nations and European Union campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence – “Hear Me Too: Voices Against Violence” and through its EU-funded NET-MED Youth project, UNESCO supported the theatre play “Black Light”, produced by the Gaza-based Theatre Day Productions (TDP) and performed through an all-female cast on the stage of the theatre in Gaza. Episodes from ‘real-life’ experiences were depicted on stage, followed by testimonies by victims of gender-based violence. The performance was followed by a TED-Style talk of interventions by young activists and advocates, empowered survivors of violence.³

15. Within the framework of the EU-funded NET-MED Youth project and UNESCO’s 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO organized in October 2018 the first Jazz Concert in Gaza in years, gathering musicians from Europe and from Gaza. More than 500 participants from Gazan youth and families and from national and international organizations attended the concert and enjoyed the music performance.

Sub-item III: “The two Palestinian sites of *Al-Ḥaram 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), a meeting was held in December 2018 at UNESCO Headquarters between the Permanent Delegation of Palestine, Palestinian experts, Advisory Bodies as well as UNESCO’s Ramallah Office and the World Heritage Centre to review the draft of a statement of Outstanding Universal Value. This draft will be presented for adoption to the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee in 2019.

17. Furthermore, the state of conservation of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town was examined by the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee (June-July 2018), 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.

18. Since the 205th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat has received three letters on the situation of the World heritage site “Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town”. The Secretariat invited the State Party of Israel to provide information on the situation of the site.

Proposed decision

19. 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 206 EX/32,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 207th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

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For more information, please visit : http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/hear_me_too_voices_against_violence_in_gaza_through_black/

ANNEX

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

Date	From	Subject
6 November 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalil Old Town
14 November 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO and Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Permanent Delegation of Jordan to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
3 December 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO and Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Permanent Delegation of Jordan to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
13 December 2018	President of the Arab Group in UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
14 December 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalil Old Town
7 January 2019	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir
25 January 2019	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Nabi Zechariah/Prophet Zakariyya
4 February 2019	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalil Old Town
27 February 2019	Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO and Permanent Delegate of Jordan to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
19 March 2019	President of the Arab Group at UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls