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IMPLEMENTATION OF 39 C/RESOLUTION 55 AND 205 EX/DECISION 29 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

The present document is submitted pursuant to 39 C/Resolution 55 and 205 EX/Decision 29. It reports on assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant Palestinian stakeholders and 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 26

1. The reporting period is from August 2018 to January 2019.
2. Detailed information on UNESCO's activities in Gaza is provided in document 206 EX/32 "Occupied Palestine" and is therefore not reported on in the present document.

Education

3. During the second half of 2018, an increased number of demolitions as well as threats of demolition of schools affected education opportunities. Violence and tension impacted access to a safe learning environment and the right to quality education for Palestinian students.
4. UNESCO provided technical guidance to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) on unified guidelines for teacher training on inclusive education and on child-centered teaching methods. Furthermore, as a member of the Education in Emergencies Thematic Working Group, and within the framework of UNESCO's Arab Regional Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies (2018-2021), UNESCO continues to advocate for the right to education of all students in Palestine. In this context, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNRWA and Save the Children have teamed up to design, and jointly fund-raise for, a new joint programme aiming at strengthening the resilience of communities, children and their families in targeted areas in Gaza, East Jerusalem, and Area C, through improved access to inclusive, equitable education and learning opportunities



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for girls and boys. The programme would also seek to strengthen the capacities of the Palestinian education system to respond to emergency needs.

5. 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 twenty-first century skills (21CS), UNESCO trained Information Technology (IT) teachers and 675 students from grades 8-12 in both the West Bank and Gaza on programming skills to develop mobile applications and to integrate these skills in their e-learning process.

6. In its capacity as the technical advisor to the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), UNESCO is assisting MoEHE in the preparation of the bylaws of the General Education and the Higher Education laws, adopted in 2016 and in 2018, so as to ensure their alignment with international principles and standards and as a milestone for the effective implementation of the SDG 4 targets in “*leaving no one behind*” in Palestine.

Culture

7. Following the entry into force in July 2018 of the “Decree Law on Tangible Cultural Heritage Law”, UNESCO continues its technical and financial support to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA). This support consists in assisting in the development of four by-laws and related operational guidelines, in cooperation with the MoTA and the participation of key experts and professionals, academics and relevant civil society institutions working in the field of heritage preservation.

8. Since the last reporting period and within the framework of the six-year project to support local development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of historic built environment funded by the Government of Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), UNESCO completed the rehabilitation of four historic sites, including historic buildings located within the World Heritage properties “Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem” and “Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town”¹, both included on the List of World Heritage in Danger. During this period, the project generated 7,500 working days as temporary job opportunities. An extension of the duration of the project and an additional contribution of US \$2.9 million have been generously granted by the donor until May 2020 as part of the phase-out strategy of the project.²

9. UNESCO continues to supervise the rehabilitation works in the Riwaya Museum in Bethlehem, funded by the Government of Norway, with the objective to open a multimedia interactive exhibition on Palestinian culture. The project was extended until June 2019 to allow the finalization of the remaining renovation works in the museum’s space as well as repairing the damage caused by a fire accident that took place in January 2018 in the Peace Centre building, which hosts the museum.

10. In September 2018, the Tourism and Culture Sector Working Group (TCSWG), a platform co-chaired by the MoTA and the Ministry of Culture (MoC), with Norway as deputy chair and UNESCO and UNDP as technical advisors to support the development, implementation and monitoring and upgrading of tourism and culture sector strategies in Palestine, held its first meeting at the MoTA in Bethlehem. The TCSWG, which was established within the Secretariat of the Local Aid Coordination Mechanism, aims to facilitate information exchange and dialogue among all key stakeholders, shall

¹ For more information about the rehabilitation projects in Bethlehem and the Old Town of Hebron, please read: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/celebration_of_the_rehabilitation_of_amer_school_in_the_old/, and http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/inauguration_of_dar_as_sabbagh_and_of_saint_joseph_women_emp/.

² For more information about the extension of the project, please read: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/sida_and_unesco_continue_to_support_local_development_in_pal-1/

meet on a quarterly basis and will be the main platform for sector coordination and policy dialogue in the fields of tourism and culture in Palestine in line with the priorities of the MoTA and MoC³.

11. The project entitled “Empowering Gaza’s youth through theatre”, submitted by Basma Society for Culture and Arts, was approved for funding by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions at its twelfth ordinary session in December 2018. In addition, a project entitled “Digital Theatre: For women, By women”, submitted by Theatre Day Productions in Gaza, was selected as part of the UNESCO-Sabrina Ho “You are Next: empowering creative women” initiative. These projects come as a successful outcome of the training course that UNESCO Office in Ramallah delivered in April 2018 on the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD). The main objective of the training was to assist project applicants and initiators from NGOs and governmental institutions in presenting their projects and in developing their ideas in accordance with the objectives of the Convention and the IFCD requirements.

Communication and Information

12. During the reporting period, journalists in Palestine have continued to face a range of violations, including physical assault, seizure of equipment, prohibition of coverage, and raids of media houses. Among the recorded incidents, on 17 November 2018, a member of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Journalists was injured and several others were left choking during clashes between the Israeli security forces and demonstrators at the Qalandiya checkpoint in East Jerusalem.

13. In October 2018, with the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, UNESCO celebrated the third International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI 2018), through a “TEDx-style” discussion at the Birzeit University. Through a public discussion, speakers from media outlets, international organizations, civil society and academia, highlighted how public access to information, free media and an empowered civil society are key for strengthening good governance and democracy, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The Ministry of Interior and the Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate issued a “*Guide to regulate the relationship between security forces and journalists in the field*”, developed following a UNESCO activity aimed at training and fostering dialogue between Palestinian police and security forces and journalists on freedom of expression and safety of journalists, funded by Sweden.

15. UNESCO, through the International Programme for the Development of Communication, supported the Palestinian Center for Development & Media Freedoms-MADA in implementing a project aimed at countering hate speech. The project included several workshops and advocacy campaigns in both the West Bank and Gaza as well as the development of a tool kit for combating hate speech especially on social media.

16. In November 2018, the UNESCO Ramallah Office was involved in a consultation meeting on the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage in the Arab world organized in Tunis, Tunisia, within the framework of the Memory of the World Programme. The consultation, preceded by a high-level symposium, was also attended by a representative from the Ministry of Culture of Palestine.

Gender Equality

17. UNESCO continues to support the advancement of Gender Equality across all its fields of work in Palestine, mainly through the implementation of the project “Building Gender Accountability” and its Gender Policy Institute (GPI), generously funded by the Government of Norway. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is an essential element in sectoral and cross-sectoral plans of the

³ For more information about the Tourism and Culture Sector Working Group, please read: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/culture_and_tourism_sector_in_palestine_comes_together_at_th/

Palestinian Government, which is also comprehensively reflected in the National Policy Agenda (NPA).

18. Through GPI, UNESCO was among the key institutions that designed and conducted a high-level joint campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence “Hear Me Too: Voices Against Violence” in Palestine (jointly led by FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women, together with the European Union, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).⁴ On 5 December 2018, as part of the joint campaign, GPI launched the *Bridging Gender Gaps in Palestine: Qualitative Analysis of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policies, 2011-2017*, conducted by GPI throughout 2018. The study provides an important analysis on government accountability to gender equality and women’s empowerment policies according to the level of implementation and impact on institutional structures and performance. In its methodology and in order to ensure a participatory approach in the development of the study, GPI reached over seventy individuals through individual structured and semi-structured interviews, individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, collective structured and semi-structured interviews, and a targeted workshop for the gender units within ministries and government agencies.

19. In September 2018, the Palestinian Council of Ministers rejected the proposal put forth by the Minister of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) for GPI to become an independent national entity. Accordingly, GPI’s Advisory Board (comprised by MoWA, UNESCO, UN Women, Representative Office of Norway to the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Institute of Women Studies of the Birzeit University, the Independent Commission of Human Rights, the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling) decided on 9 October 2018 for the alternative temporary scenario of GPI being hosted within an already established Palestinian national institution. Hosting options are presently being pursued.

Youth

20. Within the framework of the EU-funded project Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) and in partnership with the United Nations 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. The 2018 theme emphasizes the need for youth to come together, engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests, participate in decision-making processes and freely express themselves. More than 120 young men and women from different parts of the West Bank and Gaza had the opportunity to participate in two NET-MED Youth events, discussing different ways to make spaces safe for all youth in Palestine. In partnership with the Sharek Youth Forum, a three-day summer camp took place at the youth village in Kafer Na’emh. Eighty-six young men and women participated in a variety of activities highlighting civic engagement, voluntary work and the role of youth in peacebuilding.

21. In line with UNESCO’s Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021), throughout August and September 2018, the EU-funded NET-MED Youth project launched four youth-led initiatives grants in East Jerusalem, in partnership with the Palestinian Vision Organization. This effort sought to empower young women and men in East Jerusalem to create their own initiatives, implement them on the ground and build on them through community level activities – ranging from cultural camps to crafting a roof of umbrellas in the old city.

22. In November 2018, the NET-MED Youth Coordination Team and two representatives of Palestinian youth associations took part in the NET-MED Youth wrap-up and celebration event in Brussels “*Networks of Mediterranean Youth: Leading the change!*”. The event was designed as a space for dialogue, sharing success stories and networking between youth from European and Southern countries and European Union decision-makers. It also allowed for a dynamic celebration

⁴ The joint statement issued on the occasion of the launch of the joint campaign is available at the following web address: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/joint_statement_the_un_eu_and_international_development_p/

through a photo exhibition and creative performances, as well as for a creative thinking about the sustainability of the actions and the way forward.

23. In November 2018, three NET-MED Youth members took part in the media-focused regional event “*UNESCO Tunis International Journalism Workshop*” in Tunis, Tunisia. Under the theme “*A journalism that is useful for citizens*”, the event brought together media practitioners, youth and media development partners from both sides of the Mediterranean, as well as from Francophone Africa.

24. In December 2018, under the NET-MED Youth Project, five young Palestinians attended the regional capacity-building workshop “Increasing appetite for creative digital technologies among young cultural heritage defenders”, held in Tunisia. This initiative consolidated a network of 50 young cultural heritage activists from the Arab region (selected out of 560 applications), provided them with evidence-based knowledge, cutting-edge digital skills. Micro grants are planned to implement youth-led pilot projects focusing on the protection and promotion of endangered cultural heritage.

Occupied Syrian Golan

25. 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

26. In the light of the above, 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 206 EX/33,
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.

ANNEX

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

Date	From	Subject
27 September 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Education Institution: Hebron elementary school for boys
4 October 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Education Institution: Kindergarten and women social centre in Jabal Al-baba
31 October 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Education Institution: Al-Sawiya High School
6 December 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Education Institution: Al Tahaddi 13 School
11 December 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Palestinian News and Information Agency (WAFA)
12 December 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Education Institution: Tahadi Elementary School – Tuqu School
13 December 2018	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Education Institution: Al Quds University
2 February 2019	Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Temporary International Presence in Hebron