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Organización
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para la Educación,
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Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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IMPLEMENTATION OF 39 C/RESOLUTION 55 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

OUTLINE

Source: 39 C/Resolution 55.

Background: This document is presented in compliance with 39 C/Resolution 55.

Purpose: The document presents highlights of key activities implemented by UNESCO on this issue since the 39th session of the General Conference.

Decision required: Paragraph 45.



Job : 201913914

INTRODUCTION

1. The present document highlights the main activities implemented by UNESCO and achievements realized from October 2017-September 2019. More detailed information was made available in reports to the Executive Board over the past two years¹.

PART I

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN PALESTINE

Education

2. Conflict-related violence and related tensions have significantly impacted on the learning environments and the right to quality education in the West Bank and Gaza, with damaging consequences on the physical and mental well-being of children. Moreover, according to a recent report published by UNICEF, some 61 per cent of students witnessed physical violence at school, and 320,439 children in Palestine are in need of protection programmes, including psychosocial support.²

3. Not many children of primary school age in Palestine are excluded from education. However, one out of three 6-9 year-olds with disabilities, and nearly 5% of 10-15 year-old children are out of school, while from the age of 15, almost 25% of boys and 7% of girls drop out of school. Children from vulnerable households, those with disabilities, and 14-15 year-old boys are all affected by the poor quality and the lack of inclusiveness and equity in the education services in Palestine.³

4. In its capacity as the technical advisor of the **Education Sector Working Group (ESWG)**, within the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS), UNESCO has coordinated the quarterly ESWG meetings and Annual Sector Reviews held in April 2018 and 2019, chaired by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and co-chaired by Finland. At the Annual Sector Review, policy and decision makers, donors and partners in Palestine discussed strategic directions and outlined concrete recommendations for the upcoming year within the framework of the Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2017-2022.

5. UNESCO continued to provide technical support to the MoEHE for 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. In addition, UNESCO provided technical support to the preparation of policy recommendations for Higher Education institutions programmes.

6. UNESCO continued its support to ensure **inclusive and equitable quality** education and the promotion of **lifelong learning opportunities** for all Palestinians. During the reporting period, UNESCO has provided technical guidance to the MoEHE further supporting the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy through capacity building of teachers and awareness raising on inclusive education and child-centred teaching methods. In addition, as a member of the Education in Emergencies Thematic Working Group, UNESCO continued to advocate for the right to education of all students in Palestine.

7. As the co-Chair of Strategic Priority 4 of the **United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)** for Palestine (2018-2022) entitled '*Leaving No One Behind: Social development and protection*', UNESCO conducted regular meetings with all relevant agencies to discuss challenges and the way forward for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of this priority.

¹ 207 EX/39, 206 EX/33, 205 EX/26 and 204 EX/29.

² UNICEF, Children in the State of Palestine 2018 : <https://www.unicef.org/sop/reports/children-state-palestine>

³ Ibid.

8. In May 2019, UNESCO implemented the project entitled “*Psychosocial Support and Life Skills through Sports programme in the West Bank and Gaza*”, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The project aimed at creating a positive learning environment and promoting student-centered learning and psychosocial development, through building teachers capacities on the use of sports as a tool for psychosocial intervention and a means to provide students with the necessary life skills to build confidence and resilience to cope with the challenging environments, such as facilitating their access to the labour market.

9. UNESCO trained 37 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. This intervention was implemented as part of UNESCO’s 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).

10. Since July 2019, UNESCO has been implementing the project entitled “*Access to Inclusive Quality and Safe Education Opportunities for Conflict-affected Children and Youth in the West Bank and Gaza*” jointly with UNICEF, UNRWA, UNDP and Save the Children within the framework of the **Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Multi-year joint programme for Palestine (2019-2021)**. The project aims 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 for girls and boys.

11. In partnership with the Norwegian Refugees Council (NORCAP), UNESCO is conducting a case study to analyze the gaps between Education Management and Information System (EMIS) and data collected by humanitarian actors in Palestine. This case study is undertaken as part of the piloting of the “**Strengthening EMIS and Data for Increased Resilience to Crises**” initiative funded by ECW. The project aims at enhancing EMIS as an effective tool for education service delivery in crisis.

12. Within the framework of the three-year **YEM project** (Youth Employment in the Mediterranean 2018-2020), funded by the European Union, UNESCO supports youth employment and entrepreneurship in the region, through building national capacities in skills needs anticipation and assessment; improving quality and promoting attractiveness of TVET pathways, especially for women; developing regional cooperation in the field of TVET; and the development of a national skills forecasting model.

Culture

13. During the period under review, UNESCO continued providing technical assistance, building national capacities of relevant Palestinian cultural institutions, and implementing projects on the ground.

14. UNESCO, through its project “**Local Development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of historic built environment in Palestine**”, funded by the Government of Sweden, completed the rehabilitation of 20 historic sites in historic cities and rural localities in Palestine, 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”. The sites were handed over to civil society organizations, which provide public communal services. Technical capacities of 30 professionals including engineers, architects and contractors were developed through on-the-job training in the field of cultural heritage preservation. In addition, the project contributed to the socioeconomic development in the targeted communities by providing 25,000 working days as temporary job opportunities. The project is expected to be completed in May 2020.

15. Between August 2018 and September 2019, UNESCO provided technical and financial support to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) to develop **four by-laws** to enable the implementation of the **Decree Law concerning Tangible Cultural Heritage** in Palestine,

which entered into force in June 2018 and was the culmination of a four-year process undertaken with the technical and financial support of UNESCO. Civil society organizations are being consulted on the four by-laws, which concern museums, inventorying, excavations, conservation and protection of built cultural heritage, prior to their submission to the Palestinian Government for endorsement.

16. In September 2018, the **Tourism and Culture Sector Working Group (TCSWG)**, a platform established to support the development, implementation, monitoring and upgrading of tourism and culture sector strategies in Palestine, co-chaired by MoTA and the Ministry of Culture (MoC), with Norway as deputy chair and UNESCO and UNDP as technical advisers, 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 and is the main platform for sector coordination and policy dialogue in the fields of tourism and culture in Palestine.

17. Through the International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund, UNESCO provided technical expertise between 2016 until 2018 to the MoTA and other relevant stakeholders in the **preparation of conservation and management plans for the World Heritage sites “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines - Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir” and “Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem”**, both included on the List of World Heritage in Danger at the time. The two management plans were finalized and submitted to the World Heritage Committee for examination at its 42nd and 43rd sessions in 2018 and 2019 respectively, as part of the corrective measures requested by the Committee for the sites. At its 43rd session, the World Heritage Committee adopted a decision through which the property **“Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem”** was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

18. In addition, through the World Heritage Fund, UNESCO has been supporting the MoTA, since July 2018, in the preparation of a **Conservation and Management Plan for the World Heritage property “Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town”**, which was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 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 initiate a review of the draft statement of Outstanding Universal Value, which is currently underway. The state of conservation of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town was examined at the 42nd and 43rd sessions of the World Heritage Committee, which adopted without debate and on a consensual basis Decisions 42 COM 7A.28 and 43 COM 7A.29, respectively, to retain Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

19. In support of the implementation of the **2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**, UNESCO initiated a comprehensive mapping of the culture sector, and is conducting a survey to assess the contribution of the culture sector in Palestine to the seven dimensions of the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS), namely economy, education, governance, social participation, gender equality, communication and heritage. The survey is being implemented in conjunction with the project “Re|Shaping Cultural Policies for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” in Palestine, funded by the Swedish Government.

20. The project entitled “Empowering Gaza's youth through theater”, submitted by Basma Society for Culture and Arts was approved for funding by the **Intergovernmental Committee of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** in December 2018. In addition, a project entitled “Digital Theatre: For women, By women”, submitted by Theater 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 the 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 2005 Convention and the IFCD requirements.

21. 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. Due to the challenges encountered during the repair works undertaken at the Peace Centre building, which hosts the museum, in the aftermath of the January 2018 fire accident, the project was extended until December 2019. Following a high-level meeting that UNESCO convened in June 2019 with representatives of the MoTA, the Representative of Norway to the Palestinian Authority, and the Mayor of Bethlehem, UNESCO is implementing agreed actions aiming to complete the current phase of the project.

22. UNESCO **updated and upgraded the inventory of over 350 cultural heritage sites in the Gaza Strip**, building on the recommendations of the **Detailed Needs Assessment** that was carried out following the July-August 2014 war.

23. In April 2019, UNESCO organized the **International Jazz Day** in Palestine, particularly in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Ramallah. The celebrations gathered musicians from Austria, Italy, Switzerland, as well as Gaza and the West Bank, who performed for over 1,000 participants. In this context, the Mayor of Ramallah announced the commitment of the Ramallah Municipality to celebrate International Jazz Day on an annual basis.

24. UNESCO, in cooperation with [Filmlab](#)⁴ and in consultation with the Ministry of Culture, conducted a **value chain analysis of the film industry in Palestine**, to assess the opportunities and challenges it faces, from pre-production to distribution, and develop possible project proposals in this area.

25. UNESCO continued to support the strengthening of national capacities for the **safeguarding of Palestinian intangible cultural heritage** for the effective implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and thanks to the generous support of the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism (United Arab Emirates).

Communication and Information

26. According to the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), the month of May 2019 saw a significant rise in the number of violations against media freedoms in Palestine in comparison with the preceding months. These include the closure of Facebook accounts of 65 Palestinian journalists and authors⁵. Among the most significant was the airstrike by Israeli forces on the Anatolia News Agency in Gaza during May 2019 hostilities, in addition to a series of arrests, arbitrary detentions and attacks against Palestinian journalists.

27. Building upon its past work in providing technical advice and facilitating consultations towards the adoption of a law on access to information, UNESCO has been organizing awareness-raising activities highlighting the importance of **access to information** for good governance. Through the adoption of this law, Palestine would become the seventh country in the Arab region to provide legal protections for citizens' right to access public information.

28. UNESCO has been supporting the creation of a "**Journalists' Safety Officers Network**" in Palestine. Fifteen journalists from the West Bank and 18 from Gaza were trained to become safety

⁴ Filmlab is a Palestinian organization that aims to address the needs of filmmakers, young and established alike, in order to revitalize the culture of films in Palestine. For more information, please visit: www.flp.ps

⁵ Palestinian Center for Development & Media Freedoms (MADA): http://www.madacenter.org/report.php?lang=1&id=1877&category_id=13&year=2019

focal points within their respective organizations and the network is expected to be operational by the end of 2019.⁶

29. UNESCO has been supporting the creation of a national multi-stakeholder mechanism to **monitor and report on the safety of journalists** in Palestine. Its official launch is planned for the upcoming International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on 2 November 2019.

30. In February 2018, Palestine became the first country to pilot UNESCO's **Model Course on the Safety of Journalists** developed together with the International Federation of Journalists specifically for universities in the Arab States region. UNESCO trained 32 teachers from ten Palestinian universities in West Bank and Gaza on the teaching and use of the Model Course.

31. Following a series of **training activities on freedom of expression and safety of journalists** organized by UNESCO for Palestinian police and security forces and journalists and funded by Sweden, the Ministry of Interior and the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate issued in November 2018 a *"Guide to regulate the relationship between security forces and journalists in the field"*.

32. UNESCO continued to celebrate relevant International Days in Palestine, including **World Press Freedom Day**⁷ in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which involved a series of debates organized in Ramallah and Gaza, an advocacy campaign on social media and a radio episode on press freedom, which was broadcast across the country. For the International Day for Universal Access to Information, UNESCO held an annual series of "TEDx-style" talks in 2017 and 2018. In 2017, a policy debate was held on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

33. Finally, UNESCO supported in 2019 a project to empower 120 young people in Hebron to **counter hate speech and radicalization online**, through media and information skills.

Gender Equality

34. UNESCO continued to support and promote **gender equality** in Palestine and the alignment of national legislation to international treaties, through the establishment of the first **Gender Policy Institute (GPI) in Palestine**, funded by the Government of Norway with a vision for the GPI to become a national entity/institution. The GPI has become a gender-related policy think tank after broad consultation among key stakeholders and relevant academic, governmental and non-governmental institutions working in the field of gender equality. UNESCO has worked towards the establishment of the legal status of GPI to become an autonomous national Palestinian Institute. This was achieved through the submission of a legal file to the Cabinet of Ministers on 10 June 2019, which approved to grant GPI with the necessary legal status to become the first Gender Policy focused Institute in Palestine and in the entire Arab region.⁸ Subsequently, UNESCO took the lead towards the transition of GPI, at the request of, and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). The project has officially ended in August 2019 and an official ceremony for the handover of GPI to the MoWA is planned to take place on 14 October 2019.

35. Through GPI, UNESCO was among the key institutions that designed and conducted a high-level joint campaign in November 2018 of **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence** *"Hear Me Too: Voices Against Violence"* in Palestine (jointly led by FAO, OHCHR, UNDP,

⁶ UNESCO concluded training sessions of media safety officers as an initial step towards the creation of a Safety Officers Network (press release) http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_concluded_training_sessions_of_media_safety_officers/

⁷ Celebrating World Press Freedom Day 2019 in Ramallah and Gaza (press release) <https://en.unesco.org/news/celebrating-world-press-freedom-day-2019-ramallah-and-gaza>

⁸ UNESCO and the Ministry of Women's Affairs officially established the first Gender Policy Institute in Palestine and the Arab Region (press release) <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-and-ministry-womens-affairs-officially-established-first-gender-policy-institute>

UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women, together with the EU, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).⁹

36. In December 2018, UNESCO-GPI launched the **study entitled “*Bridging Gender Gaps in Palestine: Qualitative Analysis of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policies, 2011-2017*”**, conducted 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.

37. Within the framework of the joint campaign celebrating the **International Women’s Day (IWD)**, UNESCO co-led the International joint campaign for the celebration of the 2018 International Women’s Day under the theme “*She Leads the Way*”. Throughout the Campaign, a number of initiatives took place in the West Bank and Gaza highlighting women’s participation in performing arts, technology and civic engagement through art exhibitions, workshops, theatre performances, storytelling, and discussion panels. On the occasion of the 2019 International Women’s Day celebration, UNESCO co-led the one-week international joint campaign under the theme “*My Rights, Our Power*”.

Youth

38. Within the framework of the EU-funded project **Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth)**, which concluded in December 2018, NET-MED Youth produced key reports and studies, including the Skills Forecasting Model, the findings of which were discussed through three parallel roundtables during the NET-MED Youth Day in February 2018.

39. In order to enhance the economic empowerment and civic engagement of youth, UNESCO engaged youth, through this project, in participatory events related to media and sports. On the occasion of **World Radio Day** in February 2018, NET-MED Youth collaborated with Radio 24FM and carried out a radio campaign with five key radio stations highlighting “*Radio and Sports*”.

40. Within the **2018 International Women’s Day campaign**, NET-MED Youth organized a theatre performance and an art exhibition in partnership with Ayam Al Masrah/Theatre Day Productions 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.

41. In line with UNESCO’s **Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021)**, throughout August and September 2018, the 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.

42. 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!***” for dialogue, sharing success stories and networking with youth from European and Southern countries and European Union decision-makers.

43. Three NET-MED Youth members took part, in November 2019, in the media-focused regional event “***UNESCO Tunis International Journalism Workshop***” in Tunis, Tunisia. In December 2018, 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

⁹ 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/

enabled the consolidation of a network of selected 50 young cultural heritage activists from the Arab region, and provided them with evidence-based knowledge, and cutting-edge digital skills.

PART II

THE SITUATION OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

44. As reported in the 2015 report (document 38 C/17), 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, UNESCO has so far not been in a capacity to continue providing this assistance.

Proposed draft resolution

45. In light of the above, the General Conference may wish to adopt a resolution along the following lines:

The General Conference,

Recalling 39 C/Resolution 55, as well as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with regard to the right to education, Articles 4 and 94 of the Fourth Geneva Convention with regard to the denial of the right of children to education, as well as the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the Hague Convention (1954) and its Additional Protocols,

Having examined document 40 C/17,

Also recalling the role that UNESCO is called upon to act in order to satisfy the right to education for all, and to meet the need for Palestinians to have safe access to the education system,

Committed to the safeguarding of monuments, works of art, manuscripts, books and other historical and cultural properties to be protected in the event of conflicts,

1. *Supports* the efforts made by the Director-General with a view to the implementation of 39 C/Resolution 55, and requests her to do everything possible to ensure that it is fully implemented in the framework of the Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 (40 C/5);
2. *Expresses its appreciation* for the substantial contributions of all concerned Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to UNESCO's action in the occupied Palestinian territory, and *appeals* to them to continue assisting UNESCO in this endeavour;
3. *Thanks* the Director-General for the results that have been obtained in relation to the implementation of a number of current educational and cultural activities, and *invites* her to strengthen UNESCO's financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian educational and cultural institutions in order to address new needs and problems resulting from recent developments;
4. *Also thanks* the Director-General for UNESCO's response to the situation in the Gaza Strip and for the initiatives that have already been implemented with the generous financial support of Member States and donors, and *calls upon* the Director-General to further expand the early recovery programme, within the Organization's fields of competence;

5. *Expresses its continuing concern* at any actions undermining the cultural and natural heritage, and cultural and educational institutions, as well as at any impediments which prevent Palestinian and all other schoolchildren and students from being an integral part of their social fabric and from exercising fully their right to education, and calls for the observance of the provisions of the present resolution;
6. *Encourages* the Director-General to continue to reinforce her action in favour of the reconstruction, rehabilitation and restoration of the Palestinian archaeological sites and cultural heritage;
7. *Invites* the Director-General to address the needs for capacity building in all UNESCO's fields of competence by expanding the financial assistance programme for Palestinian students both from the regular budget and from extrabudgetary resources, and *thanks* Saudi Arabia for its generous contribution in this regard;
8. *Requests* the Director-General to follow closely the implementation of the recommendations of the eighth meeting of the Joint UNESCO-Palestinian Authority Committee (4-5 March 2008), especially in Gaza, and to organize, as soon as possible, the ninth meeting of the Joint UNESCO-Palestinian Authority Committee;
9. *Encourages* the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, and *expresses the hope* that the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations will succeed, and that a just and comprehensive peace will be brought about speedily, in accordance with the Constitution of UNESCO and the United Nations resolutions on this matter, particularly the relevant Security Council resolutions;
10. *Also invites* the Director-General:
 - (a) to continue the efforts she is making to preserve the human, social and cultural fabric of the occupied Syrian Golan, in accordance with the relevant provisions of this resolution;
 - (b) to undertake efforts to offer appropriate curricula, and to provide more grants and adequate assistance to the educational and cultural institutions of the occupied Syrian Golan;
11. *Recalls* that this item is inscribed on the agenda of the 209th session of the Executive Board, and decides to include this item in the agenda of the 41st session of the General Conference.