



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Two hundred and ninth session

209 EX/24

PARIS, 26 June 2020
Original: English

Item 24 of the provisional agenda

OCCUPIED PALESTINE

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 207 EX/Decision 38, by which the Executive Board decided to include the item entitled “Occupied Palestine” in the agenda of the 209th session. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 207th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Decision required: paragraph 19.



Job : 202001896

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 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. In accordance with 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 stakeholders concerned are currently planning a new phase of the project to make the Centre operational, autonomous and sustainable through the strengthening of capacities, the restoration of the premises and the elaboration of a strategy. To that effect, a project proposal was submitted in late summer 2019 to the Norwegian Government. UNESCO and the donor are in the last stages of the finalization of the project proposal.
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, the premises of the Museum have been renovated and equipped, and staff has been appointed and trained in inventorying, cataloguing, basic conservation, restoration, photography, English language and ICTs. Discussions have been initiated with the Jordan and Jerusalem Awqaf about the further rehabilitation and restructuring of the museum and exhibition plans, when the situation allows.
5. Since the 207th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat has received two letters from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO regarding the Old City of Jerusalem and the respect of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. One of these letters refers to developments related to the building of a cable car over the Old City. The Secretariat followed up with Israel, State Party to the Convention, asking them to provide information in this regard. Following subsequent reports regarding the approval and commencement of experimental drilling connected to the construction of a train route and underground station next to the Old City, UNESCO addressed two letters to Israel, State Party to the Convention, on 10 March and 22 May 2020, mentioning both the train and cable car projects. Through the letters, UNESCO underlined that, should these developments be verified, it would be of utmost importance to analyse their potential consequences and effects on the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity of the site, and urged the State Party, in the meantime, to refrain from any actions that may have an impact on the site’s Outstanding Universal Value.

6. Furthermore, the Secretariat received correspondence related to the World Heritage site “Palestine Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir”. The Secretariat invited Israel, State Party to the Convention, to provide information in this regard.

7. Information relating to correspondence received during the reporting period is reflected in the annex to this document.

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

8. Two serious eruption of hostilities took place in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel during the period in question. In early November 2019, a two-day outbreak of violence led to the deaths of 34 Palestinians as well as 111 injuries.¹ The second outbreak occurred in late February 2020.² In each case, a ceasefire was brokered following the efforts of the United Nations and Egypt, ending the escalations.

Education

9. The political situation in Gaza continued to be volatile, which affected children’s rights and their access to quality education. During 2016/2017 school year, 2% of students dropped out of school in Gaza.³ Violence against children in all its forms is of serious concern, as it compromises children’s learning and future potential. Children experience distress, fear and intimidation going to and coming from school in high-risk locations. Constant exposure to conflict, economic hardship, and increased poverty, have adverse effects on children.⁴

10. In this context, UNESCO provided **training on disaster risk reduction** for 40 school staff, which are members of Emergency Committees in the most vulnerable schools in Gaza (in December 2019). The training strengthened knowledge and technical skills on: (i) Crisis and Disaster Management, (ii) Continuation of Education during Emergencies, (iii) Emergency Prevention and Preparedness, and (iv) Dealing with disasters. Capacities of participants were improved to ensure a safe learning environment for learners and educators in the most at-risk areas, in line with the INEE Minimum Standards and the SDG 4. In addition, adapted risk mitigation and response strategies to face crises and disasters were developed to ensure the continuation of quality education during crises and disasters.

Culture

11. To support the effective implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in Palestine, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities **updated the inventory of the Palestinian cultural heritage sites in the Gaza Strip**. The inventory mapped 268 cultural heritage sites and 70 archaeological sites. A user-friendly database for the use of the public audience is under construction⁵.

12. With funding from the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) of the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the project entitled **Empowering Gaza’s youth through theatre** implemented by the Basma Society for Culture and Arts had successfully implemented a training on interactive theatre for the first time in the Gaza Strip, targeting 90 students (49 females and 41 males) from all universities. The training included 66 theoretical hours and 60 practical hours,

¹ OCHA Protection of Civilians Report (29 October-11 November 2019)
<https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/29-october-11-november-2019>

² OCHA Monthly Humanitarian Bulletin (January-February 2020)
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/overview-january-february-2020>

³ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS): <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=>

⁴ UNICEF, Children in the State of Palestine

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/unesco.ramallah/posts/2512333232193711>

and resulted in compiling a community-based theatre curriculum and a prospective study to promote community-based theatre as a source for youth development⁶.

13. Through the project entitled **Women Audio Visual Education (WAVE)**, implemented by Theatre Day Productions as part of the UNESCO-Sabrina Ho initiative **You are Next: empowering creative women**, a series of trainings were conducted in Gaza. These trainings were focused on audiovisual production, filming techniques, creative narratives and storytelling, drama acting and directing. The trainees were engaged in making six documentary films Gaza, which were screened during the 16-Day Campaign of Action against Gender-Based Violence in December 2019.

Communication and information

14. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 209 EX/25 "Implementation of 40 C/Resolution 67 and 207 EX/Decision 39 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories".

Gender Equality

15. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 209 EX/25 "Implementation of 40 C/Resolution 67 and 207 EX/Decision 39 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories".

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 Ramallah Office and the World Heritage Centre to initiate a review of the draft statement of Outstanding Universal Value, which is currently underway.

17. The state of conservation of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town was examined at the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee (30 June-10 July 2019), which adopted without debate and on a consensual basis, Decision 43 COM 7A.29 to retain Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town on the List of World Heritage in Danger. A conservation management plan for Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town is being elaborated with assistance from the World Heritage Fund.

18. The Secretariat received four letters related to the World Heritage site of Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town and the respect of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. The Secretariat invited Israel, State Party to the Convention, to provide information in this regard. Information relating to correspondence received is reflected in the annex to this document.

Proposed decision

19. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 209 EX/24 as well as the annexes attached to this decision,

⁶ More information is available in this link:
https://www.facebook.com/unesco.ramallah/posts/2707803065980059?_tn_=-R

2. Recalling its previous decisions concerning “Occupied Palestine”,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 210th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

ANNEX I



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PROGRAMME AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (PX)

Item 24 OCCUPIED PALESTINE

DRAFT DECISION

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 209 EX/24,
2. Recalling the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions (1949) and their additional Protocols (1977), the 1907 Hague Regulations on Land Warfare, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its additional Protocols, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the inscription of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls at the request of Jordan on the World Heritage List (1981) and on the List of World Heritage in Danger (1982), and the recommendations, resolutions and decisions of UNESCO on the protection of cultural heritage, as well as resolutions and decisions of UNESCO relating to Jerusalem, also recalling previous UNESCO decisions relating to the reconstruction and development of Gaza as well as UNESCO decisions on the two Palestinian sites in Al-Khalil/Hebron and in Bethlehem,
3. Affirming that nothing in the current decision, which aims, *inter alia*, at the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Palestine and the distinctive character of East Jerusalem, shall in any way affect the relevant Security Council and United Nations resolutions and decisions on the legal status of Palestine and Jerusalem, including United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 (2016),
4. Taking note of the letters addressed to the Director-General by the Permanent Delegations of Palestine and Jordan to UNESCO in 2019 and 2020 concerning the sub-sections below,

I Jerusalem

5. Reaffirming the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls for the three monotheistic religions,

6. Bearing in mind that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the “basic law” on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith,
7. Recalling the seventeen decisions of the Executive Board: 185 EX/Decision 14, 187 EX/Decision 11, 189 EX/Decision 8, 190 EX/Decision 13, 192 EX/Decision 11, 194 EX/Decision 5.I.D, 195 EX/Decision 9, 196 EX/Decision 26, 197 EX/Decision 32, 199 EX/Dec.19.1, 200 EX/Decision 25, 201 EX/Decision 30, 202 EX/Decision 38, 204 EX/Decision 25 and 205 EX/Decision 28, 206 EX/Decision 32 and 207 EX/Decision 38, and the ten World Heritage Committee decisions: 34 COM/7A.20, 35 COM/7A.22, 36 COM/7A.23, 37 COM/7A.26, 38 COM/7A.4, 39 COM/7A.27, 40 COM/7A.13, 41 COM/7A.36, 42 COM/7A.21 and 43 COM/7A.22;
8. Regrets the failure of the Israeli occupying authorities to cease the persistent excavations, tunnelling, works and projects in East Jerusalem, particularly in and around the Old City of Jerusalem which are illegal under international law, and reiterates its request to Israel, the occupying Power, to stop all violations which are not in conformity with the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;
9. Also regrets the Israeli refusal to implement the UNESCO request to the Director-General to appoint a permanent representative to be stationed in East Jerusalem to report on a regular basis about all aspects covering the fields of competence of UNESCO in East Jerusalem, and reiterates its request to the Director-General to appoint, as soon as possible, the above-mentioned representative;

II Reconstruction and development of Gaza

10. Deeply deplores the ongoing military developments around the Gaza Strip and their heavy toll of civilian casualties as well as their continuous negative impact in the fields of competence of UNESCO;
11. Deplores the continuous Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip, which harmfully affects the free and sustained movement of personnel, students and humanitarian relief items and requests Israel to immediately ease this closure;
12. Thanks the Director-General for initiatives that have already been implemented in Gaza in the fields of education, culture and youth and for the safety of media professionals, calls upon her to continue her active involvement in the reconstruction of Gaza’s damaged educational and cultural components and reiterates, in this regard, its request to her to upgrade the UNESCO Antenna in Gaza and to organize, as soon as possible, an information meeting on the current situation in Gaza in the fields of competence of UNESCO and on the outcome of the projects conducted by UNESCO;

III The two Palestinian sites of *Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs* in Al-Khalil/Hebron and the *Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel’s Tomb* in Bethlehem

13. Reaffirms that the two concerned sites located in Al-Khalil/Hebron and in Bethlehem are an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and shares the conviction affirmed by the international community that the two sites are of religious significance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam;
14. Deplores the ongoing Israeli excavations, works, construction of private roads for settlers and of a Wall inside the Old City of Al-Khalil/Hebron which are illegal under international law and harmfully affect the authenticity and integrity of the site, and the subsequent denial of freedom of movement and freedom of access to places of worship and asks Israel, the occupying Power, to end all violations which are not in conformity with the provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;
15. Regrets the visual impact of the Wall on the site of Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem as well as the strict ban on access of Palestinian Christian and Muslim worshippers

to the site, and demands that the Israeli authorities restore the original character of the landscape around the site and lift the ban on access to it;

IV

16. Decides to include these matters under an item entitled “Occupied Palestine” in the agenda at its 210th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.

ANNEX II

**THE UNESCO REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION
TO THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM AND ITS WALLS**

The Executive Board

1. Stresses the urgent need to implement the UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls;
2. Invites the Director-General and the World Heritage Centre to exert all efforts, in line with their mandates and in conformity with the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, decisions and resolutions, to ensure the prompt implementation of the mission and, in case of non-implementation, to propose effective measures in the report to it at its 210th session;
3. Expresses its commitment to exert its utmost efforts to resolve this issue at its next session.

ANNEX TO THE DOCUMENT

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

Date	From	Subject
10 October 2019	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO, with enclosed letter from the Palestinian Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability of the Bethlehem University	Palestine Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir
18 December 2019	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
17 January 2020	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalīl Old Town
22 January 2020	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
27 January 2020	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalīl Old Town
29 April 2020	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO, with enclosed letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates	Hebron/AI-Khalīl Old Town
18 May 2020	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/AI-Khalīl Old Town
17 June 2020	Ambassador of Israel to International Organizations	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls