



United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

214 EX/22

Executive Board

Two hundred and fourteenth session

PARIS, 30 March 2022
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Item 22 of the provisional agenda

OCCUPIED PALESTINE

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 212 EX/Decision 43, by which the Executive Board decided to include the item entitled "Occupied Palestine" in the agenda of the 214th session. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 212th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Decision required: paragraph 22.



Job: 202200931

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, UNESCO has sought to facilitate exchanges between Israeli, Palestinian, and 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. The state of conservation of the property will be examined at 45th session of the World Heritage Committee. It is noticeable that the pertaining decisions of the Executive Board, the General Conference and the World Heritage Committee have been adopted on a consensual basis since October 2017.
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 in 2011: 14 learning modules were implemented, with over 1,500 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 Centre currently enjoys a restoration and conservation laboratory with essential equipment, facilities and materials, that were provided under the project. Moreover, UNESCO conducted seven monitoring and consultation missions during the project implementation period, between 2011 and 2015, contributing thus to its effective and efficient execution. Committed to building the long-term sustainability of the Centre and to consolidating the acquired skills, the Government of Norway renewed its support to UNESCO in 2020 for a new phase of the project, which is currently underway and at making the center fully operational and autonomous through the restoration of the premises and the elaboration of a long-term conservation and management strategy. Since the launch of the fourth phase, the Centre has benefited from the recruitment of five additional restorers and the appointment of four technical staff. The training of the staff and restoration of the premises are ongoing since September 2021. A conservation assessment is being undertaken and a ten-year conservation and management strategy is being drafted. A new network infrastructure, as well as a fire security and climate control system are being installed.
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 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 to continue supporting the Museum, when the situation allows.
5. Since the 212th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat received a joint letter from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO dated 18 January 2022, regarding the project to build a cable car over 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 Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Secretariat followed up with Israel, State Party to the Conventions, asking it to provide relevant information in this regard, since such project could have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.
6. Furthermore, the Secretariat received a letter from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO on 28 February 2022 concerning reported violations targeting Christian presence in the

Holy City and the respect of the 1954 Hague convention for the protection of Cultural property in the event of armed Conflict and its two protocols.

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

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

8. The blockade on the Gaza strip continues to exacerbate a protracted protection crisis on the two million Palestinians who have been living with limited access to electricity, drinking water and healthcare. They have been further isolated from the external world by restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have decreased access to clean water and sanitation. According to World Bank Rapid Damage Needs Assessment (June 2021), the May 2021 escalation resulted in 261 Palestinians killed, over 2,200 injured, and up to US\$380 million in physical damage to core infrastructure assets, including buildings, health, educational and WASH facilities, in addition to \$190 million in economic losses. Although the ceasefire is holding, and the Israeli authorities have eased some of the restrictions imposed in May 2021, the blockade remains in place, impeding the access and movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza, the implementation of infrastructure projects and delaying economic recovery.

EDUCATION

9. In Gaza, during the May 2021 hostilities, 331 schools and kindergartens operated by the government, UNRWA or private actors sustained damage. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has also led to the prolonged closures of schools and kindergartens, put in place in the context of the measures adopted to contain the virus.

10. Against this backdrop, schools in Gaza and the West Bank reopened for the new school year on 16 August 2021. Education is now taking place face-to-face in all schools, subject to COVID-19 related protocols set by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Education (MoE). In Gaza, pupils of one of the three damaged schools still continue to attend nearby facilities until reconstruction is complete. Education Cluster partners have managed to finish all major rehabilitation work in the other affected schools.

11. UNESCO continues supporting the Ministry of Education to address learning gaps, which resulted from the absenteeism of students due in particular to the pandemic. Support is focused in particular on strengthening teaching and learning targeting children from grades 1-4 in order to bridge the learning loss gap in Arabic and Math subjects. Students' wellbeing is also promoted through sports, drama, storytelling, and music activities. The objective is to provide psychosocial support and emotional release for students, who were traumatized during the May 2021 escalation while learning in their schools. The initiative will benefit around 80 teachers, 34 supervisors and 4000 students and is implemented within the framework of the Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Resilience Programme for Palestine.

12. In order to respond to the needs of Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Palestine, UNESCO conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment for Higher Education institutions (HEI) in Gaza, which contributed to the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment launched in June 2021 by the World Bank in cooperation with the European Union and the United Nations. UNESCO's assessment revealed that all targeted 12 HEIs have been affected by the conflict and various material damages have been reported. In addition, the psychological impact was measured among the students in the targeted HEIs. UNESCO Office in Ramallah therefore developed funding proposals to be submitted to potential donors to ensure subsequent response and support.

13. Moreover, through funding received from the Japanese government, UNESCO is establishing two vocational units in Gaza in web and graphic design specializations. Further support to TVET will also be enhanced through a funding agreement established with the Belgium Development Agency (Enabel).

CULTURE

14. Following the conflict in Gaza in May 2021, and through funding from the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF), UNESCO conducted a Post Disaster Needs Assessment to comprehensively assess the impact of the conflict on the culture sector in Gaza. The assessment also includes a proposed recovery framework. UNESCO has provided support to 32 affected musicians and artists (including 15 women), by carrying out interactive activities in the field of music and fine arts, targeting 90 children and youth (including 58 girls) from different governorates of the Gaza Strip. The sessions were inclusive and enabled the participation of 7 children (including 4 girls) with disabilities. Ten theatre performers and four artistic directors (including 7 women) were also supported in realizing two theatre productions performed more than twenty times with post-performance interactive sessions that were attended by an estimated 1,000 youth.

15. UNESCO is supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) in preserving the Tentative List site of the [Anthedon Harbour](#). Following two field visits in April and August 2021 and several discussions with the relevant authorities, UNESCO identified the most vulnerable and accessible segments of the site along the sea shore, which had been partially damaged due to past conflicts, poor maintenance and improper interventions as well as coastal erosion. UNESCO agreed with MoTA to implement initial protection and restoration interventions to prevent the continuous deterioration and erosion of the site's components caused by the sea tide, while ensuring easy access of the public.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

16. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 214 EX/23 "Implementation of 41 C/Resolution 51 and 212 EX/Decision 44 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories".

GENDER EQUALITY

17. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 214 EX/23 "Implementation of 41 C/Resolution 51 and 212 EX/Decision 44 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"

18. 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.

19. The state of conservation of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town was presented to the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou/online, 2021), which adopted without debate and on a consensual basis Decision 44 COM 7A.16 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.

20. Since the 212th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat received two letters from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO dated 3 December 2021 and 21 January 2022, addressing reported violation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 World Heritage Convention at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of the Patriarchs part of the World Heritage property of Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town. The Secretariat followed up with Israel asking it to provide relevant information in this regard.

21. Information relating to the correspondence received during the reporting period is reflected in the Annex to this document.

Proposed draft decision

22. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 214 EX/22 as well as the annexes attached to this decision,
2. Recalling its previous decisions concerning “Occupied Palestine”,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 215th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

ANNEX I



Executive Board

Two hundred and fourteenth session

214 EX/PX/DR.22.1
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PROGRAMME AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (PX)

Item 22 OCCUPIED PALESTINE

DRAFT DECISION

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 214 EX/22,
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 2021 and 2022 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 twenty one 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, 207 EX/Decision 38, 209 EX/Decision 24, 210 EX/Decision 36, 211 EX/Decision 33 and 212 EX/Decision 43, and the eleven 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, 43 COM/7A.22 and 44 COM/7A.10;
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 215th 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 215th 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
3 December 2021	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town
18 January 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls
21 January 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town
28 February 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Christian presence in Jerusalem