



unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

215 EX/36

Executive Board

Two hundred and fifteenth session

PARIS, 5 October 2022
Original: English

Item 36 of the provisional agenda

OCCUPIED PALESTINE

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 214 EX/Decision 22, by which the Executive Board decided to include the item entitled “Occupied Palestine” in the agenda of the 215th session. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 214th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Decision required: paragraph 23.



Job: 202202584

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 the 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 and will be reinforced by the presence of experts during the forthcoming year. The conservation assessment has been undertaken and the ten-year conservation and management strategy have been drafted. A new network infrastructure, as well as a fire security and climate control system are being installed. The first Annual Review Meeting of the fourth phase, hosted online in February 2022, was attended by participants from Al-Aqsa Mosque Centre for the Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts in Jerusalem, the Jordanian Jerusalem Awqaf, the Permanent Delegations of Jordan, Palestine and Norway to UNESCO and UNESCO Secretariat.
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 214th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat received three joint letters from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO. Two letters, dated 25 April 2022 and 4 August 2022 respectively, refer to archaeological excavations and tunneling works adjacent to the outer pillars of Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, 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 third letter, dated

20 June 2022, expresses concerns about the project to build a cable car over East 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. A reply has not been received yet.

6. Moreover, the Secretariat received two letters from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO, dated 11 and 13 April 2022, addressing recent developments in the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, one letter dated 26 April 2022 regarding restrictions of access to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and three letters dated 15 April, 10 May and 23 May 2022 concerning the prevailing situation at Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, part of the World Heritage property. The letters referred to 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, as well as to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Secretariat followed up with Israel, asking it to provide relevant information. A reply has not been received yet.

7. In addition, the Secretariat received a letter dated 7 July 2022 from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO with enclosed letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, expressing concerns regarding archaeological excavations and tunneling works at Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The Secretariat followed up with Israel, asking it to provide relevant information. A reply has not been received yet.

8. Finally, the Secretariat received a letter from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO on 25 March 2022 concerning the World Heritage property Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, concerning the setting up of a nucleus for a new settlement within the property. The letter refers to 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 followed up with Israel, asking it to provide relevant information. A reply has not been received yet.

9. 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”

10. June 2022 marks 15 years of the blockade on the Gaza Strip. As a result, about 2.1 million Palestinians in Gaza are ‘locked in’, the vast majority unable to access the remainder of the oPt and the outside world, limiting access to medical treatment unavailable in Gaza, to higher education, to family and social life, and to employment and economic opportunities. According to the recent OCHA key factsheet on Gaza, the longstanding access restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities have undermined Gaza’s economy, resulting in high unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency.¹

EDUCATION

11. Considering the high unemployment rate in Gaza Strip, building on the assessment during the reporting period, UNESCO has strengthened its support to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). UNESCO completed the establishment and equipment of two vocational units in Gaza on web and graphic designs through funding received by Japan. The two units, facilitating e-work, freelancing and self-employment, will be officially opened early September 2022 to equip youth with the skills needed to access the labour market and ensure economic independency.

12. In the framework of the TVET4Future project funded by the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel), UNESCO conducted several awareness raising campaigns to increase enrolment in TVET and promote TVET as a future pathway for youth, to encourage self-employment and contribute to

¹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-15-years-blockade-june-2022>

decreasing the unemployment rate in Palestine, with a special focus on Gaza. Within the same project, work has been done on skills forecasting to help anticipating the labour market needs in the upcoming years. This will allow directing youth towards future careers that will be needed and will help policy makers bridge the gap between demand and supply.

13. UNESCO continues supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Education to address learning gaps, which resulted from school closures due to the pandemic. Support is focused on strengthening teaching and learning targeting children from grades 1-4 in order to bridge the learning loss in Arabic and Math subjects. Students' wellbeing is also promoted through sports, arts, storytelling, and music activities. The objective is to provide psychosocial support and emotional release for students, who were traumatized during the May 2021 escalation. The initiative is expected to benefit around 80 teachers, 34 supervisors and 4000 students by the end of 2022 and is implemented within the framework of the Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Resilience Programme for Palestine (ECW/MYRP).

14. To respond to the findings of the Rapid Needs Assessment for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) conducted by UNESCO in Gaza in the aftermath of the May 2021 escalation, the UNESCO Office in Ramallah developed a funding proposal submitted to potential partners to provide support and training to vulnerable higher education students. UNESCO's assessment revealed that all twelve targeted HEIs have been affected and various material damages have been reported. In addition, the psychological impact was measured among the students in the targeted HEIs.

CULTURE

15. Through UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF), the UNESCO Office in Ramallah conducted a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) to identify the damages, losses and impact of the May 2021 escalation that also includes a proposed recovery framework. The PDNA and recovery framework are finalized, and the outcomes were presented on 6 July 2022 in Gaza. Through the HEF, UNESCO also contributed to rehabilitating a historic building, Al Wehidi House in the old city of Gaza, to host the Basma Society for Culture and Arts that lost its premises during the 2021 escalation. UNESCO's contribution allowed the stabilization of the most weak and damaged parts of the building, while contributions from other sources are allowing the full rehabilitation of the building that is expected to be achieved by the end of 2022.

16. UNESCO is supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) in preserving a part of the [Anthedon Harbour](#), a site on the Tentative List of Palestine. Following two field visits and multiple exchanges with the relevant authorities, UNESCO identified the most vulnerable and accessible segments of the site along the seashore, which have 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 aiming at preventing the continuous deterioration and erosion of the site's components. Concrete arrangements for accessing the site are currently being explored along with the identification of the most suitable and effective implementation modalities.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

17. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 215 EX/37 "Implementation of 41 C/Resolution 51 and 214 EX/Decision 23 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories".

GENDER EQUALITY

18. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 215 EX/37 "Implementation of 41 C/Resolution 51 and 214 EX/Decision 23 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”

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

20. 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. The elaboration of the conservation management plan for Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town has been carried out with assistance from the World Heritage Fund.

21. Since the 214th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat received one letter from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO dated 30 May 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, in addition to raising concerns regarding the construction of an electric elevator at the property. The Secretariat followed up with Israel asking it to provide relevant information in this regard.

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

Proposed draft decision

23. 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 215 EX/36 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 216th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

ANNEX I



Executive Board

Two hundred and fifteenth session

215 EX/PX/DR.36.1
PARIS, 5 October 2022
Original: English

PROGRAMME AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (PX)

Item 36 OCCUPIED PALESTINE**DRAFT DECISION**

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 215 EX/36,
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 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 two 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, 212 EX/Decision 43 and 214 EX/Decision 22, 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 216th 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 216th 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
25 March 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir</u>
11 April 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
13 April 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
15 April 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
25 April 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
26 April 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
10 May 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
23 May 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
30 May 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Hebron/Al-Khalīl Old Town</u>
20 June 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
7 July 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO with enclosed letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>
4 August 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<u>Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</u>