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JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 34 C/RESOLUTION 47, 177 EX/DECISIONS 19 AND 20

SUMMARY

This document is presented pursuant to 34 C/Resolution 47 and 177 EX/Decisions 19 and 20, by which the Director-General was invited to report on the progress made concerning UNESCO's contribution to the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Action Plan for the safeguarding of this heritage, and on the activities carried out at the ascent leading to the Mughrabi Gate.

An addendum will be issued before the 179th session of the Executive Board in order to inform the Members of the Board on recent developments related to this issue. This addendum will also contain a draft decision.

I. Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem

1. The elaboration of the Action Plan was completed and presented to the 177th session of the Executive Board and the 34th session of the General Conference (177 EX/19, 177 EX/19 Add. and 34 C/15). A synthesis of the Action Plan was distributed to the Members of the Executive Board (177 EX/INF.8), while the full set of studies was officially forwarded to the concerned parties, the donor countries having contributed to its elaboration, in particular the Government of Italy, and other interested Member States.
2. The decision of the Executive Board (177 EX/Decision 19) and the resolution of the General Conference (34 C/Resolution 47) both welcomed the Action Plan and congratulated the Director-General for its finalization. They also encouraged “UNESCO Member States to contribute to the efforts towards the implementation of the programme activities for the second phase of the Action Plan [...] notably through extrabudgetary resources”.
3. The continued effective implementation of the Action Plan is crucial, particularly since the improvement of the urban and social environment are vital elements for the preservation of the universal values to which the Old City of Jerusalem owes its inclusion on the World Heritage List. In order to ensure concrete action on the ground, the development of the Action Plan will be sustained by a fundraising campaign to generate financial support for implementing the identified projects. That is why, besides providing the Action Plan to Member States who express their interest, a brochure containing the project profiles is in preparation, to be widely distributed.

II. The Mughrabi ascent

4. At its 31st session (June 2007, Christchurch, New Zealand), the World Heritage Committee examined the report on the state of conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls – site inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger –, the progress of the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, and the issue of the Mughrabi ascent, following the 176 EX/Special Plenary meeting and its ensuing decision.
5. The World Heritage Committee adopted Decision 31 COM 7A.18, by which it requested “the World Heritage Centre to facilitate the professional encounter at the technical level between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts to discuss the detailed proposals for the proposed final design of the Mughrabi ascent, prior to any final decision”. The Committee further requested “the Israeli authorities, in addition to the above encounter, to provide the World Heritage Centre, as soon as possible, with the proposed final design of the Mughrabi ascent, whose principal aim should be to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the site”.
6. At the time of the 34th session of the General Conference, it had been announced that the encounter called for by the World Heritage Committee would take place no later than the first days of November. Indeed, the meeting was foreseen to be held in Jerusalem on 4 November 2007, immediately after the General Conference of UNESCO. However, on 2 November it was decided, in consultation with the concerned parties, to postpone it.
7. In October 2007, the Jordanian authorities transmitted to the UNESCO Secretariat a PowerPoint document presenting the “Jordanian proposed design concept for the road leading to the Mughrabi Gate”, prepared by the Jordanian experts. This document has been forwarded to the Israeli authorities to be studied by their experts. It has also been given to ICCROM and ICOMOS, Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee.
8. Once the date of 13 January 2008 was agreed upon by the concerned parties, the necessary steps were taken by the World Heritage Centre to organize the encounter in Jerusalem. The Kenyon Institute (Council for British Research in the Levant) kindly offered its premises to host the meeting. The Jordanian delegation consisted of three experts from the Waqf and the Department

of Antiquities, while the four Israeli representatives consisted of two experts from the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Municipality and two architects from the architectural firm designated to prepare the plan and design for the Mughrabi ascent.

9. The encounter was divided into two parts: in the morning, presentations were made by the Israeli experts on the excavations, their conservation plan, and on the proposed design of the new access. The Jordanian experts also presented their conceptual design. It was noted at the beginning that the two projects were at different stages of development. The Israeli proposal was based on measurements and plans, and was therefore to be considered as a preliminary project. The Jordanian proposal, developed without a field visit, was based only on maps and photos available to the Jordanians and was therefore to be considered as a concept. These differences did not prevent a comparison of the two solutions and a technical examination of the pros and cons of each of them.

10. The Israeli proposal consists of the construction of an elevated bridge, two and a half metres wide, starting approximately at the present entrance of the Plaza, and landing on the side of the existing Mughrabi Gate. The bridge is made up of a sequence of ramps (with a maximum 9-10% slope) and platforms, to allow the access of disabled people. It is supported by 20 steel pillars resting on concrete foundations that are placed over the archaeological structures. No canopy or other shading of the access is foreseen, and the bridge railings are designed in ways that minimize visual impacts.

11. The proposal presented by Jordan foresees the construction of an access path over the existing archaeological structures, resting on a "K-span" (industrial prefabricated steel vaults) vaulted system supported by two concrete rails positioned on the sides of the archaeological remains. The rails are supported on the northern side by a new wall, and on the southern side by new buttresses, to be built over the existing retaining walls. The proposed solution foresees the archaeological structures as accessible from the southern side. The access path would be composed of steps and made up of traditional materials.

12. In the afternoon, general discussion took place among the experts, including a technical discussion on the principles of authenticity and integrity as applied to the Mughrabi Gate Ascent conservation project and the new access. During the discussion, all the main principles and solutions of the two proposals were analysed, unveiling commonalities and differences. While some interpretation difference remained, there was consensus on the principle that all the historical layers needed to be conserved to respect the authenticity of the site, and on the fact that only minimal changes of the existing structures, justified on technical grounds, could be allowed. The discussions did not rule out the possibility of continuing the professional exchanges in view of a shared solution. The World Heritage Centre proposed the organization of a follow-up meeting by the end of February 2008. The proposal was accepted by all participants.

13. The "Reinforced monitoring" mechanism, requested by the Executive Board at its 176th session (176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting decision) and by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Decisions 31 COM 5.2. and 31 COM 7A.18) was applied for Jerusalem with regard to the Mughrabi ascent. Two reports were prepared by the World Heritage Centre providing an update of the situation at the Mughrabi ascent and the status of projects. They were transmitted to the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee and also forwarded to the concerned parties and the States Parties members of the World Heritage Committee in October 2007 and in February 2008.

II. Other projects

14. An updated project proposal for the "Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of al-Haram ash-Sharîf and its Collection" in Jerusalem, (to the value of US \$1,539,060, is awaiting the official approval of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The main activities of this project are to define the Museum's mission and development plan, assess/inventory the

collections, improve conservation measures, upgrade the storage and exhibition spaces, and build the professional capacity of museum professionals in various domains, such as conservation, exhibition development, public and educational programme development, museum management and administration, etc. in view of the reopening of the Islamic Museum of the Ḥaram ash-Sharīf to the public. If approved, this four-year project should begin as soon as possible in 2008.

15. As regards the centre for the conservation of Islamic manuscripts in al-Ashrafiya Madrasa, within the Ḥaram ash-Sharīf and funded by the United Arab Emirates and the Welfare Association, the technical equipment essential for the functioning of the conservation laboratory remains at Ashdod Port in what appears to be generally good condition, as confirmed by a visit by UNESCO to the site in November 2007. Since its provision by the contracting firm, UNESCO has made continuous efforts to obtain the customs clearance required for the equipment, and to secure its safe delivery to the Ḥaram ash-Sharīf.

16. The first phase of the development of an Architectural Heritage Preservation Institute, in partnership with the Welfare Association and thanks to funding from the European Commission to the value of €700,000, is progressing, notably in terms of the administrative setting. The first year was also devoted to developing the curriculum and training materials for the Institute.

17. An addendum to the present document will be issued before the 179th session of the Executive Board in order to inform the Members of the Board on recent developments related to this issue. This addendum will also contain a draft decision.



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JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 34 C/RESOLUTION 47, 177 EX/DECISIONS 19 AND 20

ADDENDUM

SUMMARY

This document is an addendum to document 179 EX/9, and aims at informing the Members of the Board of recent developments concerning the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, and at proposing a draft decision in this regard.

Decision proposed: paragraph 12.

I. Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem

1. On 24 January 2008, the A. G. Leventis Foundation (Republic of Cyprus) announced its decision to finance one of the restoration projects identified within the framework of the Action Plan the Saint-John Prodromos church close to the Holy Sepulchre. The UNESCO mission that went to Jerusalem in February 2008 was received by His Beatitude Theofilos III, Greek-Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, who welcomed the project. Consultations will take place with the office of the Patriarchate in order to study the implementation modalities of the project.

II. The Mughrabi Ascent

2. As mentioned in document 179 EX/9, it was agreed, during the professional encounter that took place in Jerusalem on 13 January 2008 between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts, to organize a follow-up meeting in order to further discuss the material exchanged and receive the technical views of the Advisory Bodies of the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS and ICCROM. It was subsequently decided, with the agreement of all parties, to organize the follow-up meeting in Jerusalem on 24 February 2008.

3. In addition to the participants who had attended the January encounter, the Advisory Bodies were represented respectively by the Director-General of ICCROM and the President of ICOMOS. A high-level expert in structural engineering also attended the follow-up meeting. The meeting, which was preceded by a visit by all the participants to the site of the Mughrabi Ascent, opened with the presentation of the main elements of the Israeli proposal for the access to the Mughrabi Gate and for the conservation of the archaeological remains, as well as of the Jordanian concept proposal. On this occasion, the Jordanian experts also presented a new alternative design consisting of a permanent sloped stone ramp positioned to the North of the archaeological remains. This new proposal will be submitted to the Advisory Bodies for further analysis and evaluation.

4. Subsequently, a technical discussion was held, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the different proposals, and discuss common and shared principles that could best meet the conservation requirements of the area. The technical discussion focused on the following main themes:

- the issue of the respect of the authenticity of the site;
- the assessment of the impacts of the different possible solutions on the integrity of the site; and
- the constraints linked to access and security issues.

5. All experts agreed that the structures of the Mughrabi Ascent exposed after the completion of the archaeological excavations conducted by the Israel Archaeological Authority in 2007 constitute an important testimony to the history of Jerusalem that need to be preserved. All the experts also agreed that conservation action is needed to protect the authenticity of the site. As the Mughrabi Ascent has been, for many centuries, a pedestrian access to Haram-ash-Sharif, preserving its authenticity requires the maintenance, to the greatest extent possible, of its character and the re-establishment of the ascent along a path as close as possible to the original route. Both the Israeli and the Jordanian proposals are presented as inspired by this principle. However, the Israeli proposal of an elevated bridge that follows a continuous ascending curve is more distant from the shape of the original pathway than the Jordanian proposal, which foresees a stepped pathway following the irregular directions of the pre-existing pathway. Furthermore, the Israeli proposal does not foresee the landing of the bridge in alignment with the Mughrabi Gate, unlike the original pathway.

6. The experts agreed on the necessity of allowing the public to enjoy and understand, in a comprehensive and global fashion, the value and coherence of the site, in a similar manner as is done in the Archaeological Park located nearby.

7. An extensive discussion took place among the experts on the different solutions and on their impacts on the physical integrity of the site. Both proposals present significant impacts on the archaeological structures, whether steel pillars to support the elevated bridge, or the positioning of new walls, pillars or buttresses and of concrete rails to support the steel structures. Both solutions have a limited degree of reversibility.

8. An important part of the discussion concerned the physical and visual impacts of any future design, with due respect to the authenticity and integrity of the site. The experts stressed the advantages of identifying solutions of a very simple nature that could be adapted easily to the nature of the site, with a variety of modalities and full reversibility. In fact, it was stated that many archaeological sites comparable to the Mughrabi Ascent area have dealt with the problem of access and transit of the public with an adaptive and flexible approach, in order to minimize the visual and physical impacts on the site itself.

9. Providing full access and security was considered by all the experts as an essential component of the design of the new path. The design proposed by the Israeli experts respects a series of important requirements that were examined in detail during the discussion. The other relevant issue discussed concerned the need to ensure full access for the disabled.

10. This professional meeting was conducted in a spirit of mutual trust and understanding and showed the importance of technical dialogue between experts to address complex issues that require consultation and the consensus of different stakeholders. In that regard, it was strongly felt by all participants that the various proposals discussed during the meeting had helped to build a consensus in line with the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee, based on a true exchange of ideas, experiences and know-how. Recognizing the critical importance of using, when necessary, such a format for dialogue, both UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies proposed themselves as facilitators, as appropriate, for similar technical and professional exchanges in future.

11. Following the positive conclusion of the encounter and of its follow-up meeting, the World Heritage Centre presented the Third Reinforced Monitoring Report to the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, to the Members of the Committee and the concerned parties. Furthermore, the World Heritage Centre is preparing a State of Conservation Report on the Old City of Jerusalem, which will be discussed at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2008, to take place in Quebec, Canada.

12. The Executive Board may wish to adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

I – Implementation of 34 C/Resolution 47 and 177 EX/Decision 19

1. Recalling 34 C/Resolution 47 and 177 EX/Decision 19, as well as the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions (1949), the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the related Protocols, and the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the inscription of the Old City of Jerusalem on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and the recommendations, resolutions and decisions of UNESCO on the protection of cultural heritage,

2. Affirming that nothing in the present decision, which is aimed at the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, shall in any way affect the relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions, in particular the relevant Security Council resolutions on the legal status of Jerusalem,
3. Having examined document 179 EX/9 and Addendum,
4. Expresses its sincere thanks to the Director-General for his sustained efforts for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, in compliance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Conference and of the Executive Board, and reiterates its concern as to the obstacles and practices affecting the preservation of the distinctive character of the Old City of Jerusalem;
5. Taking note of the declaration by the Director-General concerning Jerusalem at the 172nd session of the Executive Board, which appeals to all parties concerned to respect the outstanding universal value of the Old City of Jerusalem, and to refrain from anything that may jeopardize the distinctive character of the Old City of Jerusalem inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger, invites him to pursue his efforts with the authorities concerned in regard to the safeguarding and preservation of the distinctive character of the Old City of Jerusalem;
6. Thanks the Leventis Foundation for its generous contribution to the restoration of the Greek-Orthodox Church of Saint John Prodromos and encourages UNESCO Member States to contribute to the implementation of activities foreseen in the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, notably through extrabudgetary resources;
7. Decides to include this item on the agenda of the 180th session of the Executive Board and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.

II – Implementation of 176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting/Decision, 176 EX/20 and 177 EX/20

1. Having examined document 179 EX/9 and Addendum,
2. Recalling decisions 176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting/Decision, 176 EX/20 and 177 EX/20,
3. Further recalling 31 COM 7.A.18 adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007);
4. Affirms that the principal aim of the final design of the Mughrabi ascent should be to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the site;
5. Encourages the application of the reinforced monitoring mechanism, adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session, in monitoring the state of conservation of the Mughrabi ascent, subject to the procedures in Document WHC-07/31.COM/5.2 and Decision 31 COM 5.2 and supports, in particular, the involvement of ICCROM and ICOMOS in this mechanism;
6. Expresses its gratitude to the Director-General for the positive action he took to ensure the holding of the professional encounter at the technical level on 13 January 2008, as well as the follow-up meeting of 24 February 2008, between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts, with the involvement of ICCROM and ICOMOS, to discuss the detailed proposals for the proposed final design of the Mughrabi ascent, prior to any final decision;

- 7 Expresses its sincere thanks to the Director-General for the action he has taken to ensure the noble mission entrusted to UNESCO in safeguarding, preserving and restoring world heritage properties for the benefit of humanity and future generations;
- 8 Invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.