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IMPLEMENTATION OF 35 C/RESOLUTION 75 AND 185 EX/DECISION 36 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 35 C/Resolution 75 and 185 EX/Decision 36. It summarizes the progress UNESCO made since the 185th session of the Executive Board in providing assistance to the Palestinian people and their educational and cultural institutions, as well as to such institutions in the occupied Syrian Golan.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present document reports on progress achieved in the implementation of UNESCO assistance to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant stakeholders in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and the occupied Syrian Golan, since July 2010.

II. UNESCO'S ASSISTANCE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

EDUCATION

2. During the period under review and in parallel to its response to the humanitarian situation in Gaza, UNESCO continued assisting the Palestinian Authority (PA) in priority areas jointly agreed upon during the 8th Palestinian Authority/UNESCO Joint Committee meeting (March 2008), namely teacher education, educational planning and management, science education and technical and vocational education (TVET).

3. Major efforts concentrated on technical assistance to the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) to help implement the **National Teacher Education Strategy (TES)**. Within the programme "Quality Systems for Quality Teachers", funded by the European Union (€3.6 million), UNESCO provided technical assistance to develop systems and operational frameworks needed for the implementation of TES, particularly by supporting the Commission for Developing the Teaching Profession (CDTP). Major CDTP achievements to improve the professionalization, status and motivation of teachers included: the piloting in schools of the National Professional Standards for teachers; the development of standards for new teachers; the development of a qualifications framework for in-service courses; ongoing research on teachers' working conditions, motivation and retention; the development of the CDTP portal as part of the communication strategy (www.cntp.ps) as well as the celebration of World Teachers' Day on 5 October 2010 jointly in Ramallah and Gaza, which included the broadcasting of advocacy television spots and films.

4. UNESCO's assistance to the teacher education reform generated further donor interest and engagement in support of TES, as it creates the systems and frameworks needed to fully implement the Strategy. The Standards for New Teachers will be used as a reference and tested in the World Bank "Teacher Education Improvement" project, which was launched recently. Another set of standards – the National Professional Standards for Teachers to upgrade the educational qualifications of teachers in grade 1 to 4 – have also become a reference, and are used in the framework of the teacher education project implemented by the World Bank.

5. In the area of **educational planning and management**, UNESCO continued to support the MoEHE's efforts to monitor and implement its five-year plan using a sector-wide approach (SWAP). After the release of the 2011 Operational Plan of the Ministry, UNESCO took the lead in developing a coordinated United Nations response package involving UNDP, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNFPA and UNESCO. The response package focuses on technical assistance in two priority areas for the Ministry, namely early childhood care and education, as well as inclusive education.

6. In the field of **non-formal education**, UNESCO provided learning opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized communities in the oPt through a partnership with the Non-Formal Education Supportive Centre in the old city of Nablus. Catch-up courses were offered to 134 Palestinian pupils from 2nd to 6th grades, as well as free-of-charge tutoring for students preparing for their final end-of-school exam, the Tawjihee. Moreover, in order to strengthen the technical capacity of the Centre, UNESCO partnered with Right to Play, an international organization focusing on non-formal education and learning through playing. Training was provided to the Centre's animators and an educational summer camp took place in July 2010. This cooperation was further extended in the ensuing months to support education activities in two vulnerable West Bank communities under threat of displacement. Together with the members of the Humanitarian Education Cluster, UNESCO is developing an education coordinated response to

address both the threat of displacement (i.e. preventive measures) as well as providing emergency relief to affected populations in the event of displacement.

7. As part of its efforts to promote **science education**, UNESCO partnered with the French General Consulate in Jerusalem to organize the first Palestinian Science Festival. The Festival took place from 1 to 10 November 2010 and ended with the “World Science Day for Peace and Development”. It benefited children and young people in five Palestinian cities, namely Gaza, Hebron, East Jerusalem, Nablus and Bethlehem. Thanks to its experimental activities, cultural events, and youth workshops in schools and in non-school settings, the Festival contributed to promoting a scientific culture among children and young people. The Palestinian Science Festival proved to be an innovative way of introducing children and young people, as well as teachers, to alternative methodologies and experimental activities in science education.

8. On 1 March 2011, a local launch of the 2011 edition of the Global Monitoring Report “The Hidden Crisis: Education and Armed Conflict” was organized in Ramallah. The panel introducing and discussing the report was composed of the Palestinian Authority’s Minister of Education and Higher Education, the United Nations Resident Coordinator for the oPt, as well as the Head of the UNESCO Ramallah Office. A photo exhibition illustrating the situation of education in the West Bank and Gaza was opened after the presentation of the report.

CULTURE

9. During the reporting period, UNESCO strengthened the strategic cooperation with relevant line Ministries of the Palestinian Authority – in particular the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Culture – as well as with local authorities and the Palestinian civil society to help safeguard the Palestinian cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and to support its cultural expressions.

10. As part of its partnership with the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, UNESCO and the Palestinian National Committee for Education, Science and Culture supported the reunion and revival of the **Palestinian National Orchestra**, which played for the first time since 1948 with 40 musicians of Palestinian origin in December 2010 to January 2011.

11. The development of **cultural tourism** as a key resource for socio-economic development, both domestic and international, remained an overarching objective shared by UNESCO and stakeholders. This objective, as well as the strengthening of social cohesion, are at the heart of the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Joint Programme “Culture and Development in the oPt”, led by UNESCO and implemented jointly with FAO, UNDP and UN Women. The results achieved under the umbrella of this programme are reflected throughout this report.

12. **Museum development** also continued to be a priority in the context of cultural tourism development. Besides helping to establish the Riwaya Museum – Bethlehem (Museum of Narratives) and an eco-museum in the cultural landscape of Battir reported on below, UNESCO implemented a training course on “Museum Exhibition Development and Curatorial Practices” in Ramallah in November 2010. The course brought together 33 young creative professionals from PA institutions, civil society organizations and academic institutions from different geographical locations. The training was part of activities under the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Joint Programme “Culture and Development in the oPt” led by UNESCO. In the framework of the same project, UNESCO supported several cultural events and festivals throughout the oPt. The revival of such activities, encouraged by the Ministry of Culture, expanded the cultural offer beyond the main cities, and contributed to cultural tourism.

Bethlehem and its Governorate

13. Within the project “**Riwaya Museum – Bethlehem**”, funded by the Government of Norway (US \$1,323,631), the civil works at the museum premises were almost completed. In December 2010, an external study for the sustainability of the museum provided encouraging findings as to the potential of the museum to become rapidly self-sustainable.

14. The project “**Battir Landscape Eco-museum**” was launched in early March 2011. Funded by the Palestinian Municipalities Support Programme of Italy and implemented by the Village Council of Battir, with technical assistance from UNESCO, the project aims to establish the first eco-museum in the oPt. The concept of the museum came as an outcome of UNESCO-supported local efforts to protect the cultural and natural resources of the unique cultural landscape of olive terraces in the area. This activity was completed last summer in the context of the “**Safeguarding Historical and Environmental Resources Towards Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate**” project funded by the Government of Norway. In January 2011, the Village Council of Battir was awarded the Melina Mercouri International Prize for Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes, for its efforts to safeguard the cultural landscape in the area.

15. The final evaluation and publication of project results, which will conclude the current phase of the “**Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan**” funded by Italy (\$500,000), are ongoing and will be completed in spring 2011.

16. In accordance with the relevant World Heritage Committee decisions, UNESCO continued to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority for the safeguarding of Palestinian cultural heritage sites of “potential Outstanding Universal Value” with financial resources from the World Heritage Fund. Technical assistance was provided in order to complete the preparation of a nomination file for the “**Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route**”.

Nablus and its Governorate

17. The “**Old City of Nablus Renovation – Restoration and Adaptive Re-use of Khan al-Wakala**” project funded by the European Union (\$2,387,822) will demonstrate that cultural heritage protection and enhancement can contribute to inclusive socio-economic development at the local level. The finishing works, and the reconstruction of the main gate of the building will be completed by the first quarter of 2011. The “Yard School”, which has been reactivated for the implementation of the conservation works, completed all works using traditional building techniques, providing training opportunities for young workers, engineers and architects. All furniture of the restored Khan will be custom-made by young designers and trainees participating in a course on “Developing Design Skills Using Elements of Local Heritage and Traditional Craftsmanship” and will be produced locally in crafts production workshops. This training is implemented in the framework of the MDG-F Joint Programme “Culture and Development in the oPt”. The Khan itself will become a multipurpose community centre (serving as guest house, restaurant, museum space, store, meeting space, open courtyard, municipal offices).

18. In **Sebastiya**, the surveys of the archaeological site, the old core and the cultural landscape are completed as of March 2011, as part of an integrated conservation and management plan. The team of local experts in charge of the survey was coordinated by UNESCO and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. This included three senior planners, seven young architects and archaeologists as well as ten technical staff from PA ministries. This activity is another pilot under the MDG-F Joint Programme “Culture and Development in the oPt”.

Jericho and the Jordan Valley

19. UNESCO made further progress in its efforts to protect and enhance the Omayyad site of **Hisham’s Palace (Khirbet al-Mafjar)**. The concept design by Swiss architect Peter Zumthor of a shelter to protect the large mosaic of the hammam was further refined and presented, on site, to

members of the international community in December 2010, with a view to mobilizing funds for its realization. In December 2010, Switzerland confirmed financial assistance to the further development of the design of the shelter for the bath mosaic (CHF 100,000). The following month, thanks to financial support from the French Consulate General in Jerusalem, French landscaper Gilles Clement undertook an assessment mission for the design and realization of two gardens at the site.

20. In the context of the launch of **the celebrations of “Jericho 10,000”** in October 2010, technical and financial support was provided for a publication by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities entitled “Jericho: A Living History – Ten Thousand Years of Civilization”. The publication promotes the diversity and richness of Jericho’s tangible and intangible heritage and stresses its potential as a major tourist site.

21. In March 2011, the first National Advisory Forum of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTF-HS) Joint Programme: “Livelihood Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable Rural and Refugee Communities in the Jordan Valley” (\$4,629,085, of which \$1,033,620 is earmarked for UNESCO) took place in Jericho. During the event, the cornerstone of the first adobe/mud-brick house was laid jointly by the Prime Minister and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. In the context of this Joint Programme, UNESCO will train local professionals in revitalizing and modernizing the traditional adobe construction technique, as a coping mechanism to address housing problems faced by local communities.

SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

22. UNESCO continued supporting the **development of Palestinian research-action capacities** in the field of gender equality and women’s empowerment through the activities of the **Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC)** in Ramallah. With regard to its research activities, the Centre published a series of studies in July 2010 on “Women and Health” in the Palestinian society (available in English and Arabic). Several studies on “Women and the Environment” are well under way. In the field of training, the Centre is assisting the Ministry of Women Affairs in gender mainstreaming the policy work of Palestinian authorities. Training on women’s rights and on violence against women are provided to the gender units of line ministries as well as to members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The Centre’s library has been provided with new books and its website (www.pwrdc.ps) has been redesigned. The activities of the PWRDC were carried out thanks to financial support from the Government of Norway (\$1,136,364), and in the context of the MDG-F Joint Programme “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the oPt”. UNESCO participates, through the PWRDC, in activities addressing violence against women (\$776,525).

23. In February 2011, the Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences visited the West Bank. The mission focused on the role of the PWRDC in research and capacity development on gender issues within the Palestinian, regional and global context. During her mission, ADG/SHS met with the Minister of Women Affairs, the Director and staff of the PWRDC, academics at Birzeit University and a group of prominent Palestinian women activists.

24. In the field of Israeli-Palestinian academic cooperation, the third phase of the Programme of University Cooperation – Masters on Social Sciences and Humanitarian Affairs 2010-2011 was launched in February 2011. The project aims at contributing to peace-building and intercultural understanding in the Middle East through academic exchange and cooperation among faculty and students from Israeli, Palestinian and Italian universities and research institutes, under the aegis of UNESCO and La Sapienza University in Rome, Italy. For its third edition, the Programme gathers 10 Israeli and 10 Palestinian students. UNESCO contributed substantively to the content by delivering a course on the human rights-based approach to development. This course offered an insight on the practical implications of applying human rights principles and standards to development work.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

25. In communication and information, activities focused on the “Promotion of the freedom of expression, safety of journalists and empowerment of women in media to enhance respect for human rights in the Gaza strip and West Bank” project funded by Finland (€400,000). Parts of these activities addressed the specific needs of the media profession in Gaza. They are reported on in document 186 EX/35 “Report by the Director-General on the Reconstruction and Development in Gaza: Implementation of 185 EX/Decision 37”. Partnerships were established with four Palestinian media development organizations, namely (i) Ma’an News network for the component on safety of journalists, (ii) MADA, the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms for monitoring, reporting on freedom of expression, peer support networking and legal aid for media professionals, (iii) Filastiniyat for the empowerment of women media professionals, in particular establishing a peer support group for young women journalists, and (iv) Birzeit University, Media Development Centre for the provision of internship opportunities and capacity-building for young media professionals. Synergies between the project components through active cooperation between the four project partners were ensured through the establishment of an advisory committee which first met in January 2011. Implementation of training activities started in March 2011 and will be reported on in detail at the next session of the Executive Board.

26. An international expert mission to advise and assist in developing and reviewing existing **journalism curricula** at Palestinian higher education institutions was undertaken in October 2010. As a follow-up, a study tour to visit the media department of Turku University of Applied Sciences in Finland will be organized in May 2011 for a group of professors and lecturers at the Media Development Centre of Birzeit University. The study tour will be an opportunity to share international experience in journalism curriculum development.

III. UNESCO’S ASSISTANCE IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

The **Scholarship programme for Syrian students in the occupied Syrian Golan** (\$113,000 from the Japanese Funds-in-Trust) was launched in July 2009 to grant 24 scholarships for four academic years to the students from the occupied Syrian Golan. Implementation of the project continued over the reporting period, in cooperation with the Syrian authorities. Fourteen new scholarships have been granted for the academic year 2010-2011, in line with the agreed criteria. Four scholarships from the previous academic year (2009-2010) will be renewed once the required documents are provided by the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education. Six remaining scholarships have been deferred to the academic year 2011-2012 since not enough applicants met the selection criteria agreed with by the Syrian authorities.