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IMPLEMENTATION OF 35 C/RESOLUTION 75 AND 182 EX/DECISION 54 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 35 C/Resolution 75 and 182 EX/Decision 54. It summarizes the progress made by UNESCO since the 182nd 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. The Director-General intends to issue an addendum to the present document before the 184th session of the Board.

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 (PA) and to relevant stakeholders in the Palestinian Territories and the Occupied Syrian Golan, since July 2009.
2. The period under review witnessed several important developments in the Palestinian Territories. In August 2009, the Government of the Palestinian Authority presented a two-year plan outlining several national goals and government policies, centred around the objective of building strong State institutions capable of providing, equitably and effectively, for the needs of the Palestinian people. UNESCO priorities in education, research and culture are well reflected in this document.
3. UNESCO priorities are equally well reproduced in the UNCT Mid-Term Response Plan, where education and culture are recognized as priority areas for United Nations assistance to the Palestinian people and its institutions. UNESCO continued coordinating the overall monitoring of United Nations activities in these fields and is promoting the development of joint programmes in the fields of both culture and education.
4. Part I of the present document reports on progress achieved in providing assistance, in the Organization's fields of competence, to the Palestinian people and their institutions. Part II provides information on the situation of educational and cultural institutions in the Occupied Syrian Golan and UNESCO's assistance in that context. Information regarding UNESCO's response to the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is reported in document 184 EX/31.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND MAJOR PROGRESS IN UNESCO'S ASSISTANCE

EDUCATION

5. During the period under review, and in parallel to its education response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, UNESCO consolidated its assistance to the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in the four major priority areas agreed upon during the eighth Joint UNESCO/PA Committee meeting (March 2008) namely: teacher education, educational planning and management, technical vocational education and training (TVET), and science education.
6. In the area of **teacher education**, UNESCO continued to provide technical assistance to MoEHE for the implementation of the National Teacher Education Strategy (TES) (co-launched by the Ministry with UNESCO in May 2008): the three-year technical assistance programme on "Quality Systems for Quality Teachers" (€3.6 million) was initiated during spring 2009. It provides technical assistance to develop systems and operational frameworks needed for the successful implementation of TES, in particular through support to the Commission for Developing the Teaching Profession (CDTP). This support entailed technical advice on developing the structures and working methods of CDTP, as well as on the preparation of National Professional Standards for Teachers. As part of this programme, a scholarship award ceremony for 18 Ph.D scholars was organized on the occasion of the World Teachers' Day (5 October 2009), aimed at promoting the status of the teaching profession and developing MoEHE's capacity to manage the current teacher education reform.
7. In support of developing **National Standards for Teachers**, a study visit to England was organized, in cooperation with the United Kingdom University Council for the Education of Teachers, for selected members of the CDTP, from 2 to 6 November 2009. The purpose of this visit was to help participants to gain knowledge on how standards are developed and applied in the United Kingdom in order to guide CDTP's ongoing work in the development of standards.

8. In the area of **educational planning and management**, UNESCO assisted MoEHE in developing its planning, administrative and managerial skills both at the central and decentralized levels, through the provision of support to the National Institute for Educational Training (NIET). This entailed training 125 newly appointed school principals on the development of strategic and yearly school plans that operationalize the overall vision and objectives of MoEHE's five year plan.

9. Finally, a **summary comprehensive capacity-development programme** was finalized with UNESCO/IIEP's support by early January 2010. The programme aims at promoting a culture of strategic planning within MoEHE, through the development of appropriate organizational structures, processes and technical skills at both national and decentralized levels in order to enhance quality education.

10. In support of the development of **science education**, UNESCO assisted MoEHE in developing a **national policy framework for science innovation and technology**. A survey on existing structures and capacities in science, innovation and technology was conducted and discussed in a stakeholder workshop held in Ramallah on 2 December 2009. The survey will form the analytical base for further technical support from UNESCO towards the development and formulation of the policy document.

CULTURE

11. During the period under review, UNESCO assistance focused on safeguarding Palestinian cultural heritage, as well as on strengthening the link between culture and development, in the context of the State-building efforts carried out by the Palestinian Authority. Assistance to the Ministry of Culture (MOC) and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), as well as to civil society organizations, was provided in the context of extrabudgetary projects, as well as through regular programme activities.

12. The **MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Joint Programme for "Culture and Development in the oPt"**, led by UNESCO in cooperation with FAO, UNIFEM and UNDP, and funded by the Government of Spain (US \$3 million, of which 1 million earmarked for UNESCO) is a good example of the contribution culture can make to economic development and social cohesion. Project activities effectively started in November 2009 with support provided to the Ministry of Culture for the development of its Sector Strategy – the first of its kind – to be finalized in February 2010. The MDG-F Secretariat undertook a mission to the Palestinian Territories in December 2009, assessed the progress of the work as positive and provided a number of recommendations for consideration of the implementing partners.

13. Cooperation with the Ministry of Culture (MoC) towards the safeguarding of **Palestinian intangible heritage** was enhanced, as MoC is exploring a possible accession to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In the context of efforts to increase local capacities in safeguarding, collecting and inventorying intangible heritage forms of expression, namely the *Hikaye* (folktales), a study day on Palestinian folktales was held on 14 October and an exhibition on the same theme was organized.

14. The reprinting of the **"Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine"** (2,000 copies in English and 2,000 copies in Arabic) was completed in October 2009. Stemming from the importance of safeguarding the sites listed in this inventory, the preparation of the nomination file for the first potential Palestinian World Heritage site, namely the "Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Old City of Bethlehem" began, in cooperation with MoTA and the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation.

Bethlehem and its Governorate

15. Progress was made regarding the project “**Riwaya Museum – Bethlehem**”, funded by the Government of Norway (\$1,323,631): the physical works at the museum’s premises were resumed and are expected to be completed by August 2010. In October 2009, key conservation activities were undertaken at the archaeological site located within the museum space, namely a monastery and a cistern from the Byzantine period. This activity, carried out by MoTA under technical guidance from two international consultants, resulted in significant findings for the history of Bethlehem, which will be fully integrated into the future museum display. Finally, a fourth and last phase of the project focusing on the audiovisual production and fit-out of the museum exhibition was formulated and submitted to Norway for approval.

16. In the framework of the project on “**Safeguarding Historical and Environmental Resources towards Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate**”, funded by Norway (\$115,000), a series of activities and workshops were organized in December 2009 to explore the feasibility of establishing a cultural landscape eco-museum in the surroundings of the village of Battir, an area rich of environmental and cultural significance. These activities involved the local community and included community mapping, recreation for children and youth, participatory planning sessions, field visits and public events, in cooperation with the Battir Village Council, the Governorate of Bethlehem, the Ministry of Local Government and MoTA. Building on the achievements of this project, and in order to further ensure the protection of the cultural and natural resources in Battir, a United Nations Joint Programme for “Landscape Protection in Battir and its environs”, involving five other United Nations agencies, is being prepared under UNESCO’s leadership.

Nablus

17. All civil works at the site of the project on “**Old City of Nablus Renovation – Restoration and Adaptive Re-use of Khan al-Wakala**”, funded by the European Union (\$2,387,822), were completed in December 2009, as was the rehabilitation of the sewage network in Al-Qaryon near the Ajaj Mosque. UNESCO also reactivated the Yard School for the Conservation of the *Khan*, which aims at building the capacities of local artisans in Nablus in conservation and restoration. The invitation to bid for the finishing works will be launched in February 2010 and will be the last step of the physical rehabilitation component.

18. A three-year project on the “**Conservation and Management of the archaeological site of Tell Balata**” in Nablus, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands (\$431,655), in cooperation with MoTA and the Department of Archaeology of the University of Leiden, was signed in December 2009 for commencement in early 2010.

Jordan Valley

19. The concept note for a three-year United Nations Joint Programme on “**Livelihood Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable, Rural and Refugee Communities in the Jordan Valley**” including UNRWA, FAO, UNESCO and UNIFEM (\$1,033,620) was approved for funding by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) in December 2009. The fully-fledged project proposal was submitted to UNTFHS for final approval in January 2010.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

20. Assistance in this area continued to focus on the promotion and protection of free and independent Palestinian media, as well as on access to information through the support for the establishment of national archives.

21. With the aim of **promoting and safeguarding the Palestinian audiovisual heritage**, an international expert mission was carried out in the West Bank in August 2009 to identify key partners and stakeholders involved in audiovisual archives conservation, assess the needs for technical assistance and capacity development and formulate an action plan for preserving and promoting audiovisual collections. In July 2009, the Photo and Film Archives of Palestinian Refugees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) were included in the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. During the celebration of the International Solidarity Day with the Palestinian People at UNESCO Headquarters on 27 November 2009, Ms K. Konnig Abu-Sayd, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, received the certificate of inscription from the Director-General of UNESCO.

22. During September-October 2009, UNESCO organized several consultations and seminars on the **draft broadcast law** in partnership with the Ministry of Information of the Palestinian Authority and Birzeit University Institute of Law. These events informed stakeholders and other interested parties on various issues regarding the new legislation and provided opportunity for discussion, feedback and data collecting for further development of the final draft law and of secondary legislation.

23. In the framework of the project "**Women Taking the Lead**", developed in cooperation with the AMIN Media Network and funded by IPDC (\$20,000), on-the-job training has been provided to 30 women journalists and media managers to increase career development and equal employment opportunities as well as protection against harassment and discrimination.

24. The "**Children's Audio Library**" initiative implemented with the Birzeit University Media Development Center was completed in December 2009. The Audio Library contains 50 hours of recording of 150 Palestinian, regional and international children's stories in the Arabic language compiled in a CD to be distributed within the Palestinian Territories. The project has been implemented in close collaboration with regional publishers, children organizations and educational institutions. The CD was officially launched during a press conference held in late November 2009 in the presence of all stakeholders.

25. The first phase of a two-year project on "**Strengthening Palestinian Participatory Democracy and Public Dialogue**" (\$300,000) undertaken in partnership with AMIN Media Network and funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) was completed. Aimed at strengthening democratic participation through citizen media and blogging, the first phase resulted in the launching of the first Palestinian blogging portal in the Arabic and English languages using free software, the organization of 12 workshops and the preparation of two training manuals. Trainings included approximately 200 participants in the West Bank and Gaza including journalists, students, civil society, academics, PA officials, women and refugees. The second phase started in January 2010 and focuses on promoting participatory public debates and talk show programmes on radio and television.

SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

26. UNESCO assistance continued focusing on strengthening the institutional and human capacities of the **Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC)** in Ramallah, supported by regular programme and extrabudgetary funding from Norway and UNFPA. In July 2009, the second Board meeting, co-chaired by the PA Minister of Women Affairs and ADG/SHS, approved the programme of work of PWRDC for the coming two years. The five current priorities of the Centre, in order to promote both gender equality and empowerment, are: research, documentation, capacity-development, awareness-raising of the media and regional and international networking. In the context of the MDG-F project on "Women Empowerment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories", of which UNESCO is a participating agency, activities focused on research and sensitization on the violence against women both in the West Bank and Gaza. In

January 2010, Norway confirmed its intention to continue supporting the institutional development of PWRDC and agreed to contribute funding of \$1.3 million.

THE SITUATION OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

27. Funding (\$113,000) from the Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT) was approved in May 2009 for a project to develop a **Scholarship Programme for Syrian students in the Occupied Syrian Golan** studying in Damascus University. This project, prepared in close consultation with the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education and expected to be implemented during the 2009-2013 period (four academic years), aims at providing scholarships to students who register in disciplines considered crucial for the future development of the Occupied Golan. A Plan of Operation was signed between the Director of the Regional Bureau for Education in Beirut and the Minister of Higher Education in the Syrian Arab Republic in Damascus on 14 July 2009 and a coordination meeting is scheduled in February 2010 to agree on scholarship allocation modalities.

CONCLUSION

28. Given recent developments in the Middle East, the Director-General intends to issue an addendum to the present document before the 184th session of the Executive Board so as to keep Member States abreast of the situation and UNESCO's response thereto.