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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
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38 C/16

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JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 37 C/RESOLUTION 44

OUTLINE

Source: 37 C/Resolution 44, 196 EX/Decision 26.

Background: By the above-mentioned resolution, the General Conference invited the Director-General to present to it, at its 38th session, a progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and to include this item in the agenda of its 38th session. By 196 EX/Decision 26, the Executive Board invited the Director-General to submit a progress report on this matter at its 197th session.

Purpose: The Director-General informs the General Conference about the current situation and the steps taken to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem since its 37th session.

Decision required: No draft resolution is proposed in the present document. After examination of this item by the Executive Board at its 197th session, the Director-General is prepared to submit an addendum to the present document.

Context

1. At its 37th session, the General Conference examined document 37 C/16, which presented a report by the Director-General concerning the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, and adopted 37 C/Resolution 44 in which it decided, *inter alia*, to include this item on the agenda of its 38th session. Since the 37th session of the General Conference, the matter has been discussed on several occasions (documents and decisions 192 EX/5, 192 EX/11, 192 EX/42, 194 EX/5, 194 EX/11, 195 EX/5, 195 EX/9, 196 EX/26, WHC-14/38.COM/7A.add, WHC-15/39.COM/7A.add and 38 COM 7A.4 and 39 COM 7A.27).

The Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem

2. By 32 C/Resolution 39, the General Conference requested the Director-General to set up a committee of experts to propose guidelines for the establishment of an Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. The World Heritage Centre fielded several technical missions to Jerusalem to elaborate this Action Plan, thanks to the generous financial contribution from the Government of Italy, as well as assistance provided by the Government of Spain. With the agreement of the parties concerned, the Action Plan was elaborated and welcomed in 2007 by the 176th session of the Executive Board and the 34th session of the General Conference, as well as by the World Heritage Committee.

3. The Action Plan comprised 18 projects of which only one has received funding, namely the project for the conservation of the Saint John Prodromos Church funded by the Leventis Foundation of Cyprus in 2009. Based on UNESCO's study and project design for the restoration of the Church, the A.G. Leventis Foundation and the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate cooperated in the implementation of the restoration works. A mission by the World Heritage Centre to Jerusalem was carried out from 27 November to 1 December 2013 in order to proceed with the closure of the project. The project has now been terminated and the remaining funds were returned to the donor in December 2014.

Establishment of a centre for the restoration of Islamic manuscripts

4. The Norwegian Government and UNESCO signed in December 2011 an agreement for the project "Ensuring the sustainability of the Centre for the Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem". The project's main objective is to build capacities of the staff of the Centre in a variety of fields of the preservation of Islamic manuscripts. The project activity started in September 2012. Five additional staff members have been recruited under the project and 10 training sessions on conservation and restoration techniques have been held so far, in addition to the field visits to restoration centres in Paris and Florence in 2013. The project also provided the Centre with conservation equipment and materials. UNESCO conducted two consultation missions in October 2014 and in February 2015 in order to review progress achieved and to plan future activities to be implemented in 2015.

Project for the safeguarding, refurbishment and revitalization of the Islamic Museum

5. The project "Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of the Haram al-Sharif and its Collection" started in 2008 with funding from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The premises of the Islamic Museum have been repaired and the necessary equipment has been purchased in order to help with the inventory process and the digitization of the collections. From 2011 to present, nine training sessions have been held and permanent staff members have been trained in conservation and museum management, English language and computer programmes. In addition, a storage room was set up and the archives were digitized. The electronic and photographic inventory was completed. The museological phase started in September 2012 with the consultant team selected by UNESCO. However, the project requires additional funding to complete the proposed museographical and scenographical planning, which was approved in March 2015 by the Awqaf authorities. A follow-up mission took place in June

2015. The re-opening of the Museum depends on the availability of funds and the security situation in Jerusalem.

The Mughrabi Ascent to the Haram al-Sharīf

6. Since early 2007, the archaeological excavations and design for a new access to the Haram al-Sharif through the Mughrabi Gate, carried out by the Israeli authorities, led the Executive Board at its 176 EX/Special Plenary Meeting to request consideration of a separate item concerning the Mughrabi Ascent within the overall context of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee requested that the Director-General and the World Heritage Centre facilitate the dialogue between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts regarding the proposed design of the Mughrabi ascent and that no measures, unilateral or otherwise, should be taken that would affect the authenticity and integrity of the site.

7. In January and February 2008, two technical meetings took place in Jerusalem, between Israeli, Jordanian and Waqf experts, in the presence of representatives from the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and ICOMOS. Despite further decisions from the Executive Board at its 189th, 190th and 191st sessions and by the World Heritage Committee at its 36th session, it has not been possible to organize a follow-up meeting on the subject since 2008. The Israeli and the Jordanian authorities prepared distinctive plans for the reconstruction of the Mughrabi Ascent, which were transmitted to the World Heritage Centre in May 2011. With a view to facilitating dialogue among the parties concerned, as requested by the World Heritage Committee and the Executive Board, UNESCO convened a technical meeting at its Headquarters in April 2012, with representatives of the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and ICOMOS. The proposal from the Jordanian experts was presented and discussed during the meeting. Israel informed the World Heritage Centre that it would not participate to the meeting. Due to the absence of the Israeli experts, neither examination nor discussion of the Israeli proposal took place. Therefore, the situation remained unchanged.

8. Information received by the Secretariat from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO indicated that the Israeli authorities had resumed work at the Ascent since May 2012. Following 191 EX/Decision 5 (I) of the Executive Board, a meeting between Israeli and Jordanian authorities was to take place at UNESCO Headquarters on 27 May 2013. However, failing to agree on the terms of reference of the reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem to be carried out from 20 to 25 May 2013, the Israeli authorities considered the meeting to be premature.

9. At its 194th session, following a roll call vote, the Executive Board invited all parties concerned to participate in the experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent, to be held at UNESCO upon an agreed date prior to the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee. It has been brought to the attention of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee (Doha, 2014) that not all the parties concerned were in a position to attend this experts meeting prior to its opening on 15 June 2014.

10. At its 38th session, the World Heritage Committee, following a vote by secret ballot, took a similar decision to that of the Executive Board mentioned above.

11. At its 196th session, following a roll call vote, the Executive Board, invited “all concerned parties to facilitate the implementation of the UNESCO RMM and experts meeting”. It also requested that the report of the technical meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent, be presented to the concerned parties prior to the next 197th session of the Executive Board.

12. The 39th session of the World Heritage Committee, after a vote by secret ballot, reiterated the same request to that of the 196th session of the Executive Board; i.e to enable the Jordanian Awaqf experts to maintain and safeguard the site and to facilitate their access with their tools and material to the site in order to enable the execution of the Jordanian design of the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in accordance with UNESCO and World Heritage Committee decisions. It also

asked the Director-General of UNESCO “to take the necessary measures in order to enable the execution of the Jordanian design of the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate”.

13. At the time of preparation of the present document, the meeting recommended by the Executive Board and by the World Heritage Committee has not taken place.

Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Old City of Jerusalem

14. The World Heritage Committee requested at its 34th (Brasilia, 2010), 35th (UNESCO, 2011) and 36th (Saint Petersburg, 2012) sessions respectively, “a joint World Heritage Centre-ICCROM-ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property as referred to in the *Operational Guidelines* to assess and advise on progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan and, in cooperation and consultation with the concerned parties, to identify appropriate operational and financial mechanisms and modalities to strengthen technical cooperation with all concerned parties in the framework of the Action Plan”. No response was received to the letters on this matter addressed by the World Heritage Centre to the Israeli authorities on 1 February, 13 April and 27 July 2011 and 9 February 2012.

15. During the 190th session of the Executive Board, Member States expressed their concern about the lack of progress in the implementation of the Executive Board’s decisions concerning the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. A meeting of the Bureau of the Executive Board convened by the Chairperson took place on 7 and 8 March 2013 and requested the Director-General to deploy her efforts to achieve progress on this matter. At the 191st session, a consensus was reached among the parties concerned for a mission to the Old City of Jerusalem to take place in May 2013, as acknowledged in 191 EX/ Decision 9. The mission was scheduled to be carried out from 20 to 25 May 2013. However, no agreement could be reached on the terms of reference of the mission by the parties concerned. At the time of drafting of the present document, the mission has not yet taken place.

16. At the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee (Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2013), no consensus could be reached among the parties concerned and the World Heritage Committee adopted, by roll call vote, Decision 37 COM 7A.26 which regretted notably the postponement of the above-mentioned mission and requested the Israeli authorities to cease its archaeological excavations in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. Following the adoption of this Decision, the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee presented a statement for the record requesting the implementation of a joint WHC/ICCROM/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem as soon as possible and inviting the Director-General to take “necessary measures” to this end.

17. At its 194th session, the Executive Board requested the dispatch, on an agreed date prior to the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee, of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICCROM/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls. However, it was brought to the attention of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee (Doha, 2014) that this joint reactive monitoring mission could not be undertaken before the session of the Committee as requested by the Executive Board.

18. At its 38th session, the World Heritage Committee, following a vote by secret ballot, took a similar decision to that of the Executive Board at its 194th session and requested that the report and recommendations of the reactive monitoring mission be presented before the 195th session of the Executive Board. However, it has not been possible to schedule the mission prior to the 195th session of the Board.

19. A letter from the Jordanian authorities was received on 12 March 2015, proposing to dispatch at the end of February 2015 the joint World Heritage Centre/ICCROM/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls. An answer by the Secretariat was sent in March 2015 indicating that this letter had been received after the dates proposed to organize the mission.

20. At its 196th session, the Executive Board invited the Director-General “to take necessary measures to implement the above-mentioned UNESCO reactive monitoring mission (RMM) in accordance with World Heritage Committee decision 34 COM/7A.20, prior to the 197th session of the Executive Board” (October 2015). It also invited all concerned parties to facilitate the implementation of that mission and furthermore requested that the report and recommendations of the mission be presented to the parties concerned prior to the next 197th session of the Executive Board.

21. At its 39th session, the World Heritage Committee, following a vote by secret ballot, stressed the need of the urgent implementation of the reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls and requested that the report and recommendations of the mission be presented to the concerned parties prior to the next 197th session of the Executive Board.

22. At the time of the preparation of this document it has not been possible to schedule the mission as requested by the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee.