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JERUSALEM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 36 C/RESOLUTION 43 AND 187 EX/DECISION 11

SUMMARY

This document is presented pursuant to 187 EX/Decision 11, by which the Executive Board requested a follow-up report on this item.

The document reports on the implementation of the Action Plan, as well as on other projects for the Old City of Jerusalem, all of which are mainly financed through voluntary extrabudgetary contributions.

The report by the Director-General on the implementation of 36 C/Resolution 43 and 187 EX/Decision 5 related to the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem is presented in document 189 EX/5.

No decision is proposed.

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

1. The last activity carried out in the framework of the Action Plan financed by the Italian Government has been completed. It consisted in the rehabilitation of the Saha Square and the surrounding buildings in the Christian quarter, testing the Rehabilitation Manual produced during the first phase of the Action Plan. The project has been carried out in partnership with the Technical Unit of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, owner of the buildings.
2. The preliminary phase of the conservation project of the Saint John Prodromos Church, funded by the Leventis Foundation of Cyprus, and implemented in close collaboration with the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, has been completed. The detailed restoration project has been finalized and works should start shortly. However, the archaeological explorations revealed structural and sanitation disorders, the solution of which will require all available funds. Additional funding would be necessary in order to undertake the overall restoration project.
3. At its 186th session, the Executive Board was informed (186 EX/11) of the initiative by the Director-General to convey a brainstorming session with Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian experts, on 14 October 2010, with the aim of reactivating the Action Plan and devising the potential framework for an UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS mission to the Old City of Jerusalem as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session (Brasilia, 2010). Such request was reiterated by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in June 2011 (Paris). The draft terms of reference for the mission were submitted by the World Heritage Centre to the Israeli authorities by letters dated 13 April and 27 July 2011. To this date, the World Heritage Centre is awaiting comments by the Israeli authorities with regard to these draft terms of reference.

II. Other projects

4. As a follow-up to the project for the establishment of a Centre for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts, in the Madrasa al-Ashrayfiyyah within the Haram al-Sharif, a capacity-building project, funded by the Organization's regular programme (US \$190,000) was completed in June 2011. The objective was to ensure the long-term conservation of the invaluable collection of manuscripts and other historic documents of the Centre. To this end, a tailor-made modular training programme was delivered by international experts, focused on paper restoration and conservation, documentation, and on reinforcing managerial and organizational practices. A final phase of the project funded by Norway (\$1,233,000) will start in February 2012. It includes further targeted training and the organization of field visits and practical internships, in order to develop the professional skills and techniques of the staff in conservation and restoration techniques and facilitate the creation of partnerships with other institutions, as well as the creation of additional storage spaces and the procurement of conservation materials and equipment.
5. Following the recruitment of four permanent staff by the Jordanian authorities, the development of the project for the "Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of the Haram al-Sharif and its Collection," funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (\$1,130,000), which started in 2009, has been progressing well. Expert consultants were contracted in 2010 to assess the inventory needs of the collections, including data management. The staff is trained in conservation, photography of objects, inventory building, English language and computer training. Basic computer equipment has been purchased and the electronic inventory is progressing. The roof of the Museum has been repaired and the storage rooms are being reorganized.
6. At the 187th session of the Executive Board in September 2011, 187 EX/Decision 11 was adopted by roll-call vote, recalling the previous decisions concerning Jerusalem, and noting "the lack of progress in the implementation of UNESCO's 185 EX/Decision 14".

7. The World Heritage Centre was informed, by an electronic mail from the Permanent Delegation of Israel on 17 January 2012, that a report on the state of conservation of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls was being prepared by the Israeli authorities in view of the 36th session of the World Heritage Committee and that it would be sent to the World Heritage Centre by mid-March 2012.

8. Should additional information become available, the Director-General is prepared to issue an addendum to the present document before the 189th session of the Executive Board, in order to inform the Members of the Executive Board about any related recent development.