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IMPLEMENTATION OF 34 C/RESOLUTION 58 AND 179 EX/DECISION 39 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 34 C/Resolution 58 and 179 EX/Decision 39. It summarizes the progress made by UNESCO, since the 179th 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 180th session of the Board.

No financial or administrative implications.

INTRODUCTION

1. The period under review was one of renewed and strengthened support by the international community in favour of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP). The PRDP, which was presented to the donor community and endorsed at the Paris Donor Conference (December 2007), is a three-year reform agenda focusing on capacity development of PA institutions in the areas of good governance, law and order and the delivery of basic social services. As already indicated in the report under this same item to the Executive Board at its 179th session, quality education, as well as cultural tourism, are acknowledged as national priorities in this Plan. It should be noted that since then a new section on "culture and rights" has been added to, which identifies the promotion of cultural expressions and institutions as an additional priority of the PA under the social services chapter of the PRDP. This new development addresses the concern notably expressed by UNESCO that culture, as an essential element and asset for development in the Palestinian Territories, was not adequately reflected in the Plan.

2. Particular efforts are being made to identify UNESCO's assistance, which contributes directly to the PRDP priorities within the Organization's fields of competence, in particular education and culture. Such efforts are part of an overall initiative by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to devise a three-year United Nations Mid-Term Response Plan (MTRP) to the PRDP. The MTRP will comprise ongoing United Nations assistance programmes in support of the PRDP and will also identify new inter-agency initiatives that are likely further to support the realization of the PRDP objectives. The UNESCO Office in Ramallah is leading the coordination of the education and culture contribution to the MTRP, which is expected to be completed in late summer 2008.

3. Despite some improvements in the socio-economic conditions on the ground during the period under review, the situation, particularly in Gaza, has remained very difficult. The delivery of educational services to children and youth living and studying in Gaza became increasingly challenging both for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, as well as for United Nations agencies providing humanitarian assistance. Also, the tense situation in Gaza is contributing to undermine the full realization of press freedom, with media professionals facing harassment and threats.

4. A major highlight during the period under review was the official visit of the Director-General to the Palestinian Territories on 14 and 15 June 2008. On this occasion, the Director-General held bilateral talks with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr Mahmoud Abbas, and met with Mr Riad Al-Malki, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Lamis Al-Alami, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Ms Tahani Abu Daqqa, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ms Kholoud Deibes, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities and of Women Affairs, and Mr Yahya Yakhlef, President of the National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, to discuss ongoing developments and joint efforts to promote peace, development and reconciliation in the region. Among the issues discussed were, in particular, UNESCO's continued support for programmes and projects in the fields of quality education and support to tangible and intangible heritage conservation and safeguarding, as well as the promotion of cultural industries and cultural tourism, the development of audiovisual archives and the strengthening of media literacy programmes, and gender and youth outreach, through sustained support to the Women's Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC). The Director-General also visited the cities of Nablus and Bethlehem to visit various projects developed by UNESCO in the field of cultural heritage.

PROGRESS AND MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN UNESCO'S ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Education

5. Assistance in the field of education primarily focused on the four priority areas agreed upon during the eighth meeting of the Joint UNESCO/Palestinian Authority Committee, held at UNESCO Headquarters in early March 2008, namely educational planning and management, teacher education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and science education and research. In these areas, upstream support through technical advice and capacity-building activities was provided to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

6. **Educational planning and management:** Technical assistance was provided through the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) for the finalization of the MoEHE's **Five-Year Education Development Strategic Plan** (2008-2012). The Plan will be launched in mid-July 2008 and is intended to serve as a basis for the first Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) ever developed in the Palestinian Territories. The SWAp will serve to strengthen aid harmonization and harness ownership of reform and development in the Palestinian educational sector. After the launch of the plan, a mission will be fielded by IIEP to design a capacity development programme for the yearly monitoring of the Plan respectively at the MoEHE, governorate and school levels.

7. **Teacher education:** In the framework of the project **Development of a National Comprehensive Teacher Education Strategy in the OPT** (US \$500,000) funded by Norway, the National Teacher Education Strategy for Palestine was completed and officially launched in March 2008, after a one-year consultative process led by the MoEHE and facilitated by UNESCO. The Strategy aims at developing an adequate cadre of qualified capable teachers through pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes and sets the ground for improving the level of the teaching profession and the system management. Following the launch of the Strategy, and in close consultation with the MoEHE, a project proposal on Quality systems for quality teachers (€3.8 million), aimed at providing technical assistance for the implementation of the Strategy, was developed and submitted to the European Commission for funding. The project consists of three components: (i) improving management and institutional capacity of the teacher education system for pre-service, in-service and career development; (ii) improving the status and motivation of teachers; and (iii) enhancing relevance and coherence of teacher training and professional development.

8. **Technical and vocational education and training (TVET):** technical assistance is being planned for the establishment of a Vocational Guidance and Counselling System, which aims at improving Palestinian students', especially girls', access to the job market.

9. **Science education:** Initial steps were taken to support the MoEHE in its efforts to promote science education in schools and institutions of higher education. As a first element in the development of a national science, technology and research strategy, a mapping exercise was designed to identify existing research capacities in Palestinian institutions of higher education and in the private sector. In addition, at the school level, UNESCO will disseminate micro-science kits to a selected number of schools in remote areas and provide related teacher training.

10. Furthermore, and in a context of continued difficult socio-economic conditions and often disrupted educational services, UNESCO continued giving special attention to the educational needs of the most vulnerable groups. Remedial courses in basic subjects (maths, science and English) were offered in May 2008 to 60 students in grades 4-6 in the Old City of Nablus, as a remedy to the frequent teachers' strikes that occurred during the 2007/2008 school year.

Culture

11. UNESCO's assistance in the field of culture continued to focus on the safeguarding and enhancement of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It involved extensive cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and specialized civil society organizations (CSOs). Attention was also given to the promotion of cultural diversity and cultural expressions both at policy level and through the implementation of community-based initiatives.

12. A major development was the final approval of the **Culture and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory** project (\$3 million) under the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG TF). This project was developed by UNESCO in close consultation with UNDP, FAO and UNIFEM and relevant line ministries. It adopts a comprehensive approach to the promotion of culture in the Palestinian Territories, as a contribution both to socio-economic development and social cohesion. Institutional capacity-building and human resource development are key modalities of the project.

13. **Safeguarding of tangible cultural heritage:** Support was provided to a conference on Architectural Heritage: The Reality and Challenges for Preservation, organized by the Islamic University of Gaza, in Gaza City from 22 to 24 April 2008, on the occasion of International Heritage Day. This event aimed at promoting Gaza's cultural heritage as an integral part of the Palestinian heritage and at raising awareness on its protection and sustainable use.

14. UNESCO delivered continued technical assistance for the safeguarding of selected cultural monuments and sites in Bethlehem, Nablus and Jericho:

- (i) **Bethlehem** – Within the framework of the project **Museum Development in Bethlehem: the Crypt Museum at Bethlehem Peace Centre**, funded by the Government of Norway (\$724,000), continuous efforts were made towards the finalization of the project, including additional fundraising. In May 2008, an evaluation meeting was held in Jerusalem gathering the key stakeholders of the project and the donor. In June 2008, the submitted bids for the rehabilitation works were technically and financially evaluated. Under the patronage of the President of the Palestinian Authority, H.E. Mr Mahmoud Abbas, UNESCO's Director-General laid the foundation stone of the museum on 15 June 2008, during a public ceremony attended by the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, the Governor and the Mayor of Bethlehem, and the Norwegian Representative to the PA. On this occasion, a multimedia exhibition on the diversity of the Mediterranean cultures was organized in the premises of the planned museum.
 - Within the framework of the **Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan**, funded by the Government of Italy (\$500,000), the following activities were launched, continued or terminated: (i) the second phase of the 1:500 detailed survey (qualitative survey) of the urban fabric of the three historic towns of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour was completed; (ii) the first level "community mapping" was conducted in nine schools, as a tool to enhance the active participation of local population in the plan (students were asked to analyse their town and neighbourhood and produce a representation of it by using various means (drawings, stories, 3D models made of cardboard, gypsum, clay, etc.)); and (iii) the participation strategy was launched, with the involvement of local communities. Finally, a seminar about the protection of the cultural landscape around Bethlehem was organized in March 2008.
 - Under the project **Safeguarding Historical and Environmental Resources Towards Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate**, funded by the Government of Norway (\$115,000), research on cultural landscapes was

conducted within the framework of Palestine, land of olives and vines, one of the priorities of the Inventory of cultural and natural heritage sites of potential outstanding universal value in Palestine. The findings of this research in the areas of ethno-anthropology and spatial planning highlighted the fragility of environmental and cultural resources in the study area, due to urban encroachment and the absence of planning tools. An illustrated leaflet showing the value of the landscape and the threats to which it is exposed was produced and distributed among local communities.

- (ii) **Nablus** – Within the framework of the **Revitalization Plan of the Old City of Nablus**, sponsored by the Munir Sukhtian Group-Jordan (\$100,000), the implementation designs of six sites were finalized, based on the winning proposals from the National Open Design Competition for Architects Under 40 and Students in Architecture and Urban Planning to design public spaces and urban facilities in the Old City of Nablus, in consultation with the Municipality of Nablus and the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage. A publication containing the results of the competition was officially launched in the presence of the local authorities by the Director-General on 15 June 2008, during his visit to Nablus. Finally, local authorities concerned agreed to work on Al Qarion and Habalah sites, with an additional contribution from the Municipality of Nablus of \$40,000.
 - Within the framework of the project **Old City of Nablus Renovation – Restoration and adaptive reuse of the Khan al-Wakala**, funded by the European Commission (EC) (€1,327,000), in June 2008, the bids submitted for the structural works of the new annexes to the building have been technically and financially evaluated. The Director-General paid a visit to the project site on 15 June 2008, in the presence of the Governor and the Mayor of Nablus, the President of An-Najah National University and the EC Representatives.
- (iii) **Jericho** – Specialized technical assistance was provided to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for the project **Archaeological Park of Qasr Hisham**, in the framework of the US-funded project reactivated in October 2007. In May 2008 the local team of architects submitted the final design for the rehabilitation of the on-site museum, the construction of basic visitors' facilities and the presentation of the site. UNESCO is monitoring the ongoing construction and rehabilitation works.

15. **Promotion of cultural expressions and industries:** The following initiatives were supported:

- (i) An international conference on The future of the Palestinian national identity organized by the Society of Inaash E-Usra in March 2008, provided an opportunity for Palestinian intellectuals and researchers to exchange views and experiences about the role of cultural identities in development and state building, with experts from other countries.
- (ii) The Palestine Festival of Literature (PALFEST), organized by the British organization Engaged Events from 7 to 11 May 2008, involving world-renowned Palestinian and international authors, writers and poets, including 2005 Nobel Prize Laureate, Mr Harold Pinter. Activities included literary events, public readings, workshops, discussions and book-signings in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jenin to promote literature and the book industry.
- (iii) The production of three monthly issues (April to June 2008) of the cultural magazine *Filistin Ashabab* (Palestinian Youth), which publishes texts and visual material produced by young Palestinian artists and researchers and promotes exchange of experiences and intercultural dialogue among youth.

Communication and information

16. Assistance primarily focused on the priority areas agreed upon during the eighth meeting of the Joint UNESCO/Palestinian Authority Committee, held at UNESCO Headquarters in early March 2008. Technical support was also provided for promoting independent and pluralistic media, freedom of expression and safety of media professionals.

17. Technical support and advice was provided in drafting the new **Press Law and Broadcasting Law**, in cooperation with the Ministry of Information, Palestinian media and civil society organizations. The objective is to promote freedom of expression and information by developing an appropriate media legislation and regulatory framework and by raising awareness among concerned stakeholders on international principles and standards in this area.

18. In the area of **capacity-building of media training institutions and centres**, and with financial support from the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), two projects were developed in close cooperation with the Birzeit University Media Development Centre, namely **Establishment of Palestinian web-based platform for journalists** (\$19,000) and **Children's audio library** (\$32,700). The first project aims at promoting access to professional news and at providing peer support locally and internationally for Palestinian journalists, while serving as a discussion forum and database; the second aims at establishing the kernel of a literary audio library for children in the form of Audio CDs. During the second phase of the latter, Palestinian, regional and international children's and youth literature will be recorded in Arabic and distributed to libraries, schools and radio stations to promote self-expression of youth and cultural understanding.

19. Given the prevailing situation in both the West Bank and Gaza, the **safety and protection of Palestinian media professionals** remained a priority area of attention and concern. After the successful completion of a safety and security training course for Palestinian journalists, photographers and cameramen working both in public and private media (Ramallah, November 2007), a new project on Promotion of safety and protection of journalists and media professionals in Gaza and West Bank (\$230,000), developed in cooperation with International News Safety Institute (INSI) has been included in the 2008 Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal (CAP) at its mid-year review (July 2008). Fundraising efforts are currently under way.

20. In spring 2008, a new project entitled **Women taking the lead** funded by the IPDC (\$20,000) was launched in cooperation with the Arab Media Internet Network (AMIN). This project aims at providing a training programme for women journalists and media managers (especially in Gaza) to increase career development and equal employment opportunities, as well as protection against harassment and discrimination.

21. A joint UNESCO/AMIN project proposal on **Strengthening Palestinian Participatory Democracy and Public Dialogue** (\$300,000) was submitted to the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). This project aims at supporting freedom of expression and citizen journalism and at establishing the first Palestinian web portal for blogs. The initial application was approved in May 2008 and a fully fledged proposal was submitted to the UNDEF Secretariat in July 2008 for final approval.

22. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day in May 2008, a three-day conference on **Palestinian Media Dialogue and Reform** was organized by AMIN in Jericho and Gaza, with the participation of the UNESCO Office in Ramallah. The conference aimed at fostering understanding and dialogue between media organizations and journalists and the developing of a joint strategy for professional development and better networking in the Palestinian media.

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

23. During the period under review, the Organization continued its efforts to preserve the human, social and cultural fabric of the occupied Syrian Golan, as decided in 34 C/Resolution 58 and 179 EX/Decision 39. The desk study to collect relevant information on existing educational and cultural services made available both by public institutions and NGOs in the occupied Syrian Golan, as reported in document 179 EX/39, is being enriched. As suggested in the letter sent to the Israeli Authorities in April 2008, this initial mapping will mainly focus on identifying information concerning current provisions for primary, basic, secondary and higher education; technical and vocational education and related training programmes; community service education; basic skills and competencies training programmes; youth employment and training facilities; and cultural institutions and organizations. The expected output is a state-of-the-art report, which will be submitted to the Director-General who will inform the Executive Board thereon.

24. With a view to the submission for approval by the Japanese authorities (JFIT) of financial assistance of \$100,000 to support scholarships for the Syrian students in the occupied Syrian Golan, consultations were held in April 2008 between the UNESCO Beirut Office and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) of Syria to identify the procedures and criteria for selection and award of these scholarships. The Beirut Office will field a mission to Syria at the end of June 2008 to finalize with the MoHE the agreement on the procedures and criteria for the award of scholarships to Golan students.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI PROFESSIONALS AND ACADEMIA

25. The Organization continued to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian dialogue with the aim of strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation.

26. In the area of academic cooperation, UNESCO continued to provide assistance to the **Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization (IPSO)**. In particular, a new project on Harnessing history to understand the current Israeli-Arab water landscape funded by Italy (\$296,451) was approved. The purpose of this Israeli-Palestinian cooperative research and training project is to provide a basis for historical analysis of water management in the Jordan River basin and encourage a peaceful and sustainable dialogue over the use of scarce and shared water resources in the region.

27. In the field of **Israeli-Palestinian academic cooperation**, the second phase of the Programme of University Cooperation – Masters on Social Sciences and Humanitarian Affairs (\$257,640) was launched in Jerusalem on 12 May 2008. This 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.

CONCLUSION

28. Given recent developments in the Middle East, the Director-General intends to issue an addendum to the present document before the 180th session of the Executive Board, so as to keep Member States abreast of the situation and UNESCO's response thereto. This addendum will also contain a draft decision.



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ADDENDUM

SUMMARY

As announced in document 180 EX/44, this Addendum presents an update of new developments in relation to the implementation of 34 C/Resolution 58 and 179 EX/Decision 39 and UNESCO's response thereto.

Decision proposed: paragraph 5.

1. In the field of education, a major new development was the finalization of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MoEHE) second **Five-Year Education Development Strategic Plan (2008-2012)**, with UNESCO/IIEP technical assistance. The Plan was launched by H. E. Ms L. Al-Alami, Minister of Education and Higher Education, in Ramallah, on 15 July 2008. In order to support the implementation of the Plan, a UNESCO/IIEP human capacity development programme aimed at the MoEHE staff was started. Initial activities focus on developing capacities within the Ministry at the central, district and school levels in planning, administrative and managerial skills, in particular with a view to the formulation of yearly operational plans, budgets, monitoring and evaluation. Following a needs assessment mission in June 2008, which started working on the design of a comprehensive capacity development programme (CDP) for the MoEHE, a three-weeks' training workshop is currently being carried out. The workshop aims at training a core team of trainers at the MoEHE in formulating yearly operational plans. Once trained, these trainers are expected to train their colleagues at the district offices and schools in planning and monitoring skills.

2. In the field of culture, Norway approved additional support for an amount of US \$600,000 to the development of a museum at the Bethlehem Peace Centre – **the *Riwayya* (narratives) Museum in Bethlehem**. This brought the total contribution of Norway for the establishment of the museum to more than \$1.3 million. This third phase of the project concentrates on the production and installation of the interactive exhibition, as well as on human resource development for the future museum staff. A project-signing ceremony was held in Ramallah on 7 August, in the presence of H.E. Ms K. Dabeis, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, and of H.E. Mr T. Wennesland, Representative of Norway to the Palestinian Authority.

3. Within the framework of the “**Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan**”, funded by the Government of Italy (\$500,000), the preliminary strategic document of the Conservation and Management Plan was presented to key stakeholders namely the municipalities of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, the Palestinian Ministries of Tourism and Antiquities, and of Local Government and other key members of the Joint Technical Committee. The Palestinian stakeholders are currently reviewing this strategic document, which proposes strengthened conservation measures for the three municipalities, with a view to safeguarding the three historical centres within a holistic cultural landscape.

4. In the field of **cultural industries** and within the framework of the International Year for Languages 2008, UNESCO is contributing to the production of the youth magazine *Filistin Ashsbab* which publishes both editorial and visual material written and produced by youth. The magazine provides young people with the opportunity to exchange experiences, encourages intercultural dialogue and promotes the diversity of cultural expressions. A contribution was also made to the Palestine Festival of Literature (PALFEST) which was held in May in various governorates and involved local and international authors and journalists. Activities included readings, workshops, discussions and book-signings.

5. In view of the information provided in document 180 EX/44 and the present Addendum, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 34 C/Resolution 58 and 179 EX/Decision 39, as well as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with regard to the right to education, Articles 4 and 94 of the Fourth Geneva Convention with regard to the denial of the right of children to education, as well as the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the Hague Convention (1954) and its Additional Protocols,
2. Having examined document 180 EX/44 and its Addendum,
3. Further recalling the role that UNESCO is called upon to play in order to satisfy the right to education for all, and to meet the need for Palestinians to have safe access to the education system,
4. Recalling paragraph 31 of the Medium-Term Strategy (31 C/4 Approved), defining a “road map for a revitalized UNESCO: principles of action and programming”, and paragraph 12 of 31 C/Resolution 43,
5. Committed to the safeguarding of monuments, works of art, manuscripts, books and other historical and cultural properties to be protected in the event of conflict,
6. Deeply convinced that the continuous strengthening of the reconstruction and development process in the Palestinian territories should be carried out in a context of non-violence and of mutual respect and recognition, as promoted by the objectives of the road map,
7. Supports the efforts made by the Director-General with a view to the implementation of 34 C/Resolution 58 and 179 EX/Decision 39, and requests him to do everything possible to ensure that they are fully implemented in the framework of the Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5 Approved);
8. Expresses its appreciation for the substantial contributions of all concerned Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to UNESCO’s action in the Palestinian territories, and appeals to them to continue assisting UNESCO in this endeavour;

9. Thanks the Director-General for the results that have been obtained in relation to the implementation of a number of current educational and cultural activities, and invites him to strengthen UNESCO's financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian educational and cultural institutions in order to address new needs and problems resulting from recent developments;
10. Expresses its continuing concern at any actions undermining the cultural and natural heritage, and cultural and educational institutions, as well as at any impediments which prevent Palestinian and all other schoolchildren and students from being an integral part of their social fabric and from exercising fully their right to education, and calls for the observance of the provisions of 34 C/Resolution 58 and 179 EX/Decision 39;
11. Encourages the Director-General to continue to reinforce his action in favour of the reconstruction, rehabilitation and restoration of the Palestinian archaeological sites and cultural heritage;
12. Invites the Director-General to address the needs for capacity-building in all UNESCO's fields of competence by expanding the financial assistance programme for Palestinian students both from the regular budget and from extrabudgetary resources, and by establishing a multi-donor trust fund benefiting Palestinian students in need;
13. Requests the Director-General to follow closely the implementation of the recommendations of the eighth meeting of the Joint UNESCO-Palestinian Authority Committee (4-5 March 2008) and to organize, as soon as possible, the ninth meeting of the Joint UNESCO-Palestinian Authority Committee;
14. Encourages Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, and expresses the hope that a just and comprehensive peace will be brought about speedily;
15. Also invites the Director-General:
 - (a) to continue the efforts he is making to preserve the human, social and cultural fabric of the occupied Syrian Golan, in accordance with the relevant provisions of this decision;
 - (b) to undertake efforts to offer appropriate curricula, and to provide more grants and adequate assistance to the educational and cultural institutions of the occupied Syrian Golan;
16. Decides to include this item on the agenda of the Executive Board at its 181st session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.