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# World Heritage

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## UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

### CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

World Heritage Committee  
Thirty first Session  
Christchurch, New Zealand  
23 June – 2 July 2007

**Item 12A of the Provisional Agenda: Protection of the Palestinian cultural  
and natural heritage**

Progress Report on the Protection of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage

#### SUMMARY

This document provides a summary of the progress made in the implementation of the activities related to decisions taken by the Committee since its 26th session in Budapest (2002) to provide technical cooperation in favour of the protection of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage. It also provides information on the state of conservation of Palestinian heritage and preservation measures as requested by the Committee's decision 30.COM 11C.2.

**Draft Decision: 31.COM 12A see point III**

## I. Activities related to World Heritage in the Palestinian Territories

1. In June 2002, at its 26th session in Budapest, the World Heritage Committee recognized the exceptional universal value of the Palestinian cultural heritage, and requested the Secretariat to assist the Palestinian Authority in establishing an inventory of such outstanding cultural and natural heritage, evaluating its state of conservation and the measures for its safeguarding, as well as building capacities within the responsible Palestinian institutions in view of the future implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*. Since then, the allocation of funds by the World Heritage Committee (USD 350,000) has contributed to activities implemented by the UNESCO Office in Ramallah, in close consultation with the responsible Palestinian authorities, mainly the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, with the support of the World Heritage Centre.

2. A series of activities has been carried out, in particular the establishment and publication of the *Inventory of Palestinian cultural and natural heritage sites of potential outstanding universal value* which was presented to the 29th session of the Committee. Further on-going activities are set below:

- World Heritage awareness raising initiatives (publication and distribution of information material, consultative workshops);
- Reinforcement of the Palestinian World Heritage Secretariat (staff training, related web page upgrading and management, collection of resource materials, equipment);
- Institutional capacity building and sharing of knowledge (training courses on information management, site management and risk preparedness);
- A special project focused on the identification and conservation of cultural landscapes in accordance with the *Inventory* (site No. 8: the Land of Olives and Vines).

3. A mission from the World Heritage Centre was carried out in November 2006 in order to prepare the work plan for 2007, drawn up in consultation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. It is expected that, during the period between the 31st and 32nd sessions of the Committee, the following activities will be undertaken:

- The elaboration of Conservation plans for the old cities of Hebron and Nablus, including the Management Plan of the archaeological site of Tell Balata, in Nablus (assessment, emergency conservation and planning tools);
- The second phase of the project for the safeguarding of Cultural landscape;
- The continued support to the Palestinian World Heritage Secretariat, including the provision of assistance in the preparation work for potential future Nominations through documenting, mapping and zoning of at least three sites included in the *Inventory of Palestinian cultural and natural heritage sites of potential outstanding universal value*.

4. Since mid-2006, the vast majority of the donor community has decided to cut direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority, thus creating a severe crisis which has led to a considerable decline in living standards throughout the Palestinian Territories. For the United Nations, including UNESCO, this situation, which generated acute humanitarian needs, posed challenges for assistance delivery. Priority was given to the provision of humanitarian assistance directly aimed at the most vulnerable, whereas conventional development assistance – including capacity development efforts in the Organization's fields of competence - suffered from delays.

5. As regards paragraph 5 of decision **30.COM/11C.2**, by which the Committee “encourages the reactivation of the joint Israeli-Palestinian Technical Committee for Archaeology”, the present conditions have not allowed the concerned bodies to meet. The recommended reactivation will only be possible once the situation has evolved.

## II. Conservation of Palestinian cultural heritage

6. In spite of the present difficulties, efforts towards the rehabilitation and conservation of Palestinian cultural heritage sites, mainly through extra-budgetary projects, continued in Bethlehem, Nablus Jericho, and other localities.

**a. Bethlehem** - Within the framework of the *“Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan”* funded by Italy, following the selection of the National Project Coordinator, appointed in June 2006, and the setting up (renovation, furniture and equipment) of the Project office of the Plan within the premises of the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, in October 2006, the selection and appointment of an International team of experts, in order to enter the operational part the project, was carried out between July and December 2006. The selected team, from Florence, Italy, composed of 16 specialists in various domains (urban planning, architectural restoration, sociology, economics, landscape planning and conservation, etc.), well represents the multidisciplinary approach that was required by UNESCO, and a first mission by selected members of the international team of experts took place in March 2007.

**b. Nablus** - Within the framework of the *“Revitalization Plan of the Old City of Nablus”* (sponsored by the Munir Sukhtian Group-Jordan), the Prize-giving Ceremony of 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” took place in August 2006. Presently, fund-raising for the implementation of the winning proposals in the six sites selected for the competition is on-going.

Regarding the *“Restoration and adaptive reuse of the Khan al-Wakala”*, the funding, received from the European Commission, of USD 1.7 million for the restoration and renovation of the Caravanserai, will allow resuming restoration activities on the site, which were disrupted in early 2006. It is planned that the restoration of the Caravanserai will be completed by the end of 2008.

**c. Jericho** - In the framework of the project concerning the *“Design of the protective shelters of the mosaic area of the Great Bath Hall of Qasr Hisham in Jericho and other facilities of the Archaeological Park”*, progress was made by the local architects associated with the international consultants. An assessment study on the structural conditions of the masonries of the Great Bath Hall was carried out, as well as the definition of the lay-out for the Archaeological Park.

The project entitled *“Conservation of Qasr Hisham – Phase II”*, funded by Italy, was completed by December 2006. Three main activities characterised this last phase of the project: a) the conservation work, carried out *in situ*, of selected stone elements, by the personnel trained in 2005; b) the last mission of the two international specialists in stone conservation undertaken in December 2006 to monitor the conservation work carried out by the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage; c) archaeological excavations carried out by this Department aiming at understanding the phasing of usage of the palace, especially the Thermal Complex.

Among the various activities carried out, the design of a framework programme entitled *“Developing Cultural Routes in Palestine: in the footsteps of the Prophets”*, was completed in close consultation with various stakeholders at local, national and international level. The framework document comprises 12 pilot projects focusing on cultural heritage preservation and employment generation in the Palestinian Territories. A publication of the framework document is under preparation and will be distributed to potential donors.

**III. Draft decision: 31 COM.12A**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/12A,
2. Recalling Decision **30 COM 11C.2** adopted at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006),
3. Takes note of the information provided by the World Heritage Centre on the progress made in the implementation of its Decisions **29 COM 11.D** and **30 COM 11C.2**;
4. Commends the efforts of all professionals involved in preserving the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage despite difficult conditions;
5. Thanks the concerned States Parties, IGOs and NGOs for their substantial contributions to UNESCO's action in the Palestinian Territories, and appeals to them to continue assisting in this endeavour;
6. Regrets that the prevailing situation, besides heavily affecting the life of the communities, does not allow effective and smooth implementation of conservation programmes;
7. Urges all parties concerned with the safeguarding of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage to take appropriate measures to prevent and avoid any damage to the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage;
8. Requests the World Heritage Centre to continue its efforts, in liaison with the concerned parties, in order to elaborate an Action Plan for the preservation and rehabilitation of this heritage, and to continue assisting the Palestinian institutions concerned in reinforcing their capacity in the protection, preservation and management of the cultural and natural heritage;
9. Invites the States Parties to contribute to the implementation of the above activities and decides to allocate an amount of USD 100,000 to this end during the 2008-2009 biennium ;
10. Further requests the World Heritage Centre to present a report on the progress made to the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session in 2008.