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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-fourth session

Brasilia, Brazil
25 July – 3 August 2010

**Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda: Protection of the Palestinian cultural
and natural heritage**

SUMMARY

As requested by the World Heritage Committee in its decision **33 COM 12**, this document provides a summary of the progress made in the implementation of the activities related to decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee since its 26th session in Budapest (2002), which aim, at providing technical assistance in favour of the protection of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage. It also provides information on on-going rehabilitation and conservation projects.

Draft Decision: 34 COM 11, see paragraph 14

1. Since the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee in Budapest in 2002, the Secretariat assists the Palestinian Authority in the protection of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage. Since then, the allocation of funds by the World Heritage Committee (USD 570,000) has contributed to activities implemented by the UNESCO Ramallah Office, in close cooperation with the responsible Palestinian authorities, mainly the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities), with the support of the World Heritage Centre.

2. At its 33rd session (Seville, 2009), the World Heritage Committee adopted Decision **33 COM 12** by which it requested the World Heritage Centre to continue assisting the Palestinian institutions in charge of the protection of heritage. Therefore, the activities initiated in the previous years will continue, as much as the situation prevailing on the ground allows, in particular, the support to the Palestinian World Heritage Secretariat. This included the dissemination of the newly printed 4,000 copies of the *Inventory of Palestinian Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of potential Outstanding Universal Value* in English and Arabic; the further development of the “Educational Manual” based on the “World Heritage in Young Hands” currently used as a training tool for teachers to introduce cultural heritage in school curricula, the preparation of the Nomination file for “Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and Historic Bethlehem”; the continuation of the capacity-building for staff members of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, e.g. in GIS-based tools for the inventorying and protection of archaeological resources as well as in the preparation of nomination files.

Bethlehem Governorate

3. Within the framework of the “Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan (Phase 1)”, funded by the Government of Italy (USD 500,000), the Strategic Plan, then named “Guidelines for the Conservation and rehabilitation of the Historic Towns of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour”, was endorsed on 3 March 2010 by all key stakeholders. The donor is committed to provide funds for the implementation of the second phase of the project, which aims at finalizing the conservation and management plans for the three historic towns.

4. The support provided to the Palestinian World Heritage Secretariat includes the provision of assistance in the preparation of the first potential Palestinian Nomination file, namely the “Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and Historic Bethlehem” (site No 1 of the *Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine*).

5. Within the project “Riwaya Museum - Bethlehem”, funded by the Government of Norway (USD 1,323,640) conservation works funded by UNESCO Regular Programme funds (USD 150,000) were undertaken at the archaeological site located within the museum space, namely a monastery and a cistern from the Byzantine period. This activity entailed new excavations carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities under technical guidance from two international consultants. It resulted in significant findings for the history of Bethlehem, which will be fully integrated into the future museum display.

6. The project for the safeguarding of cultural landscapes, which produced the “first of its kind” set of guidelines for the protection of a unique historic system of rain-fed as well as irrigated terraced agriculture in Battir (Bethlehem Governorate, site No. 8 of the *Inventory*: the Land of Olives and Vines) is continuing. In addition, within the project “Safeguarding Historical and Environmental Resources Towards Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate”, funded by the Government of Norway (USD 115,000), a series of activities and workshops were carried out in December

2009, focusing on exploring the feasibility of establishing a Cultural Landscape Eco-museum in the surroundings of Battir.

Nablus

7. A 3-year project on the “Conservation and Management of the archaeological site of Tell Balata” (site No. 12 of the *Inventory: Historic Nablus*), funded by the Government of the Netherlands, has started in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Department of Archaeology of the University of Leiden as well as the concerned local authorities and community. The project represents the first holistic intervention addressing the protection of an archaeological site through the establishment of an archaeological park in the Northern districts of the West Bank.

8. Regarding the “Restoration and adaptive reuse of the Khan al-Wakala (Phases 2 and 3)”, funded by the European Commission (2,387,822 Euros), rehabilitation works are ongoing, as per the approved project. All civil works at the site were completed in December 2009, as well as the rehabilitation of the sewage network in Al-Qaryon near Ajaj Mosque. UNESCO also reactivated the Yard School for the Conservation of the Khan, which mainly aims at building the capacities of local artisans in Nablus through transferring know-how by local experts in conservation and restoration. The invitation to bid for the finishing works is prepared and will be the last step of the physical rehabilitation of the site.

Nablus, Jenin and Hebron Governorates

9. UNESCO is working on the rehabilitation of historic sites in the Nablus, Jenin and Hebron Governorates within the framework of the MDG-Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Joint Programme for “Culture and Development in the occupied Palestinian territory”, funded by the Government of Spain (USD 3,000,000, led by UNESCO in cooperation with FAO, UNIFEM and UNDP). The programme ascertains the contribution that culture can make to economic development and to social cohesion.

Jericho Governorate and the Jordan Valley

10. The activity concerning the “Conservation and management of Hisham’s Palace in Jericho” has been incorporated within the Czech Republic funded project for the “Protection of the mosaic at Qasr Hisham Archaeological Park. Archaeological excavations and executive design for the protective shelters of the Great Bath Hall and visitors’ facilities at the site” (USD 56,541).; works continue towards the finalization of the comprehensive design of the protective structures, guided by Prof. Peter Zumthor, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and a Palestinian engineering office.

11. In the framework of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, a Joint Programme concerning “Livelihood Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable, Rural and Refugee Communities in the Jordan Valley”, funded by the Government of Japan, concentrates its efforts towards the reviving of Earthen Architecture in the Jordan Valley as a major endangered traditional construction practice in the area, through the provision of training modules and hands-on modality for new structures as well as rehabilitation of historic buildings and sites.

Gaza

12. A proposal for the conservation and management of the archaeological site of Tell Umm Amer (Saint Hilarion Monastery), in Gaza (site No. 14 of the *Inventory*) was submitted to donors for funding.

Recent developments

13. During the 184th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO, three documents were presented to the members of the Board related respectively to Educational and Cultural Institutions in the Occupied Arab Territories, the reconstruction and development of Gaza and a new agenda item concerning the two Palestinian sites of al-Haram al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs in al-Khalil/Hebron and the Bilal bin Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. The latter was due to the recent decision by the Israeli authorities to include these two sites within the List of their national heritage programme. Three draft decisions were submitted by Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Tunisia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam. After considerable effort to reach a consensus, decisions were adopted, to which the original draft decisions were attached, by which the examination of these agenda items was postponed to the 185th session of the Executive Board.

14. **Draft Decision: 34 COM 11**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-10/34.COM/11,*
2. *Recalling Decision **33 COM 12** adopted at its 33rd session (Seville, 2009),*
3. *Takes note of the information provided by the World Heritage Centre and commends the efforts of all professionals involved in preserving the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage despite difficult conditions;*
4. *Urges all parties concerned with the safeguarding of heritage to take appropriate measures to prevent and avoid any damage to the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage;*
5. *Requests the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS to undertake a mission to assess the state of conservation of the main sites listed in the Inventory of Palestinian heritage of potential Outstanding Universal Value;*
6. *Also Requests the World Heritage Centre to continue assisting the Palestinian institutions concerned in reinforcing their capacity in the protection, preservation and management of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage;*
7. *Further requests the World Heritage Centre to present a progress report to the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011.*