



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

World Heritage

36 COM

WHC-12/36.COM/11

Paris, 11 May 2012

Original: English / French

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

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

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty-sixth session

**Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation
24 June– 6 July 2012**

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 **35 COM 11**, this document presents a summary of the progress made in the implementation of the activities in favour of the protection of the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage according to decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee since its 26th session in Budapest (2002). It also provides information on on-going rehabilitation and conservation projects.

Draft Decision: 36 COM 11, see part IV

I. BACKGROUND

1. Since the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee in Budapest in 2002, the Secretariat has assisted 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 34th and 35th sessions (Brasilia, 2010; UNESCO, 2011), the World Heritage Committee had requested “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”. The World Heritage Centre took the necessary steps to organize such a mission, however, no answer has been received to its request and the mission has not taken place.
3. The World Heritage Committee also 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 are continuing, to the extent possible in light of the situation prevailing on the ground, focusing on technical assistance to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

II. ACTIVITIES

A. Bethlehem Governorate

4. The “Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan (Phase 1)”, funded by the Government of Italy (USD 500,000), is completed. A UNESCO two-volume publication about methods, process and results of the plan will be printed in 300 copies for distribution.
5. The project for the safeguarding of cultural landscapes, which produced a set of guidelines for the protection of a unique historic system of rain-fed as well as irrigated terraced agriculture in Battir (Bethlehem Governorate, as part of the site No. 8 of the *inventory*: the Land of Olives and Vines) is completed. The Battir Village, which was awarded the “UNESCO-Greece Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes” on 24 May 2011, is benefitting from several donor-funded initiatives. The project for the establishment of a Landscape Eco-museum in Battir funded by Italy through the Palestinian Municipality Support Programme is on-going.

B. Nablus, Jenin and Hebron Governorates

6. The three-year project on the “Conservation and Management of the archaeological site of Tell Balata” (site of the Tentative List: Historic Nablus), funded by the Government of the Netherlands (USD 431,655), is continuing 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, expected to be completed in December 2012, 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.
7. 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 have

been completed. The provision of furniture continues through the mobilization of Palestinian designers and craftsmen, adequately trained through the MDG-F Joint Programme started in 2009 (cf. below). A business plan has been drafted by local consultants in cooperation with key stakeholders and publication of results is expected to be launched during the inauguration in April 2012.

8. UNESCO is working on the rehabilitation of historic sites in the Nablus, Jenin and Hebron Governorates within the framework of the UNESCO-led MDG-F Joint Programme for “Culture and Development in the occupied Palestinian territory”, funded by the Government of Spain (USD 3,000,000, in cooperation with FAO, UN Women and UNDP). The main intervention focuses on the historic town of Sebastiya and its cultural landscape (site of the Tentative List): the integrated plan for the conservation and management of cultural assets will be presented to stakeholders for endorsement in April 2012; the construction of the light tourist facility has started, following archaeological excavations on the site.

C. Jericho Governorate

9. The project “Protection of the mosaics at Qasr Hisham Archaeological Park - Design for the protective shelters of the Great Bath Hall and visitors’ facilities at the site” (site of the Tentative List), continues through the contribution of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture (CHF 100,000). The fund contributes to the completion of the design phase by Prof. Peter Zumthor (Pritzker Architecture Prize 2009) and his local partner (Habash Consulting Engineers) for the “House of the Mosaics”.

D. Gaza

10. The second component of the conservation works at the archaeological site of Tell Umm Amer (Saint Hilarion Monastery), in Gaza (site of the Tentative List), funded by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture (CHF 50,000) as part of the campaign for combating looting and illicit trafficking of cultural artifacts, and co-funded by the Government of France (30,000 Euros), is on-going, in cooperation with the Islamic University of Gaza (Iwan Centre) and the French Biblical School of Archaeology of Jerusalem. This component focuses on emergency conservation measures, notably the consolidation of the area where the tomb of Saint Hilarion is situated which is very fragile and at risk of collapse. The intervention entails the removal of the mosaic floor (and storage in a safe place), archaeological excavation, the construction of a retaining wall, the reburial of the site, and eventually the re-composition of the mosaic floor.

III. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

11. Following the consideration of the items related respectively to “the Educational and Cultural Institutions in the Occupied Arab Territories”, “the Reconstruction and development of Gaza” and “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” by the Executive Board at its 187th and 189th sessions (September 2011, February 2012), no consensus could be reached by the Members of the Executive Board on the proposed decisions presented by several Member States. The decisions were therefore adopted by roll-call vote.
12. On 8 March 2012, Palestine became Party to the World Heritage Convention following its admission as a Member of UNESCO by the decision of the General Conference (36th session, October/November 2011) and its ratification of the Convention on 8 December 2011. Thereafter, Palestine submitted its Tentative List as well as its first nomination: the *“Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route,*

Bethlehem”, to be processed on emergency basis as per paragraphs 161-162 of the *Operational Guidelines* (see Document WHC-12/36 COM.8 A.Add).

IV. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 36 COM 11

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-12/36.COM/11,*
2. *Recalling Decision **35 COM 11** adopted at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011),*
3. *Takes note of the information provided by the World Heritage Centre and welcomes Palestine as a Party to the World Heritage Convention;*
4. *Commends the efforts of all professionals involved in preserving the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage despite the prevailing conditions;*
5. *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;*
6. *Encourages the reactivation of the joint Israeli-Palestinian Technical Committee for Archaeology, in coordination with the concerned parties, as recommended at the 29th, 30th, 34th and 35th sessions of the World Heritage Committee;*
7. *Reiterates its request that the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS undertake a mission to assess the state of conservation of the main sites listed in the inventory and the Tentative List;*
8. *Invites 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.*