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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE
World Heritage Committee

Thirty-fifth session

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters

19-29 June 2011

**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 **34 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 ongoing rehabilitation and conservation projects.

Draft Decision: 35 COM 11, see paragraph 15

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 session (Brasilia, 2010), the World Heritage Committee adopted Decision **34 COM 11** by which it encouraged “the reactivation of the joint Israeli-Palestinian Technical Committee for Archaeology, in coordination with the concerned parties, as recommended at the 29th and 30th sessions of the World Heritage Committee”. At the time of drafting this document, no information has been received on this matter.

3. In this decision, the World Heritage Committee had also 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 has taken the necessary steps to organize such a mission; however, no answer has been received so far to UNESCO’s request and the mission had not yet taken place at the time of the drafting of this document.

4. 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, in particular the support to the Palestinian World Heritage Secretariat. This focused, in the past year, on the technical assistance to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for the preparation of the Nomination file of “Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem”. The preparation of the file entailed capacity-building for staff members of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, as well as the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Bethlehem. The nomination document was submitted by the Palestinian authorities to the World Heritage Centre in January 2011. However, pursuant to Article 11 of the *World Heritage Convention*, only State Parties to the *Convention* can submit nomination proposals for properties on their territory and accordingly, the World Heritage Centre would only be able to receive this nomination proposal if and when Palestine becomes a party to the *Convention*.

Bethlehem Governorate

5. The “Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan (Phase 1)”, funded by the Government of Italy (USD 500,000), is completed. The final evaluation, carried out in April 2011 by three independent consultants, strongly recommended the donor to provide funds for the finalization of the conservation and management plans for the three historic towns. UNESCO, in cooperation with the Palestinian partners, is preparing a two-volume publication about the process and findings of the project (the project area partially matches with the site No. 1 of the *Inventory: Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and Historic Bethlehem*).

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, as part of the site No. 8 of the *Inventory: the Land of Olives and Vines*) is completed. The project was awarded the “UNESCO-Greece Melina Mercouri International Prize for

the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes” (*ex-aequo* with the Historical and Cultural Museum-Reservation of Garni in Armenia).

Nablus

7. A three-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 (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 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 have been completed. The provision of furniture continues through the mobilization of Palestinian designers and craftsmen, adequately trained through the MDG-F Joint Programme (cf. below).

Nablus, Jenin and Hebron Governorates (and the Gaza Strip)

9. 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, UNIFEM and UNDP).

Jericho Governorate and the Jordan Valley

10. The project “Protection of the mosaics at Qasr Hisham Archaeological Park - Archaeological excavations and concept design for the protective shelters of the Great Bath Hall and visitors’ facilities at the site” (site No. 11 of the *Inventory*), funded by the Czech Republic (USD 56,541), was brought to completion. The fund contributed substantially to enable Prof. Peter Zumthor (Pritzker Architecture Prize 2009) and his local partner (Habash Consulting Engineers) to make progress in the design of the ‘emotional reconstruction’ of the Great Bath Hall, renamed ‘House of the Mosaics’. The project was presented to the donor community, the media and the general public in December 2010.

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 (USD 1,033,620 for the UNESCO component), concentrates its efforts on 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 as well as rehabilitation of historic buildings and sites.

Gaza

12. The first component of conservation works at the archaeological site of Tell Umm Amer (Saint Hilarion Monastery), in Gaza (site No. 14 of the *Inventory*), funded by the Government of France (80,000 Euros) is completed. Cleaning of the archaeological ruins, emergency conservation measures and basic management of

the site were undertaken, in cooperation with the Islamic University of Gaza (Iwan Centre) and the French Biblical School of Archaeology of Jerusalem.

Recent developments

13. 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 185th session in October 2010, and despite considerable efforts, no consensus could be reached by Members of the Executive Board on the proposed decisions presented by several Member States. The decisions were adopted by roll-call vote.

14. At its 186th session, the Executive Board also examined these three items and adopted decisions by which it “recalls its previous decisions” and “decides to include these items on the agenda of the 187th session of the Executive Board”.

15. **Draft Decision: 35 COM 11**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-10/34.COM/11,*
2. *Recalling Decision **34 COM 11** adopted at its 34th session (Brasilia, 2010),*
3. *Takes note of the information provided by the World Heritage Centre and regrets that the mission requested by the World Heritage Committee could not take place;*
4. *Commends the efforts of all professionals involved in preserving the Palestinian cultural and natural heritage despite 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 and 34th 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 of Palestinian heritage of potential Outstanding Universal Value;*
8. *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;*
9. *Decides to allocate 50,000 USD from the World Heritage Fund to this end for the biennium 2012-2013 to complement the existing extrabudgetary funding;*
10. *Further requests the World Heritage Centre to present a progress report to the World Heritage Committee at its 36th session in 2012.*