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Item 23 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF 41 C/RESOLUTION 51 AND 212 EX/DECISION 44 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

The present document is submitted pursuant to 212 EX/Decision 44 and 41 C/Resolution 51.

It reports on assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant Palestinian stakeholders, and on developments since the 212th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Decision required: paragraph 40.



Job: 202200937

INTRODUCTION

1. The reporting period is from September to February 2022.
2. Detailed information on UNESCO's activities in Gaza is provided in document 214 EX/22 "Occupied Palestine" and is therefore not reported on in the present document.

EDUCATION

3. The protracted crisis continues in Palestine, impacting around 2.1 million people, including 933,994 children in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, ¹. This crisis is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has raised the already elevated unemployment levels in both the West Bank and Gaza.
4. Approximately 600,000 Palestinians across Palestine, including around 13,400 children with disabilities, will need humanitarian assistance to access education in 2022. Nearly 74% of them live in the Gaza Strip and over 26% in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Longstanding issues affecting access to education include insufficient and/or inadequate safe school infrastructure throughout Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and with Gaza particularly affected, with around 65% of schools operating on a double-shift system. In 2021, these challenges have been compounded by successive COVID-19 surges, which have led to the prolonged closures of schools and kindergartens, as part of the measures adopted to contain the pandemic.²
5. In this context, UNESCO continues to provide technical support through its participation as technical advisor of the Education Sector working group, as co-chair of the Quality Education and the Higher Education thematic working groups and as a member in other thematic working groups, mainly on quality education, inclusive education and life skills.
6. Adding to the above, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education in policy dialogue and the development of three policy papers on governance, quality assurance and digital education. The action plans to implement the policy recommendations contained in these papers, provided further opportunity for UNESCO to address the priorities of the Ministry. A synthesis report was prepared and shared with the Ministry, which would provide a basis for the future Education Strategy in Palestine.
7. UNESCO continues to support the implementation of the inclusive education policy in Palestine through funds received from Education Cannot Wait (ECW) where a manual for inclusive education was developed during 2021 and training was conducted for supervisors, counselors and school principals for 177 schools in marginalized areas of the West Bank. In addition, capacity building for 13 teachers at the three determinations schools in West Bank was carried out to ensure they are able to provide psychosocial support to sick students in the hospitals.
8. Within the same project, UNESCO reprogrammed funds to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Together with the Ministry of Education (MoE), UNESCO conducted summer camp activities in 100 schools in the West Bank for grades from 1-4 to bridge the learning loss of students in Arabic and Math. 10,000 students, 360 teachers, 34 supervisors and 100 school principals benefited from this activity. In parallel, support to the learning loss assessment was provided to the MoE through data entry in both West Bank and Gaza to identify the parameters to provide the needed interventions.
9. Moreover, within ECW funding under the project aiming to ensure access to education for children affected by COVID-19, UNESCO provided 43 laptops to selected marginalized schools in area C to provide access to distance learning.

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/media/112316/file/2022-HAC-State-of-Palestine.pdf>

² https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/HNO_2022.pdf

10. UNESCO, with CapED support, conducted STEM training of 48 teachers on using artificial intelligence (AI) in robotics. The training of teachers resulted in transferring the knowledge to 500 students in both West Bank and Gaza. The training focused on the importance of using AI in problem solving and teamwork, which could be applied to solve various challenges at a local and global levels.

11. From September to November 2021, UNESCO, in cooperation with ILO, also conducted training on skills anticipation to technical TVET staff from ministries of education, higher education and labour. In addition, within the EU-funded Youth for Employment in the Mediterranean Project (YEM) project, UNESCO also organized training on entrepreneurship for TVET teachers in July 2021 and conducted training on skills forecasting in September 2021. To ensure the sustainability of these TVET interventions, UNESCO, within the funding agreement with the Belgium Development Agency (ENABEL) will further strengthen TVET by enhancing innovative approaches and mainstreaming technical, digital and transversal skills for youth to help reduce the high unemployment rate in Palestine. The joint UNESCO/ENABEL project also provides for the development of a Labor Management Information System (LMIS) and contextualization of the Work and Life Skills Toolbox. This will set the ground for further interventions towards a robust TVET that is able to link between the supply and demand.

12. Through Japanese funding, training to the technical and educational staff of the MoE TV channel is being provided since September 2021 to ensure quality lessons are broadcasted as part of UNESCO's support to distance learning in Palestine. In addition, three pedagogical videos were developed for three endangered craft industries in Palestine, namely soap, leather, and copper where an educational manual is currently being developed to encourage youth in the TVET track to learn those crafts.

13. Finally, as a follow-up to the development of the Higher Education Strategy, UNESCO has initiated support to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in developing its Monitoring and Evaluation framework to monitor the progress towards achieving SDG4 targets.

CULTURE

14. During the second half of 2021, UNESCO continued to face the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that severely affected the implementation of cultural activities as well as other challenges still present in the working environment in Palestine. Despite this, UNESCO and its main partners were able to implement ongoing projects and achieve concrete results.

15. The end of 2021 marked the successful completion of the project "*Local development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of historic built environment in Palestine*" funded by Sweden, culminating nine years of support. UNESCO completed the last activities in the project, including a publication on success stories and best practices of the project entitled "*New Future for Forgotten Spaces*" as a resource document that records the overall history and achievements of the project. Furthermore, UNESCO supported upgrading the storage of archaeological objects at the premises of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) and supported the completion, inauguration and operationalization of the [Old Hebron Museum](#), which is now a destination for local visitors and international tourists. UNESCO and MoTA cooperated as well to establish and launch the first [Palestinian Virtual Museum](#) featuring 40 digitized archaeological objects from different historical periods through a website and a mobile application. The Virtual Museum is an easily accessed source of information on the Palestinian movable heritage and can be expanded to respond to the needs of researchers and knowledge seekers in the future.

16. UNESCO supported, through the World Heritage Fund, the elaboration of the Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) for the World Heritage site of "[Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town](#)" and the preparation of a Nomination Dossier for the Tentative List site "[Ancient Jericho/Tell es-Sultan](#)". UNESCO and its advisory bodies provided feedback on the pre-final CMP draft of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town, after which MoTA prepared a final draft for submission to UNESCO. Moreover,

UNESCO supported the development of a detailed urban plan for the World Heritage property “[Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir](#)” to provide building codes and by-laws for areas in the buffer zone of the property, to effectively manage urban transformation in the site. The final outcomes were developed in cooperation with and shall be endorsed by MoTA, the Municipality of Battir and the Ministry of Local Government.

17. The renovation works in the Riwaya Museum in Bethlehem, funded by Norway, advanced during the reporting period. They included the completion of the ongoing works and the preparations for a final renovation phase which implies upgrading the audiovisual installations that are necessary for a multimedia interactive function. The project has been extended with no-cost until 31 December 2022, in agreement with the donor, to enable the completion of the final renovation phase and to develop concrete ideas on the multimedia content of the Museum and to its museography, in close coordination with the relevant authorities and stakeholders.

18. UNESCO supported the Ministry of Culture (MoC), in the process of further revision of the content of a Law for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Palestine through the participation of relevant experts and cultural institutions specialized in the field of intangible cultural heritage, in order to address some issues raised during the adoption process. The Digital Intangible Cultural Heritage Registry held by the MoC has been upgraded and relevant personnel trained, with the aim to fully present the living heritage elements in digital format and make information accessible to the public for documentation, research and promotional purposes. Upgrading the Intangible Cultural Heritage Registry indirectly contributed to the successful inscription in December 2021 of ‘[The art of embroidery in Palestine, practices, skills, knowledge and rituals](#)’ as well as of the ‘[Arabic calligraphy: knowledge, skills and practices](#)’ (a multinational nomination) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. As part of UNESCO’s Intersectoral Initiative ‘Education and Culture together in action to advance the SDGs’, a preliminary internal ‘Desk Review on Living Heritage and Education’ for the West Bank and Gaza was prepared to strengthen linkages between the safeguarding of living heritage and education. In the framework of a project funded by Japan entitled ‘*Developing Digital Skills and Education for Sustainable Development through Distance Learning in Palestine – Phase I*’, pedagogical videos and a manual on six endangered traditional crafts are currently in the making. Moreover, within the same project and to better understand the interconnection of traditional crafts and local knowledge with the living heritage that continues to define and shape the World Heritage properties in Bethlehem and Hebron Old Town, an in-depth research on traditional crafts and practices, skills and traditional knowledge is being carried out in both sites.

19. The MoC continued to be supported also through the project “[Re|Shaping Cultural Policies for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)” funded by Sweden under the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. UNESCO finalized two studies on the “Impact of Covid-19 on the Culture Sector” and “Digital Culture in Palestine”. The findings of the studies were presented during a workshop organized in August 2021.

20. UNESCO Ramallah Office celebrated the World Olive Tree Day on 26 November 2021, in cooperation with the National Conservatory of Music (NCM), through the organization of a series of music activities in elementary schools encouraging families and education institutions to protect olive trees and transmit through traditional music and songs the values it embodies. The activities targeted 7-12 years old children and a short promotional video about the activity has been produced and uploaded on UNESCO’s social media <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcL21IVvQgg>.

21. In the framework of the UNESCO/EU project ‘[Supporting new regulatory frameworks to strengthen the cultural and creative industries and promote South-South cooperation](#)’ in which UNESCO is supporting the MoC in enhancing and improving the Palestinian film sector, a structure of a national film institute is under elaboration along with its possible legal framework. A stakeholders’ consultation is planned to take place at the beginning of 2022. In the framework of the same project,

national researchers have been contracted to collect data that shall feed an online platform for a film directory and a production directory.

22. UNESCO is finalizing the design of the study mapping the culture sector in Palestine through statistics that measure the transversal contribution of culture to the SDGs. The report is being translated into Arabic and it will be disseminated with the DROSOS Foundation which is partnering with UNESCO in this activity.

23. Palestine participated in the online regional consultation for the Arab States Region, held in February 2022, in preparation for the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - Mondiacult 2022. This inclusive consultation process aimed to support the regional dialogue on emerging trends, gaps and priorities for cultural policies, and their adaptation to the multidimensional challenges of sustainable development at the national and regional levels, including in the framework of cultural conventions.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

24. Between November 2021 and end January 2022, the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedom (MADA) recorded a total of 98 media freedom violations, ranging from physical attacks to denial of coverage. In January 2022 alone, at least 5 media workers were hit by rubber bullets fired by Israeli soldiers.³

25. On 30 November 2021, the UNESCO Office in Ramallah, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, launched a National Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Conference. About 250 persons attended both in West Bank and Gaza, including nine civil society organizations active in the field of media and information, media experts, educators and students. A video was also produced to promote the conference's outcomes.

26. UNESCO Office in Ramallah conducted psychosocial supporting sessions for 150 young men and women from the media sector. A self-care manual in Arabic is in the final review stage to be printed and distributed to provide guidance to journalists in distress. This manual is expected to be used as a tool to serve Palestine as well as the wider Arab region. This was part of the ongoing support following the Gaza escalation in May 2021, which included the destruction by IDF of a tower block in Gaza that housed the offices of several local and international media outlets.

27. During September and October 2021, four training sessions on fact-checking and professional reporting on elections were conducted for about 60 media workers in the directorates of local governorates.

28. In October 2021, UNESCO contributed to the only English-language magazine in Palestine "This Week in Palestine" to promote UNESCO's work on freedom of expression, tackling disinformation, and Media & Information Literacy through three articles addressed to the general public.

29. On 26 October 2021, in the framework of the Media and Information Literacy Week 2021, UNESCO Office in Ramallah and the Al-Quds Open University launched a new project on "Assessing Media Institutions' Strategic Management and Extending Media Literacy in the Palestinian Higher Education". This project was granted financial support by the IPDC and was complemented by the Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP) funds. It will be implemented in three phases by December 2022: a) Assessing the media institutions readiness in applying MIL concepts through research and study b) Capacity building sessions and, c) development of a Media information Literacy curriculum for Higher Education institutions.

³ <https://www.madacenter.org/en/article/1371/>

30. UNESCO Office in Ramallah is continuing to support the preparation of the first national report based on UNESCO's Internet Universality Indicators that aims to assess the state of Internet development at the national level, according to the ROAM principles of Human Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multi-stakeholder participation. This work is being carried out in collaboration with the Arab Center for Social Media Advancement (Hamleh). The relevant stakeholders and the research team are currently reviewing the first draft. It is foreseen that the report will be published during 2022.

31. In November and December 2021, in collaboration with The Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA), UNESCO conducted orientation meetings with three selected radio stations, in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza to improve their knowledge of MIL and build their skills to enhance their editorial strategies, develop codes of conducts, and produce new programs, that clearly indicates applying MIL concepts. The best short documentary produced on MIL principles was selected by a panel consisting of UNESCO, PYALARA and educators, and rewarded in January 2022.

32. In collaboration with the Media Development Center at Birzeit University, UNESCO organized a three-day workshop in the West Bank in December 2021 and Gaza in January 2022 on MIL capacity building and the proper use of tools. The workshop targeted duty bearers to ensure their full understanding of concepts and use of MIL tools, as well as for students (in media, political science and law), including regulators and influencers. The workshop specifically addressed the spread of disinformation/misinformation and hate speech, taking into account gender dimensions. An open discussion between all participants was conducted in February 2022 to discuss inter alia challenges on how to maximize the application of MIL standards and tools.

GENDER EQUALITY

33. In partnership with UN-Women, UNESCO conducted media monitoring involving four media outlets covering three types of production: television, radio and newspaper content to assess their compatibility with the gender equality standards. This assessment was concluded December 2021 and led to the production of a code of conduct regarding this area in consultation with the media professionals, media outlets and the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. A training on gender representation targeting the media outlets involved in the assessment will be conducted during the first quarter of 2022.

34. UNESCO Office in Ramallah took part in the '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)' around 25 November under the theme "Women and girls: Safe at home, online, in the street, at work and in society as a whole". In cooperation with Radio Philistia, UNESCO supported three radio episodes in Arabic contributing to the campaign and raising awareness on GBV in Palestine.

35. The first radio episode was on "Online Violence Against Palestinian Female Journalists" and was broadcast online on the 29 November 2021; the second radio episode was on the "Unequal Burden on Female Students and Working Women due to COVID-19" and was broadcast online on 7 December 2021; and building on the ResiliArt debate model, the third and last episode of this series was on "Arts as a Way to Raise Awareness on Violence Against Women and Fight Gender Stereotypes" and was broadcasted online on 8 December 2021.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

36. UNESCO is actively participating in the UN Thematic Group on Youth (UNYG) and as such has undertaken several mapping exercises to identify the best opportunity to build synergies and expand collaboration in support to youth related interventions in the following key areas such as "Support civic engagement initiatives that provide youth (in particular women and girls) with a great voice" as well as "Economic empowerment".

37. Therefore, UNESCO as a member of the UNTG on Youth has contributed to the establishment of the first Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) in Palestine. The YAP is expected to provide a platform for young people to advise and impact policy, programme design, and implementation of youth-related interventions in the country and to ensure that the United Nations programme interventions effectively respond to the critical challenges and priorities of youth. The selection of the future members of the panel will be finalized by October 2022.

38. UNESCO and the Idries Shah Foundation organized the World Tales Short Story Competition to invite youth all over the world to share their hopes and concerns for the future and promote tolerance, inclusion, mutual understanding, gender equality, antidiscrimination, non-violence and peace. The Competition received over 2,000 entries from all 5 regions and rewarded 16 laureates in July 2021. Palestinian young student, Khitam al-Hissi, was awarded a bronze medal and an iPad for her exceptional short story entitled “We the children won!”. UNESCO’s Field Office in Ramallah is facilitating the delivery of her Prize with the support of the IBBY Palestine library network who helped her submit her story to be published in 2022.

Occupied Syrian Golan

39. The project for Syrian students in the occupied Syrian Golan launched in 2009 and financed by Japanese Funds-In-Trust ended in March 2013. Without further extrabudgetary resources, this assistance could not be provided over the reporting period.

Proposed draft decision

40. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having considered documents 214 EX/22 and 214 EX/23,
2. Recalling its previous decisions concerning “Educational and Cultural Institutions in the Occupied Arab Territories”,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 215th session and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

ANNEX



Executive Board Two hundred and fourteenth session

214 EX/PX/DR.23.1
PARIS, 30 March 2022
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PROGRAMME AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (PX)

Item 23 **IMPLEMENTATION OF 41 C/RESOLUTION 51 AND 212 EX/DECISION 44 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES**

DRAFT DECISION

The Executive Board,

I OCCUPIED PALESTINE

1. Recalling 185 EX/Decision 36 and 38 C/Resolution 72 as well as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with regard to the right to education, Articles 24, 50 and 94 of the Fourth Geneva Convention with regard to the denial of the right of children to education, as well as the Hague Convention (1954) and its additional Protocols and the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), also recalling the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004 on the "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory",
2. Having examined documents 214 EX/22 and 214 EX/23,
3. 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, as well as the safeguarding of schools and all educational facilities,
4. Deplores the damaging impact of the military confrontations on the fields of competence of UNESCO in the Gaza Strip, particularly education and cultural institutions;
5. Deeply concerned by the Israeli army violations against Palestinian universities and schools, demands that the Israeli authorities immediately halt actions that violate UNESCO principles and the provisions of the world declaration for education for all (1990) and reaffirms, in this regard, that schools, universities and cultural heritage sites enjoy special protection and should not be targeted;
6. Expresses its growing concern about the harmful impact of the Wall on the activities of educational and cultural institutions, and demands, in this regard, that Israel, the occupying Power, cease all of its settlement activities, including the construction of the Wall and other measures aimed at altering the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem and the Cremisan Monastery in the Bethlehem Governorate, which harm the social fabric of Palestinian society and prevent Palestinian school children and students from exercising fully their right to education;
7. Notes with deep concern the Israeli censorship of the Palestinian curricula of schools and universities in East Jerusalem, and urges the Israeli authorities to immediately halt this censorship;
8. Expresses its appreciation for the substantial contributions of all concerned Member States and intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to UNESCO's action in Palestine as well as for building of schools for Palestinian children such as the school of Tana, near Nablus and the two schools in Khan Al-Ahmar and in Abu Nuwar near Jerusalem, and appeals to them to continue assisting UNESCO in this endeavour;
9. Deeply regrets the destruction by the Israeli authorities of schools, including the school in Abu Nuwar and the school in Tana, and calls on the Israeli authorities to halt plans for further demolition, including of the school in Khan Al-Ahmar;
10. Thanks the Director-General for the results that have been obtained in favour of the protection, reconstruction, rehabilitation and restoration of the Palestinian archaeological sites and cultural heritage, invites her to reinforce her action in this regard and to strengthen UNESCO's assistance to the Palestinian educational and cultural institutions in order to address the needs for capacity building in UNESCO's fields of competence by, *inter alia*, expanding the financial assistance programme for Palestinian students and school children, and requests her to organize, as soon as possible, the ninth meeting of the Joint UNESCO-Palestine Committee;

II OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

11. Also invites the Director-General:
 - (a) to continue the efforts she is making to preserve the human, social and cultural fabric of the occupied Syrian Golan, in accordance with the relevant provisions of its decisions;

- (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;
- (c) to dispatch an expert to assess and evaluate the needs of the educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Syrian Golan and report to her before the 215th session of the Executive Board;

III

12. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 215th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.

ANNEX TO THE DOCUMENT

During the reporting period, the following correspondence has been received by the Secretariat in relation to this item:

Date	From	Subject
10 December 2021	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Attacks on educational institutions and violations of the right to education
17 December 2021	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Attacks on educational institutions and violations of the right to education
10 January 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Attacks on educational institutions and violations of the right to education
12 January 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Attacks on educational institutions and violations of the right to education
31 January 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Violations against journalists
9 February 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Report by Amnesty International
2 March 2022	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	Attacks on educational institutions and violations of the right to education