



Second Meeting
of the Islamic Heritage Committee

Final Report

Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt: 17-18 September 2011

In furtherance of its effort to protect Islamic civilization heritage in the Member States, through its Islamic Heritage Committee, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), jointly with the Supreme Council of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt, held the second meeting of the Islamic Heritage Committee in Cairo. The meeting, convened on 17-18 September 2011, gathered the representatives of the states parties to the Islamic Heritage Committee: namely, Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal, Niger, Malaysia, with the absence of the representative of Iran. The meeting was also attended by members of the assisting academic committee to the Islamic Heritage Committee.

The meeting opened, Saturday 17 September 2011, with a speech by the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt in which he expressed full thanks and appreciation to H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of ISESCO, for choosing Egypt to host this important event. He also hailed as fruitful the cooperation between Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities and ISESCO, and stressed the need to revisit the work tools and methods used in attending to heritage issues in the Islamic world, voicing his confidence that the Islamic Heritage Committee, and with it the assisting scientific committee, will accomplish this very challenging mission.

There followed the speech of ISESCO Director General, which was read on his behalf by ISESCO representative to the meeting. Dr Altwaijri stressed the importance of the meeting on account of the critical conditions that have marked the Islamic Arab scene. He considered that there is no better way to overcome this critical situation and its negative effects but through holding tight to the perennial Islamic values, and entrenching them to build the bases for justice, good governance, respect for human dignity. He also stressed that ISESCO is steadfast in its commitment to preserving the time-honoured heritage of the Islamic civilization, giving it prior attention in its various areas of action, it being understood that it tops the list of cultural rights to which individuals and communities are entitled. This, the Director General explained, was the reason why ISESCO established the Islamic Heritage Committee with the objective of increasing efforts in this regard. Talking about the challenges and dangers posed to the Islamic cultural and civilizational heritage in countless Member States, particularly the acts of destruction and judaization to which the Islamic sanctities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and around Al-Aqsa Mosque are subjected at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities,

Dr Altwajri pointed out to the major issues placed on the agenda of the second meeting of the Islamic Heritage Committee. He called on the Islamic Heritage Committee to pore over the roadmap he presented to the Committee, in order to define the approach to follow by all parties in the next stage to preserve and protect the Member States' civilizational heritage.

In his speech, Dr Murad Rammah, Chairman of the Islamic Heritage Committee, expressed thanks and appreciation to H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, ISESCO Director General, for continuously supporting the Islamic Heritage Committee and providing the mechanisms to enable the Committee to best discharge its role in safeguarding the Islamic civilizational heritage. He considered as deservedly interesting the roadmap which ISESCO Director General addressed to the Committee, and stressed the need to translate into action its guidelines within the Committee's ambit and the objectives it was established for. He also expressed thanks to Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities for generously hosting the meeting.

The Committee started work sessions with presentation and discussion of the work paper titled (**Towards Common Ground to Promote Heritage in the Islamic World**). The paper contained a number of common points in cultural and civilizational heritage which the relevant parties in the Member States should act on to come up with new approaches to address issues of cultural and civilizational heritage, allow for developing methodologies and effective solutions in light of these common denominators to provide tools to preserve cultural civilizational heritage, enlarge scope for research and production of new techniques, and establish centres and laboratories specialising in the maintenance and protection of cultural heritage in the Member States.

Also on the meeting's agenda was the presentation and discussion of the (**Draft Form for the Inscription of Heritage Components on the Islamic Heritage List, along with Relevant Criteria**). The document sought to give an accurate survey of archaeological sites and natural reserves in the Member States, protect and promote intangible heritage, provide urgent assistance to safeguard archaeological monuments harmed by natural disasters, provide legal support to recover looted cultural property, and support the relevant parties in the Member States to inscribe their archaeological sites on UNESCO World Heritage List.

Also presented was the (**Technical Documented Report on the Excavations Carried out by the Israeli Occupation Authorities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Environs of Al-Aqsa Mosque**), which showed how lawless are the acts of demolition and judaization the Israeli occupation authorities inflict on Al-Quds Al-Sharif and its Islamic historical monuments. Equally grave, the report explained, are the endeavours by Israel to add Al Haram Al Ibrahimy in Al Khalil along with Billal Bin Rabah mosque in Bayt Lahm to Israel's heritage list.

There was also the (**Guidance Note on the Importance of Cultural Heritage for Economy and Sustainable Development**). In this document was underlined the value of culture and how it can be used to serve economic growth and sustainable development through sensitising relevant parties to the importance of adopting cultural policies to deploy heritage in stimulating environmental, cultural, social and economic development, encourage the youth and civil society organs to take a lead part in this area, as well as offer services and work opportunities, link cultural heritage and educational system, and involve all the social strata in promoting cultural and civilizational heritage in the Member States.

Discussions ensued during which a number of useful observations and proposals were made by the Committee's members. At the close of its work session, the Committee approved the following documents:

1. Towards Common Ground to Promote Heritage in the Islamic World.
2. Draft Form for the Inscription of Heritage Components on the Islamic Heritage List, along with Relevant Criteria.
3. Technical Documented Report on the Excavations Carried out by the Israeli Occupation Authorities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
4. Guidance Note on the Importance of Cultural Heritage for Economy and Sustainable Development.

The following recommendations were adopted:

- Prevail on the Israeli occupation authorities to immediately stop conducting excavations and archaeological works at the Bab Al-Maghariba (Al-Maghariba Gate) in Al-Aqsa Mosque, building a synagogue near Al-Aqsa Mosque, erecting the racial discrimination wall, building the Jewish museum on top of "Ma'man Allah" Muslim cemetery, it being understood that these acts are meant to change the demographic configuration of the Palestinian lands, and constitute a grave violation of international law, most notably The Hague Convention of 1954 and the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Call on the UN Security Council and the Quartet to immediately intervene, in order to take urgent measures to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque and compel Israel to implement the resolutions of the international legality regarding Al-Quds, especially resolutions 253, 267, 271, 465, 476, 478, 6725, 1073, and the UN General Assembly Resolution 51/223.
- Urge government and local community institutions and bodies, inside and outside the Islamic world, to coordinate and combine efforts to sensitise the Islamic and international public opinion to the dangers of excavations by

Israel in Al-Aqsa Mosque and clarify how Israeli aggression can adversely impact on regional and international relations.

- Invite ISESCO to pursue effort to document violations by the Israeli occupation authorities in the environs of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, through the endeavour by ISESCO Committee of Archaeology Experts to investigate into Islamic civilization landmarks in Al-Quds Al-Sharif which are being subjected to destruction and judaization by Israel, coordinate with official authorities in Palestine, and present a regular fact-finding report to ISESCO Director General which he will refer to relevant senior parties.
- Invite UNESCO to activate the resolutions adopted in this regard by the World Heritage Committee in its 30th, 33rd and 34th sessions.
- Call on the Arab, Islamic and international media to uncover the practices pursued by the Israeli occupation authorities in flagrant violation of international agreements and conventions regarding protection of sanctities and historical monuments.
- Appeal to government institutions as well as civil society institutions and organs to urgently take the necessary measures to preserve human civilization heritage and protect it from looting and destruction amid the accelerating changes and difficult conditions occurring on the Arab Islamic scene.
- Invite ISESCO to:
 - Hold a scientific symposium of heritage experts, specialists and officials to consider developing a common strategy among the Member States, as part of the roadmap of the Islamic Heritage Committee to preserve Islamic heritage.
 - Devise a guide to maintenance and restoration of Islamic heritage landmarks.
 - Produce a booklet on Islamic art.
 - Hold training sessions and workshops on mechanisms to inscribe heritage on the Islamic heritage list, for the benefit of civilizational heritage specialists.
 - Organise an academic meeting on the importance of cultural heritage in economic growth and sustainable development.
- Urge the relevant parties in the Member States to integrate into curricula material to raise awareness about Islamic civilization heritage.
- Extend full credit and appreciation to the Arab Republic of Egypt, represented in the Supreme Council of Antiquities, for so generously hosting the second meeting of the Islamic Heritage Committee in Cairo.

- Express thanks and appreciation to H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of ISESCO, for his remarkable effort to enable the Islamic Heritage Committee to accomplish its tasks and contribute to safeguarding Islamic civilization heritage in the Member States.