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Ramallah Office

PRESS RELEASE
2017/10
Ramallah, 26 May 2017

UNESCO and Consulate General of Sweden inaugurated the rehabilitated cultural heritage sites in the Historic Town of Beit Iksa village



Beit Iksa, Jerusalem - On 18 May, UNESCO Ramallah Office, the Consulate General of Sweden in Jerusalem, Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation inaugurated the rehabilitated cultural heritage sites in the Historic Town of Beit Iksa village in Jerusalem. Several sites were rehabilitated between 2012 and 2016, including a public place used currently as a children playground and a locale for the Women's Association in the village. These two rehabilitation projects were implemented within the framework of the project "*Local development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of historic environment in Palestine*" funded by the government of Sweden through UNESCO.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Governor of Jerusalem Mr. Adnan Al Hussieni, the Mayor of Beit Iksa Village, Dr. Sa'ada Al Khateeb, Gunnar Olvik from the

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Swedish Consulate General in Jerusalem, Mr. Junaid Sorosh Wali, Head of Culture Unit at UNESCO Ramallah Office, Dr. Khaldun Bshara, Director of Riwaq Centre for Architectural Conservation, residents of the village as well as inhabitants from surrounding villages.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Al Khateeb welcomed the participants to Beit Iksa and emphasized the difficulties people are facing in accessing the village. He further reiterated that *implementing such projects supports the steadfastness of youth and elders to stay in the village and protect its heritage*. Mr. Al-Husseini stated that *we believe that the rehabilitation of the historic centre in Beit Iksa could further develop its potential as a tourist destination and as s venue for cultural activities. It is a pleasure to see UNESCO and Sida supporting cultural heritage in Palestine*. Dr. Bshara highlighted the very challenging working environment because of the restrictions on access of personnel and materials to the village.

Mr. Olvik emphasized Sweden's support to building a Palestinian state that is viable and independent and further went on saying that *supporting cultural heritage revitalization contributes to this aim through enforcing resilience of marginalized communities and groups*. This was further highlighted by Mr. Sorosh-Wali, UNESCO's Head of Culture Unit, who stressed the *critical importance of preserving historic urban heritage as an effective platform for the social and economic development of communities and as the core of their identity.*

UNESCO, with funding from the government of Sweden through Sida and in close cooperation with its implementation partners, **rehabilitated 51 cultural heritage sites in Palestine** within the framework of the above project. This included cities and villages across Palestine, which have contributed to the effective conservation of Palestinian cultural heritage, the reinforcement of local development and the provision of community services.

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visit www.unesco.org/ramallah and visit us on : Unesco Ramallah Office

For more information on this event, please contact: Majd Beltaji, Public Information Officer of the UNESCO Ramallah Office, at m.beltaji@unesco.org