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Joint Statement the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the

Decree Law on the Palestinian Tangible Cultural Heritage

Ramallah, 3 June 2018. Decree Law no. 11/2018 on Tangible Cultural Heritage entered into force today, after it was signed by President Mahmoud Abbas and published on the official gazette. The promulgation of the Decree Law comes at the culmination of extensive efforts by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), with the technical and financial support of UNESCO and the efficient participation of civil society organizations specialized in cultural heritage preservation. The collaboration among all stakeholders, which involved deep discussions and continuous reviews, led to a comprehensive and modern law that provides Palestinian cultural heritage with the necessary legislative protection, in line with international standards and in compliance with the provisions of international conventions ratified by the State of Palestine.

The new Decree Law supersedes the previous Provisional Law on Antiquities no. 51 (1966) and its amendments (which was in force in the northern governorates) and Law on Antiquities (Title V) (1929) and its amendments (which was in force in the southern governorates). It provides a comprehensive set of provisions on the protection, management, and promotion of Palestinian tangible cultural heritage.

Decree Law No. 11 expands the timeframe of heritage protection to all structures built before 1917 AD, whereas the previous legislation had limited the protection timeframe to heritage only dating back to before 1700 AD. Moreover, the new law sets forth another framework by virtue of which protection provided to the elements of tangible cultural heritage may be expanded if these elements are of a cultural, economic, or natural value. A comprehensive national inventory of all tangible cultural heritage in Palestine will also be established under this Decree Law.

The new heritage protection legislation adheres to the UNESCO conventions in the field of Culture ratified by Palestine, namely: the *1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the 1954 *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the*

Event of Armed Conflict and its two protocols, the 1970 *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, and the 2001 *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*.

The law designates MoTA as the policy, legal, and administrative reference authority for heritage in Palestine, and to establish a fund for cultural heritage, further sets up an advisory council tasked with contributing to the development of guiding policies for heritage protection, management, and promotion. It also include the sanctions applicable to offenses or violations against tangible cultural heritage.

MoTA and UNESCO extend their deepest thanks to all those who took part in the development and review of the law, in the lead-up to its adoption and final promulgation. Special gratitude goes to the Government of Sweden, to the national institutions active in the field of cultural heritage, as well as the local, international, and academic experts. MoTA looks forward to collaborating with all stakeholders in the development of the needed by-laws, so as to ensure the effective implementation of the new legislation for the protection and safeguarding of the Palestinian tangible cultural heritage for future generations.

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visit www.unesco.org/ramallah and follow us on  at https://www.facebook.com/unesco.ramallah/

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