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PRESS RELEASE
2018/9
Betlehem, 5 September 2018

Culture and Tourism Sector in Palestine comes together at the first Tourism and Culture Sector Working Group



Betlehem, 5 September 2018 – The first Tourism and Culture Sector Working Group (TCSWG), set-up within the Local Aid Coordination architecture (LACS), met today at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) in Betlehem. The TCSWG, which is chaired by MoTA and the Ministry of Culture (MoC), co-chaired by Norway and with UNESCO and UNDP as the technical advisors, serves as a platform to establish more linkages between MoTA, MoC, civil society, the private sector, line ministries and donors to support the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the Tourism and Culture sector strategies.

The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, H.E. Ms. Rula Ma'ayah, welcomed all stakeholders to this important day for the tourism and culture sector in Palestine and further highlighted the great potentail that tourism has *in terms of developing the Palestinian economy, ensuring that through its development, the tourism industry shall directly benefit a wide segment of the Palestinian society.* This was further reiterated by the Minister of Culture, H.E. Ehab Bessaiso, who emphasized that the working group *sets the foundations for further developing the tourism and culture sector* and stated that *the meeting is a hub that supports Palestinian culture, and shall contribute towards overcoming the continous instability and negative impact of the political situation*.

Ms. Hilde Haraldstad, Representative of Norway to Palestine, stated that as deputy chair of this working group, Norway will *continue to support both Ministers and civil society in these*

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two very important sectors for Palestine. She further reiterated that *Norway is commited together with other donors and partners to use this group to coordinate and avoid duplication, share information, engage in policy dialogue and strategize together*.

Dr. Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO Representative to Palestine, commended both MoTA and MoC for the establishment of the TCSWG, *which constitutes a breakthrough in terms of support to the strategically important and closely interconnected sectors and emphasized that no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component. Indeed, only a human-centered approach to development based on mutual respect and open dialogue among cultures can lead to lasting, inclusive and equitable results.*

Mr. Roberto Valent, UNDP Special Representative, emphasized the needed joint efforts, and stressed the *importance of innovative solutions to properly tackle the challenges facing the culture and tourism sectors thus boosting tourism and ensuring a prosperous, vibrant and cohesive community.*

During the meeting, key donors and partners working in the field of culture in Palestine members of the TCSWG – such as Germany, Spain, Turkey, Italy, Poland, the Office of the European Union Representative, Sweden and Switzerland – briefed on their actions in support of Culture and outlined the main policy areas for further development. This was followed by the MoTA and MoC presenting the main highligths and a situational analysis of their sectors and the related challenges.

The Tourism and Culture Sector Working Group will be meeting on a quarterly basis and will be the main platform for sector coordination and policy dialogue in the Tourism and Culture sector in the State of Palestine, with LACS as its Secretariat. It will facilitate information exchange and dialogue focusing on programmes, policy, research or any sector analysis in order to strengthen the sector wide approach and align support to priorities of the MoTA and MoC as outlined in their respective strategic plans.

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

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