United Nations
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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Ramallah Office

PRESS RELEASE
2018/14
Bethlehem, 17 October 2018

Inauguration of Dar As-Sabbagh and of Saint Joseph Women Empowerment Centre in Bethlehem



Bethlehem, 17 October 2018 - The completion of the rehabilitation works of the *Dar As-Sabbagh* building and of the *Saint Joseph Women Empowerment Centre*, located in the "Star Street" in the historic centre of Bethlehem, took place through two events under the patronage of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Bethehem Municipality and UNESCO.

The two sites were renovated by the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) within the framework of UNESCO's project *Local development through the Rehabilitation and Revitalization of Historic Built Environment in Palestine*, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The project contributes to the improvement of the quality of lives of local communities through the rehabilitation of Palestinian built heritage.

The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, H.E. Rula Ma'aya, expressed all her pride for the excellent collaboration of all actors involved in the restoration of these two important sites in Bethlehem, *whose importance bears further testimony of the rich Palestinian heritage and which will contribute to the revitalization of the old city of Bethlehem*.

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Heritage rehabilitation, said Dr Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO's Representative to Palestine, *goes beyond the mere restoration of important heritage buildings and sites, it also means being able to improve to the liveability of historic cities such as Bethlehem. The rehabilitation of these two sites contributes* – he continued – *to bringing back to life the social fabric of Star Street, in the heart of Bethlehem*.

Both sites are located along the Pilgrimage Route (Star Street), which is an integrated part of the UNESCO's World Heritage site "*Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem*[1]", inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2012. The "Dar As-Sabbagh" building is part of a large 18th century courtyard house, consisting of three floors and demonstrating special architectural features that stand witness to an important phase of construction in the Bethlehem area. The building, given by the Kassis Family to serve as a Research Centre on the Palestinian diaspora, can be seen as a model of collaboration among property ownership, private and public sectors.

The "Saint Joseph Women Empowerment Centre", managed by the Saint Joseph School for girls in Bethlehem and owned by the "Custodia Terrae Sanctae" will serve as a training centre for school-girls and women on the production of mosaics. It will provide a proper workspace for students to develop their skills and will allow them to exhibit and sell their products, further contributing to the economic empowerment of the beneficiaries and the revitalisation of the Star Street.

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

For more information on this project, please contact: Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Head of the Culture Unit at the UNESCO Ramallah Office, at j.sorosh@unesco.org

[1] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433