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Ramallah Office

PRESS RELEASE
2019/1
Nablus, 25 February 2019

Inauguration of Al-Nasr Square and Kanaan Soap Factory in the Old Town of Nablus



Nablus, 25 February 2019 – The Nablus Municipality, its residents, the donor and UNESCO celebrated the inaugurations of the Kanaan Soap Factory and Al-Nasr square, located in the Old Town of Nablus. The two cultural heritage sites were renovated by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Old Cities Revitalization Programme of the Welfare Association – TAAWON, 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), that aims to contribute to the improvement of the quality of lives of local communities through the rehabilitation of Palestinian built heritage.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Junaid Sorosh Wali, Officer in Charge and Head of Culture Unit at UNESCO Ramallah Office, emphasized that *transforming the once-active soap factory to serve the wellbeing of two of the most vulnerable segments of Palestinian society, namely the elderly and youth, is a unique example that attests to UNESCO's goals and principles in protecting and promoting the heritage for sustainable use.* He further added that *the intervention in Al-Nasr Square contributes to the protection of the Old Town's values and promotes the square's role as a commercial, social and inclusive public space while providing a safer and adequate environment for its users.*

Mr. Adli Ya'ish, the Mayor of Nablus, thanked all those who contributed to the success of these projects, and expressed his pride seeing the achievements in the Old Town of Nablus,

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which was made possible by UNESCO and its partners during the past years. He stressed that *the municipality seeks to document and revive the entire historic centre of Nablus, including buildings, quarters, neighbourhoods and traditional markets.*

Mr. Maher Daoudi, who represented the Consulate General of Sweden in Jerusalem, praised the project's achievements and emphasized Sweden's long-term support to the safeguarding of Palestinian cultural heritage as *a representation of identities and collective memories of the Palestinian people and requires continuous support.*

The Kanaan Soap Factory is an exquisite work of architecture located in Al Masaben Street which is historically known for traditional soap production. After the completion of the rehabilitation works, the building is being managed by the Social Charitable Foundation, serving as a centre for the elderly and a digital library for students. Al-Nasr Square, also known as Al-Manara Clock Tower Square, is one of the most important historic landmarks and liveable public spaces in the Old Town of Nablus. The intervention in this central commercial area largely contributed to beautifying and enhancing the site, and provided a safer and more adequate space for the users.

Since its inception in 2012, the programme successfully rehabilitated 67 cultural heritage sites adapted to provide social services, generated 97,000 working days, trained 168 architects; engineers and professionals on techniques of cultural heritage preservation and management and organized 147 community awareness activities on the value of cultural heritage in Palestine.

The Old Town of Nablus and its environs has been added to the Tentative List of Palestine in 2012 for possible nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List.
For more information on the Tentative List of Palestine please visit https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/ps

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

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