

PEACE PROGRAMME

3rd SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Nablus, 8 November 1996

Plan of Action of the PEACE Programme for 1997-1998

Introduction

The draft Plan of Action of the PEACE Programme for 1997-1998 has been elaborated on the basis of the following:

- decisions of the meetings of the Steering Committee concerning the activities of the PEACE Programme, Phase II;*
- project proposals elaborated by the PEACE Programme Office and submitted for funding to various intergovernmental organisations and donor agencies;*
- various projects elaborated by the member-universities, on a bilateral basis, for which a broader framework of action can be provided through involvement of other PEACE Programme members;*
- project proposals elaborated by UNESCO, which concern Palestinian higher education and research have also been considered, to the extent to which PEACE Programme member-universities can be involved in their execution.*

I. Staff Development and Academic Mobility

The PEACE Programme will continue to give high priority to staff development, given the needs of Palestinian universities in terms of upgrading the training of their present staff, or the training of new staff in areas in which expertise is lacking. There is also a need to reinforce the quality of programmes, through the temporary return of Palestinian scientists and academics in the Diaspora and through visiting professorships and short-term missions by foreign academics.

1.1 Fellowships for Palestinian Graduates and Young Academics

- a) 60 grants and fellowships for Palestinian graduate students and young academics are to be offered by the PEACE Programme during the 1997/1998 biennium. Provisions to that effect have been made in the Project Profile request submitted to the European Commission.
- b) At least 11 grants will be offered through the International Fellowship Programme for Palestinian students, launched by the Director-General of UNESCO.
- c) PEACE Programme member-universities will continue to offer fellowships and scholarships to Palestinian students, by arrangement with their national authorities. They will also waive tuition fees for PEACE Programme grantees and provide facilities for their stay in the respective countries.

1.2. Staff Training and Exchanges

It is foreseen to expand and diversify the action of the PEACE Programme in the area of staff training. One Project Profile, (Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Research at Palestinian Universities through Staff Development), included in the UNESCO's Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, is designed to meet staff development needs through the upgrading of the training of faculty members. Fellowships and scholarships over a three-year period are foreseen. PEACE Programme member-universities can, if and when requested, be involved in the implementation of this Project.

1.3. TOKTEN Scheme for Palestine

A data base of Palestinian scientists and academics working abroad has been initiated by UNESCO, which has decided to launch a TOKTEN Project with its own financial resources. Palestine will be given priority. The PEACE Programme member-universities could be engaged in this Project. Funding for 15 missions, foreseen for the 1997/1998 biennium, could be secured through the subvention requested to the European Commission and through other contributions, to be secured by the member-universities.

1.4. University Volunteers for Palestine

Missions by European university professors to Palestinian universities are included in many bilateral agreements and have been going on regularly during the last few years. It is important for the PEACE Programme Office to be informed by the Palestinian universities about foreign missions they receive in order to be able to consider how bilateral exchanges can be built into more comprehensive multilateral ones. There are

good possibilities to implement the 20 missions foreseen in the Project Proposal submitted to the European Commission.

II. Further Development of Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza

Three distinct project proposals are focused on this need:

a) Elaboration of a Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza

A project proposal addressing this issue has been prepared by UNESCO and has been submitted to NORAD (Norwegian Agency for International Development), which has approved funding. The project includes drafting a national strategy for the future of higher education in Palestine. International experts are to be involved in the implementation of the Project.

b) Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes and Institutions

The Ministry for Higher Education has established a special unit to deal with this important issue. Its activity could be assisted by the initiative group constituted by the PEACE Programme for that purpose.

c) Training of Higher Education Administrators in Planning, Management and Financing

A training workshop, funded under MED-CAMPUS, which includes 2 Palestinian universities (Birzeit and Al Azhar), will be organised with the assistance of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning. The Universities of Utrecht, Bochum and Bergen, as members of the Utrecht group, have agreed to form a subnetwork with the purpose of possibly extending the training mentioned above to all Palestinian universities. In addition to workshops held in Palestine, visits of Palestinian administrators to European universities can be organised. The sum of US\$30,000 has been included in the subvention request to the European Commission for this purpose.

It can also be envisaged to undertake a feasibility study for the establishment of a higher education management information system (HEMIS). Several Palestinian universities have already started to introduce informatics in their management. However, a lot remains to be done in order to generalise the use of informatics for management purposes and, more particularly, to build a national information system. This need is to be addressed with the support of the subnetwork of universities (Utrecht, Bochum, Bergen) mentioned above. Its composition may be extended to include other universities.

III. Academic Programmes and Research

One of the major functions of the PEACE Programme is to assist the Palestinian universities to raise the quality of their programmes of teaching, training and research and to assure their active participation, as equal partners, in international academic co-operation. There are already a large number of initiatives developed, bilaterally or multilaterally, through the PEACE Programme. The list below includes those activities in which PEACE Programme member-universities are directly involved. Many other initiatives exist.

The listing of projects below is by areas of action. Within each area, several forms of action have already been identified and concrete project proposals have been submitted by various institutions. In relation to some of them, initial funding has already been obtained.

1. *Archaeology*

The UNESCO Chair on Archaeology was officially launched in April 1995, with the support of UNESCO. An expert on restoration taught for one semester at the Universities of Al-Quds and Birzeit in 1995, and a new one is currently teaching at the same universities. A subnetwork of universities within the PEACE Programme, including Louvain-La-Neuve, Leiden, Siena, Salamanca, Granada, etc. has been established in order to support the activities of the Chair. The PEACE programme Office has submitted proposals for links with other projects supported by UNESCO in the field of Archaeology and Tourism. Action of the PEACE Programme in 1997-1998 will continue to develop the necessary links between Archaeology and the development of training in the field of Tourism.

2. *Foreign Language Training*

Following the request of Palestinian universities to assist in the development of a large-scale programme aimed at promoting the teaching of foreign languages and the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language at Palestinian universities and colleges, the PEACE Programme Office has elaborated proposals and has prepared the ground for action in this field. A Foreign Language Resource Centre to serve the needs of Palestinian universities is to be established, with initial support from UNESCO. A Palestinian group of experts, to pilot the development of this project, has been set up. Its work will be supported by language departments of several PEACE Programme member-universities which have expressed interest in this activity.

3. *Marine Science*

In the field of Marine Science, UNESCO's Science Sector has prepared a project of support for Marine Science and Coastal Zone Management, included in UNESCO's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (Project SC2). It foresees the establishment of a Palestinian Centre for Marine Environment and Resources (CMER)

in Gaza and includes a strong training component. The PEACE Programme Office sees the role of its member-universities, particularly in the training component of this large-scale project.

4. Micro-electronics Facility

One other Project in UNESCO's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People foresees the establishment of a micro-electronics facility at one of the universities, with branches at other universities. The objective is to develop a Palestinian capacity in micro-electronics, capable to provide expertise and services for the choice of suitable equipment, its procurement, installation, technical training, transfer of knowledge, maintenance and management. It is also intended to promote linkages between higher education and the socio-economic sectors, through the services it could provide. The nature of the project indicates that it would benefit greatly from the full involvement of PEACE Programme member-universities in its execution. Departments of micro-electronics and informatics of these universities are ready to take part.

5. Medical Studies

The question of developing medical studies at Palestinian higher education institutions has been on the agenda for some time. Several European universities have indicated that they are ready to extend support in this undertaking. The PEACE Programme should outline a possible course of action in this field, in close co-operation with the Ministry of Higher Education.

One concrete project for which initial funding has been proposed by the University of Oslo, in co-operation with Hebron University, concerns health risks in the shoe industry. Another project proposed by the same university, concerns nutrition research and training, notably the establishment of a special unit within the Department of Community Health at Birzeit University, to undertake research, training and health education programmes in nutrition-related activities.

6. Management and Administration

A proposal to upgrade programmes at Palestinian universities in the area of management and administration has been elaborated by a consortium of five French universities which are members of the PEACE Programme. A programme of applied mathematics in economics is also foreseen.

7. Special Education, Adult education and Community Needs

A special education programme aiming at developing competence in inclusive education/special education at An-Najah National University is to be implemented in co-operation with the University of Oslo. The University of Nottingham is preparing a proposal for a comprehensive programme meant to secure the involvement of

Palestinian Universities in Adult Education and in meeting specific needs for training at the level of local communities.

8. Law Studies

Several programmes have been developed in this area, starting from bilateral initiatives. They are mostly located at the University of Birzeit. The objective is to expand the programme in two directions:

(i) to cover international studies, with special emphasis on European studies and the structures and mechanisms of the European Union, and

(ii) to develop expertise and studies in this field at other Palestinian universities.

9. Peace, Human Rights and Democracy

At this moment in the evolution of the Peace process in the Middle East, it is of utmost importance for the PEACE Programme to develop activities of its own aimed at promoting a culture of peace, the observance of human rights and the advancement of democracy. Several initiatives have been taken. An international UNITWIN network for the Study of the Causes of the Refugee Phenomenon, Displacement of Persons and Forced Migration has been established with the support of UNESCO and on the basis of carried out with Oxford University (The Refugee Studies Programme). A focal point for a Palestinian Programme for the Study of the Causes and Consequences of Involuntary Migration has been set up at An-Najah National University. The establishment of a UNESCO Chair on Human Rights and Peace, under UNESCO's UNITWIN Programme could be envisaged.

10. Physical Education and Sports

A bilateral project between the University of Birzeit and the University of Ghent, launched with the support of the Belgian (Flemish) government, has led to remarkable results. However, the needs are enormous and the programme requires the involvement of other PEACE Programme member-universities.

11. Teacher Training

UNESCO's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People includes a specific project aimed at Strengthening Teacher Education Capacity. This is a priority need, since out of a total of 11,000 teachers, only 5% possess both a University degree and a diploma in education. Co-operation with Palestinian universities and colleges is envisaged in the execution of this large scale project. Foreign universities (Harvard University and the American Council of Learned Societies) have elaborated proposals indicating ways in which foreign higher education institutions could be involved in the development of teacher training capacity in Palestine.

12. Distance Education

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Action by the PEACE Programme in the field of distance education takes into account two basic needs:

- (i) the existence of Al-Quds Open University, which needs strong reinforcement of its programmes and facilities, and
- (ii) the more extensive use of distance education technologies and methodologies in the programmes of all Palestinian higher education institutions.

With regard to (i), work already done by the International Council for Distance Education, with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of UNESCO should be continued. Long range planning of open and distance education in Palestine was advocated by the ICDE mission to Al Quds Open University in September 1994. That plan should be elaborated, and the PEACE Programme can bring a contribution to that effect.

With regard to (ii), it is mainly through bilateral co-operation that efforts to introduce new information technologies based on distance education delivery systems at Palestinian universities can best be achieved. However, this does not exclude larger scale multilateral projects. One example is the project of establishing an Arab Satellite University of Science and Technology (ASUST), submitted to UNESCO by the National Technological University (NTU) in the US. Many governments and presidents of universities in the Arab States have indicated interest in this project. It can offer a great chance for modernisation for the Palestinian universities as well.

IV. Upgrading Infrastructure Facilities

The UNESCO mission on Higher Education to the West Bank and Gaza (January 1994) and the study on higher education in the Occupied Territories, elaborated for the Commission of the European Communities, point out to the need for upgrading the infrastructure facilities (teaching space, laboratories, libraries, teaching aids, etc.) in order to raise the quality of teaching training and research at Palestinian universities. The needs are considerable and they require major capital investments and substantial funding. It is not within the capacity of the PEACE Programme to assure funding at such a level. However, the member-universities of the PEACE Programme can make an important and useful contribution in this respect. It is in connection with such possibilities that several possible lines of action and concrete projects are presented below.

1. Support for Upgrading Laboratories & Science Workshops at Universities and Colleges

The project proposal addressing these needs which has been prepared by UNESCO foresees a budget of US. \$ 2,000,000 for equipment and US\$65,000 for personnel and training. PEACE Programme member-universities can contribute to upgrading laboratory facilities in several ways:

- by donations of consumable and of basic equipment, particularly laboratory equipment used in teaching;
- training for the use and maintenance of laboratory equipment;
- procurement of adequate equipment when funding for the larger scale project is assured

Many of the projects which concern various academic projects listed under III above also include small scale equipment facilities. They represent therefore, another way for meeting the enormous need of the Palestinian universities in this respect.

2. Support for Library and Teaching/Learning Facilities of Higher Education Institutions

The project proposal included in UNESCO's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People is budgeted at the level of US\$2,100,000 of which US\$2,000,000 is for equipment. It is envisaged to set up a centrally managed system of library acquisitions (especially reference materials and subscription to periodicals) and to assure access to international data bases, library interlinks, etc. The participation of the PEACE Programme member-universities in this major undertaking is of utmost importance. Acting both bilaterally and multilaterally, the member universities can:

- make donations of basic text books and of reference materials and periodicals they produce;
- assure access to data bases and to library holdings that can be accessed by new information and communication technologies;
- provide materials and expertise concerning the use of audio visual teaching aids, particular in science fields.

V. Further Development of the PEACE Programme

The following objectives will be pursued:

- to further increase the membership of the PEACE programme to 100 members;

- to further strengthen the links with the European Commission and with UNESCO, and to seek development of such links with other intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations;
- to assure funding of its activities through a vigorous campaign which should be aimed at a broad spectrum of potential donors: IGOs and NGOs, foundations and development agencies, companies and enterprises in the public and private sector;
- to ask the member-universities to seek financial support for the activities of the Programme, to their national authorities and to various other possible sources in their countries.

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