

PEACE Programme

6th Session of the General Assembly

Bethlehem, 27 February 2005

FINAL REPORT

Opening of the Meeting, Quorum and Adoption of the Agenda

Professor Hassassian opened the session stressing that while it is held in close connection with the International Conference, it has a specific statutory role, namely to debate and approve the Report of activities of the PEACE Programme since the last General Assembly meeting in November 2001 and to adopt the Plan of Action for 2005-2006. He asked Prof. Dumitru Chitoran, Advisor to the PEACE Programme Office at UNESCO to inform the Assembly whether there is a quorum, so that the meeting could be held in conformity with the statutes. Professor Chitoran referred to the relevant information on membership included in the Report of Activities. He mentioned that there are a number of member universities which have not participated in activities and have not paid their fees for some time. The Steering Committee has taken note of this fact and has considered that they have ceased to be members of PEACE. Accordingly, PEACE has at present 75 members: 61 European and North American universities, 11 Palestinian universities and 3 associate collective members. (cf. **Annex 1, PEACE membership-2005**). Of them, 28 member-universities were present at the meeting. In addition, 11 member-universities had sent mandates to be represented. Thus, there was a statutory quorum of 39 member-universities and the meeting could be held in conformity with the By-Laws of PEACE.

The General Assembly adopted the Agenda proposed by the Steering Committee (cf. **Annex 2**).

Item 1: Report of Activities of the PEACE Programme over the Period November 2001- February 2005

Under Item 1 of the Agenda, Professor Chitoran presented the Report of Activities of PEACE over the period November 2001- February 2005. He referred to the written Report which had been distributed to the participants and had also been sent to them in advance of the meeting. Mentioning that there had been very useful and constructive debates on PEACE activities during the International Conference, he insisted however that there were several issues which need further discussion.

He emphasized the steps taken by the Steering Committee to renew and reinforce the PEACE Programme. The most important achievement is the resumption of the Scholarship Scheme. The number of 6 grants awarded for the current academic year is still modest, but the expressed readiness of the member-universities to support the Scheme and the additional funding obtained from AGFUND open up new prospects beginning with the academic year 2005-2006. Equally important has been the initiation of several new academic projects (the Centre for Advanced Studies and

Research in International Cooperation and Development in Palestine, the Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Birzeit University, etc.). PEACE is most grateful both to the member and non member-universities which have taken the initiative to launch them.

The Steering Committee has paid special attention to cooperation with UNESCO, which continues to extend its full support to PEACE and to host its office in Paris. Steps have been taken to link PEACE activities to UNESCO action for the rehabilitation and development of higher education in Palestine. A major project aimed at setting up an up to date system of Distance Education in Palestine (Avicenna Project for Palestine) is being elaborated in close cooperation with UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Palestinian National Authority.

Professor Chitoran referred to the need to clarify the situation of those member universities which do not take part in the activities of the Network and do not pay the membership fee. Concrete proposals were put forward in the Report in this regard and the participants were requested to express their point of view.

There were several interventions from the floor, indicating agreement with the line of action presented in the Report, which was then approved.

Under sub item 1.1, Professor Chitoran informed the Assembly about the **financial situation** of the PEACE Programme. The Assembly appreciated the efforts of the Steering Committee and of the PEACE Office at UNESCO to keep operational costs as low as possible. It took note of the fact that PEACE has at present the sum of **74.335,94 euros** and **119,359.10 US dollars** in four accounts at the Arab Bank in Paris. An audit document had been distributed to the participants. The Assembly recommended that the funds available should be used judiciously for the priority activities of PEACE, in particular for the Scholarship Scheme and for academic exchanges. Modest funding should also be used to cover running expenses of the Network and to reinforce its secretariat services and the updating of the PEACE web site.

Under sub item 1. 2, Dr. Radwa Barakat presented the revised **Guidelines for the PEACE Scholarship Scheme**, stressing that the revision was necessary in order to allow for a better selection of candidates and a smoother management of the Scheme. The guidelines were approved as presented (**Annex 3**).

Item 2: Plan of Action of the PEACE Programme for 2005-2006

Professor Gianni Vaggi presented the Plan of Action of PEACE for 2005-2006. He pointed out that in elaborating the draft Plan of Action distributed to the participants for discussion the Steering Committee had tried to put forward a realistic but ambitious line of action aimed at giving a serious push to the PEACE Network by expanding and diversifying its range of activities and by seeking broader alliances for their implementation. He said that the discussions held during the International Conference were most pertinent to the future action of PEACE. In particular, he appreciated the commitment of member-universities to take concrete action - both bilaterally and multilaterally - to support Palestinian universities.

The fact that many non-member universities attended the International Conference and put forward concrete proposals for cooperation is indicative of the spirit of solidarity with Palestinian universities which is gaining ground in the international academic community. This places new tasks ahead of the PEACE Programme, while offering new prospects for broadening the scope of its action.

The General Assembly empowered the Steering Committee to revise the Plan of Action in light of the recommendations and suggestions that emerged from the debates of the International Conference and of the 6th Session. The revised Plan of Action is attached (**Annex 4**), with a number of annexes, presenting the proposed concrete activities in a more detailed manner.

Professor Manuel Hassassian declared the Session closed, expressing the hope that the new line of action adopted by PEACE will reinforce international academic cooperation and solidarity with the Palestinian universities.

Annex 1

PEACE Programme Candidates 2005-2006

An-Najah National University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Mohammad Talat Rashed Qabaha/ 28	M.A	GIS	B.A Geography at An-Najah National University 86.8%
Mohammad Azzam Ahmad Othman/ 25	M.A	Industrial Engineering	B.Sc Industrial Eng. at An-Najah National Uni. 88.2%
Samer Najeh Arandi	M.A	Computer Engineering	B.Sc Computer Eng. at An-Najah National Uni. 0.9%
Islamic University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Kamal Elabed Elkahlout/ 27	Ph.D	Biochemistry	M.Sc Biotechnology. Middle East Technical Uni. / Turkey. GPA 3.43
Zaher Mahmoud Nassar/ 38	Ph.D	Optometry	M.Sc in physics. Islamic Uni. 78.3%
Hebron University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Belal Amro */ 24	M.Sc	M.I.S.	B.Sc Computer Eng. at PPU. 88.3%
Zaki Ali Hassan Tubesha/ 29	Ph.D	Food Technology	M.Sc Nutrition and Food Technology at Jordan Uni. GPA 3.19
Arab American University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Yaser Samara/ 23	M.A	Financial Accounting	B.A in Accounting at Arab American Uni. Jenin GPA 3.98
Hussein T. Hijaz*/ 33	Ph.D	Finance & Banking	M.Sc at Boston U.S.A Uni. GPA 3.48
Bashar Draghmeh*/ 29	Ph.D	Civil Law	M.A in Law at Jordan Uni. GPA 3.44
Birzeit University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Musa Khaldi*/ 35	Ph.D	Education	Master in Education at Birzeit Uni. 82%
Ghinda Rishmawi/ 24	M.A	Publicity and media	B.A Mass Media and Communication and Birzeit Uni. 82%
Iyad Fakhri Assad/ 22	M.A	Computer Science	B.Sc in Computer Science at Birzeit Uni. 91%
Palestine Polytechnic University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Shadi Arafeh/ 26	M.A	Multimedia system	B.A Computer Eng. at PPU 84.5%
Jaser Abdel-Ghafer Al-Mohtaseb*/ 26	M.A	Mechatronics	B. Eng. in Mechatronics at PPU 88.8%
Samer Mahmoud Whoush*/ 25	M.A	Computer Engineering	B. Eng. in Computer System at PPU 80.4%
Samer Amin moh'd Eid Motawe	M.A.	Computer Science	B.S Computer Science at Hebron Uni. GPA 90.38%
Al-Quds Open University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Yasseen Sulaiman Mustafa Jaber/ 29	M.A	Computer Science	B.Sc in Computer Science at An-Najah Uni. 75.5%

Hamzeh A-Mujahed/ 26	M.A	Computer system Eng.	B.A in computer System Eng. at PPU 79.8%
Salahideen Alhaj*/ 34	Ph.D	Computer Science	M.Sc Computer & Electronics. Mysore Uni. of (India) First class
Al-Quds University			
Student name/Age	Degree	Field of study	Last university degree
Maher Salim Rateb Al-Abed/ 32	Ph.D	Clinical Pharmacy International Pharmacy Practice and Policy	M.Sc Clinical Pharmacy International Pharmacy Practice and Policy Uni. of London
Naheel Hashem Zaben/ 30	Ph.D	Information studies	M.Sc in Information Studies at Loughbrough Uni. UK

* Applicant from last year (March 2004)

Annex 2

General Guidelines For the PEACE Programme Scholarship Scheme

The PEACE Programme is a network of European and North American universities, committed to promoting international co-operation with, and extending assistance to the Palestinian universities in a various forms, including scholarships for study abroad. Although it is not a foundation with a substantial budget of its own, the PEACE network has been able, with the strong support of its member-universities, to provide opportunities for study abroad for a number of Palestinian graduate students and young academics.

The guidelines below indicate the conditions to be met by Palestinian applicants in order to be considered for assistance, the procedures to be followed in submitting requests, the selection process by the PEACE Programme and further requirements to be met by Palestinian graduate students during their period of study abroad.

Candidates:

1.
 - i. Must have successfully completed a graduate programme with GPA of at least very good or more than 80% and meet the requirements to apply for a higher graduate level.
 - ii. Must be nominated by their universities.
 - iii. Must not be more than 30 years of age for MS/MA study and 35 years for PhD.
 - iv. Must attach to the request certified copies of all educational certificates, diplomas/transcripts and study records, other relevant certificates, etc., 2 recommendations by professors of their university and C.V.
 - v. Must have a good command of a foreign language.
 - For universities where English is the language of instruction, a TOEFL (or other, equivalent) test is required with a score of at least 500-550 (some universities may require higher scores) or according to the university requirements.
 - For French-teaching universities, the level of French language test, DELF (may be taken at the French Consulate in Palestine) is required for MA/MSc or PhD in Humanities or Social Science. For PhD in Science (math, Physics, chemistry, biology, computer science) a TOEFL or equivalent in English is acceptable.
 - For any other language (i.e. Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese, etc.) preparatory language courses are to be taken at Palestinian institutes or universities. The receiving institutions usually provide opportunities to pursue further language training after arrival in the respective country.

- vi. The field of study of the nominee must be selected according to the needs of his/her institution.
- vii. Must submit a detailed description of the study programme he/she wish to pursue and of the research topic for the MA/ MSc or PhD thesis.
2. The University should then officially submit the request to the Chairman of the Steering Committee of PEACE.
3. The steering committee of the PEACE examines all applications and selects the candidates, which will be supported by the PEACE programme. In taking the decision, the Steering Committee takes into account the academic qualifications of the candidates while also paying attention to equity in providing assistance to all Palestinian universities.
4. When decision for support is taken, the PEACE Programme Office at UNESCO will send the request to member-universities in Europe and North America, for consideration and acceptance.

Application deadlines

1. Applications with all the required documentation, should reach the PEACE Programme Executive Office, represented by the Chairman of the PEACE Programme Steering Committee, not later than 31 December of the year.
2. Applicants will be notified about the decision concerning their applications and the type of scholarship he or she will receive as soon as possible, but not later than mid May of the following year.

Contacting the Receiving Institutions

Successful applicants (and their institutions) are then requested to immediately contact the appropriate units or departments of the receiving institutions, in order to settle all the necessary arrangements: scientific supervisor, detailed programme of studies to be pursued, any other special requirements of the respective university, as well as technical arrangements concerning visa, housing, meals, library and laboratory facilities, exact time of arrival at the receiving university, etc.

Records of Study Progress

The PEACE Programme Office keeps records of the academic standing of the Palestinian students, which receive assistance to study abroad. For that purpose, it requests the receiving universities to send adequate information, allowing the Steering Committee to decide on prolongation or cessation of such assistance.

Financing

1. PEACE Programme member-universities are the main source for assistance to Palestinian students and young academics to pursue studies abroad. Contributions have also been received from the European Commission and from UNESCO. A campaign to receive donations from foundations, agencies, NGOs and from individual contributors has to be launched repeatedly
2. Assistance for study abroad may be in the form of a full scholarship, covering the whole period of study (which may vary from one to four years). All

receiving universities agree to exempt Palestinian students from any fees. Those who cannot offer a full scholarship, cover accommodation costs (student hostel and meals) medical and dental care, provision of other facilities (such as library and laboratory use, reference books, access to PCs, etc.)

3. The PEACE Programme provides, in some cases, additional assistance to students, such as international transportation and a supplement grant, if and only if, the scholarship offered to them is not sufficient to cover living expenses.

Agreement

Each grant recipient signs a statement stipulating his / her acceptance of the conditions of the grant offered, and undertaking the obligation to return to his / her university upon completion of studies abroad

" To whom it may concern "

I the undersigned,

Mr./Ms. -----

of -----University,

accept and abide to the conditions offered to me by the University of

-----,
within the frame of the PEACE Programme assistance , during the (one , two , three , or four) years of study granted to me to fulfill the requirements of a MA/MSc or PhD degree.

I also pledge that, upon completion of my studies at the University of-----

I will return in due time to my home University -----

If I fail to return, I will be obliged to repay all scholarship funding.

Signed (Student)

Signed (Reference)

Annex 3

Center for Advanced Studies and Research in Cooperation and Development CASR-ICD

In December 1999 the PEACE Program decided to establish a Master Program in International Cooperation and Development and Innovation in Palestine (ICDI) at three Universities in Palestine: *An-Najah, Bir Zeit and Bethlehem*, based on collaboration with the universities of *Siena and Pavia* in Italy. The plan was approved by the Ministry of Higher Education and a team of representatives of the five universities was established and worked until June 2001. The worsening of the local situation prevented the implementation of the project.

In 2004 thanks to funds of the Italian Bishop's Conference and to the NGO VIS, work re-started for a more limited and a pilot initiative of establishing a **Master Degree in International Cooperation and Development –MICAD-** at Bethlehem University was envisaged. In December 2004 a Tempus Meda project was submitted to the European Union to support the initiative, with the participation of three European universities - Pavia, Radboud University, Nijmegen (both members of PEACE) and University College, Dublin. The University of Geneva, also an active member of PEACE, will be involved through the Institut Universtaire d'Etudes sur le Development.

Based on this initiative, conditions have been created to expand the proposal into a larger Project aimed at establishing a **Centre of Advanced Studies and Research in Cooperation and Development in Palestine (CASR-ICD)**. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed in Bethlehem by the five European universities mentioned above, which are associated to CASR-ICD. Other universities both member and non-members of PEACE will be invited to join the Project.

The Centre will promote post-graduate education and research activities in Cooperation and Development (it is necessary to expand on the academic goals of CASR-ICD: why is training and research on ICD important for Palestine, how are activities to be carried out: full fledged academic programmes leading to degrees, training of Palestinians abroad to serve the Center, joint research projects, etc).

In carrying on these research activities the Centre will consider as a priority the needs of the Palestinian society, particularly in this moment of institutional building, and it will focus its attention on sustainable economic and human development. These research activities are mentioned to support the transition of the Palestinian society from a situation of instability, vulnerability and strong dependency on international aid to a more viable and sustainable economy.

The Centre is part of a plan directly devised by the Minister of Education of Italy and coordinated by Rector Schmid which aims at the building strong partnerships between universities on both sides of the Mediterranean. This program started in November 2003 in Catania with the participation of representatives of Higher Education Ministries of sixteen Mediterranean countries including Palestine. Five Centres of

excellence have already been established at Universities in the Mediterranean area. In January 2005, at a second conference in Catania, the idea of having a Centre of Excellence in Palestine was presented and a working group was re-established with the participation of the five universities. As was made clear in Catania last January, this initiative is possible thanks to the help of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Palestine but also because of the constant support of the PEA **CASR-ICD** will include the five universities and possibly more in the future, and a CE Program.

Annex 4

European Committee for Establishing a Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Birzeit University, Palestine (ECCE-Birzeit)

Mission

On the basis of UNESCO's Unifying Theme, "Contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalization through education, the sciences, culture and communication" (Medium-Term Strategy, 2002-2007), we, a group of concerned mathematicians and physicists, have decided to launch a novel initiative. We strongly believe that, along the lines of UNESCO's theme, furthering the education of the people at all levels, in particular in areas marked by deep conflicts, is of vital importance. We hope that bringing people together through higher education, through training in scientific research and cooperation, will be a significant contribution, in the long-term, towards easing of tension in the Middle East.

Hence we propose establishing a Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Theoretical Physics on the campus of Birzeit University, in the town of Birzeit, West Bank, Palestine.

Birzeit University has established itself as an important Palestinian university, as well as a very liberal minded and independent. The support of the authorities at Birzeit University for this initiative has been secured. The aim of the Center will be twofold. On the one hand, students will be trained in both, Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, up to Ph.D. level. On the other hand, the Center will promote and emphasize research in both fields. This will be accomplished by sponsoring grants, holding workshops and conferences, inviting international scholars for extended periods, and building up a first-rate library as well as computational facilities. Although the focus of the Center is on Palestinian students, it will be open to other students from the Middle East.

An additional function of the Center is to enhance the quality of teaching and research in Mathematics and Physics at the other Palestinian universities, and to develop teaching materials and methodologies in Mathematics and Physics for secondary education.

Information about this initiative and new developments can be obtained from the ECCE-Birzeit web site: <http://www.physik.uni-augsburg.de/ifk/ecce/>.

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Project Details

• Scientific Goals

The Center will focus on establishing a first rate training program for graduate students in both mathematics and theoretical physics. It will offer graduate programs leading to the Ph.D. degree in both subjects. The curriculum of study will include basic and applied topics. In particular, the Center will promote those fields of study, in mathematics and theoretical physics that are relevant for the development of the Palestinian society and the region at large. The second important goal for the Center is to promote research in mathematics and theoretical physics in Palestine and the region. The Center will establish a series of international and regional conferences that will be held on a regular basis.

Moreover, it will initiate workshops to be organized by leading mathematicians and physicists from around the world. Weekly seminars will take place on the premises of the Center, by scientists in residence or by visiting scientists. In addition, the Center will serve as a funding agency to provide grants to qualified researchers in Palestine and the region. Qualified Ph.D. students are eligible to receive scholarships during their study and/or grants to support them while writing their doctoral dissertations.

• Required Personnel

The steering committee will appoint an internationally recognized scientist, a mathematician or a physicist, as the director of the Center. The initial appointment is for three years, and is renewable. The director is the chief executive officer of the Center who has the final authority in all matters. He is accountable only to the steering committee. The steering committee, in consent with the director, will also select the key personnel: (i) the Director of the Library; (ii) the Chair of the Department of Mathematics; (iii) the Chair of the Department of Theoretical Physics; (iv) the Director of the Computer Center; (v) the Director of Fiscal Affairs; (vi) the Registrar; and (vii) the Director of Public and International Relations. The two Department Chairs will act as vice directors of the Center. We envision that there will be 20 faculty members, about half in mathematics and half in theoretical physics, at the full, associate, and assistant professor level, in addition to the Director. Furthermore, 20 postdoctoral associates and 35 supporting staff are needed. Most of the personnel will be hired from a pool of talented Palestinians and other qualified individuals from the region. Individuals are hired based solely on their qualifications regardless of their race, gender, religion or ethnic background. The faculty and the top administration posts will be hired through standard international procedures and will be subject to international competition. An internationally recognized tenure process will be implemented.

• Buildings, Equipment

There will be three main buildings, one for the library, one for the staff and administration, and one for faculty, postdocs and visiting scientists, as well as classrooms and central computer facilities. A fourth building should house apartments for guest scientists as well as student dormitories. The Center will be built adjacent to the campus of Birzeit University, the land being donated by the board of trustees of Birzeit University. The architecture of the Center will be compatible with the architecture of Birzeit University. The major equipments required are computer facilities, the main resources needed are books and periodicals. The Center's library will provide first-rate service to students, faculty, and researchers in Palestine and the

region. It will hold books and periodicals in both mathematics and physics comparable to any West European or North American major doctoral granting institutions.

Preliminary estimates have been made for the costs involved. (It is expected to have land donated for the buildings of the Center; capital investments amount to 12 million euros and annual maintenance and running costs at about 4.5 million euros).

- **Steering Committee**

At present, ECCE-Birzeit consists of an informal group of scientists supporting the project as outlined above. However, in order to ensure effective procedures as well as clear responsibilities, it is suggested to establish, as soon as possible, a relatively small Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall consist of: 6 members from the group of proposing scientists; 3 representatives from Palestinian Universities; and 3 representatives from institutions/organizations engaged in furthering higher education in Palestine (e.g. EU, UNESCO). The Steering Committee elects its Chair and its Vice Chair from amongst the 6 members representing the proposing scientists; Chair and Vice Chair shall represent the scientific areas of the Center, mathematics and theoretical physics. The Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring the highest, internationally competitive scientific standard of the Center. It is also responsible for the overall direction and strategic planning of the center.

- **Members and supporters**

Some 27 well known scientists from all over the world have already associated themselves to the initiative, many of them from universities which are members of PEACE. The PEACE Programme is invited to extend its support to the initiative.

- **Status of the Center**

The center will be established in cooperation with the administration of Birzeit University and the Palestinian ministry of higher education. The center, however, will retain a clear independent status but will abide by the local laws governing institutions of higher education in Palestine. Concerning these aspects, precise rules and legal procedures have to be formulated and negotiated as soon as possible, to provide a solid basis for the efforts of all key partners participating in this project

Partners

The ECCE-Birzeit project needs, quite obviously, the support and help from competent institutions and organizations. Some contacts already have been established, others still have to be worked out. A very tentative list includes: European Union, Palestinian European Academic Cooperation in Education (PEACE / UNESCO), Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste (ICTP), Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Faculty For Israeli-Palestinian Peace (FFIPP), American University of Beirut, German University in Cairo, Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization (IPSO), Arab Science and Technology Foundation (ASTF), Private Donors and Businesses.

Annex 5

E-Learning and Open and Distance Education at Palestinian Universities Development of an Avicenna Project for Palestine

Background

The Steering Committee of the PEACE Programme decided at its meeting held at UNESCO, Paris on 2 February 2003) to launch “a *wide-scale programme aimed at promoting e-learning and distance education technologies and methodologies at Palestinian universities.*” It further decided that this programme should be linked to the **Avicenna Project**, launched three years ago under the EUROMEDIS Initiative of the European Union. The Avicenna Project links 4 EU Member States (France, Italy, Spain and UK) and 11 Mediterranean non-EU Member States, including Palestine, with the aim “to accelerate the adoption and best use of ICT-assisted Open Distance Learning (ODL) and to create a self-sustainable virtual campus in the countries of the Mediterranean Region”.

UNESCO is the principal co-ordinator of the Project, to which the European Commission contributes 3.7 million Euros for the initial phase 2003-2006.

Several major European Open Universities and ODL providers, namely the UK Open University (UK), Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Spain, the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM), the Centre national d’enseignement à distance (CNED) and l’Université euro-méditerranéenne sans murs (Université de Marseille) will serve as the “work-package leaders”, under the aegis of UNESCO.

Avicenna Knowledge Centers (AKC) have been set up in the 15 countries participating in Avicenna, to serve as network nodes. Al Quds Open University serves as the Avicenna Knowledge Centre for Palestine.

Rationale for the development of an Avicenna Project for Palestine

The Avicenna Project is particularly relevant to meet the needs and to overcome the difficulties encountered by the Palestinian universities at present. In the first place, it could help Palestinian institutions cope with the increased demand for access, given the fact that they lack facilities for further access to programmes offered in the traditional mode. It can also help maintain and enhance the quality of programmes and help develop further academic ties with universities abroad. More importantly, by developing the capacity to offer programmes on the distance mode, it can surmount the persistent difficulties created by the repeated closures of institutions and the obstacles to free movement of faculty and students.

Proposed Strategy of Action

An Avicenna Knowledge Center (AKC) has been set up at Al Quds Open University to act as the Project national focal point and service node for Palestine. Its capacity to perform that function efficiently needs to be enhanced. At the same time, the infrastructure facilities and service capacities for Avicenna at all Palestinian universities need to be developed. The proposed Avicenna Project for Palestine aims to contribute to meet these objectives.

Expected contribution of PEACE Programme member-universities

PEACE Programme member-universities will be asked to consider ways and means by which they could contribute to the implementation of Avicenna at Palestinian higher education institutions. In particular, they will be asked to:

- provide assistance for the training of personnel in keeping with the guidelines and requirements set for the Avicenna Project (i.e. training of managers and experts in e-learning and ODL resources at all Palestinian universities; training of course producers, tutors and teachers; training of students);
- Provide and seek assistance from their national authorities for equipping Palestinian universities with the specified equipment (i.e. ODL servers, knowledge information storage servers and data bases, links to the Avicenna Educational Virtual Library and to the Avicenna Portal, etc.);
- Provide assistance in course provision (courses they could offer on line, co-production of new courses, translation and adaptation of available course material, etc.).
- Help establish a Virtual Library, serving the needs of all Palestinian higher education and research institutions.

Academics across Borders (AAB) Initiative Pilot Project for Palestinian Universities

UNESCO has launched a new initiative in higher education entitled “Academics Across Borders” (AAB). Its main goal is to reinforce academic solidarity globally in response to the pressing need to reduce the gap between industrial developed and developing countries with regard to higher education and research. AAB will strive to mobilize human, material and technological resources in order to render international cooperation in higher education more efficient and less costly, while giving it a clear direction in support of systems and institutions of higher education in the developing countries. Support for the redressment and revitalization of higher education in countries in conflict and post conflict situations will be given priority.

The main components of the initiative are:

- B. University Volunteers**, including (i) well known *academics* who hold *leading positions in their institutions*, have been *actively engaged in interuniversity cooperation projects* and are willing to share their experience for the benefit of institutions in the developing countries (ii) *newly retired academics*, who are willing to teach and do research at universities abroad, at reduced costs by comparison to present rates for international academic exchange programmes and for consultancies, (iii) *newly appointed young academics* at the beginning of their careers and *(post)graduate students*, who wish to acquire international experience as a means to enhance their professional careers.
- C. Expatriate academics and researchers**, through the revival of the **TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals)**, aimed at encouraging expatriate academics to help promote teaching and research at higher education institutions in their home countries.
- D. Technological Resources**, by promoting the intensive use of ICTs, which have opened new prospects to international cooperation in higher education and have rendered universities virtually borderless. AAB will develop a global “*Open Educational Resources*” (*OER*) *Facility for Higher Education*, with a view to provide ICT-based educational materials freely on the web and the Internet.

Activities to be included in the AAB Pilot Project for Palestine

PEACE should seize the opportunities offered by the AAB initiative in the efforts to support Palestinian higher education. An AAB/PEACE Pilot Project is being currently elaborated. It is based on the close links that could be built between on-

going and planned activities of PEACE under and the envisaged activities of

AAB, notably:

University Volunteers. Based on its long standing links with Palestinian universities, PEACE will encourage its member-universities to identify university teachers and researchers who would be willing (as in the past) to spend short periods of time at Palestinian universities in order to teach and do research.

TOKTEN Project for Palestine. PEACE could help revive the TOKTEN Project for Palestine, launched by UNESCO some time ago, through the numerous Palestinian academics which hold leading teaching and research positions at universities and research institutions abroad

Institutional and Staff Development of Palestinian universities. All on-going and planned activities of PEACE, namely

- *the Scholarships Scheme*
- *the academic programmes*
- *Joint research projects*

could be associated to the AAB initiative, thus standing a chance to be considerably reinforced through the opportunities it offers.

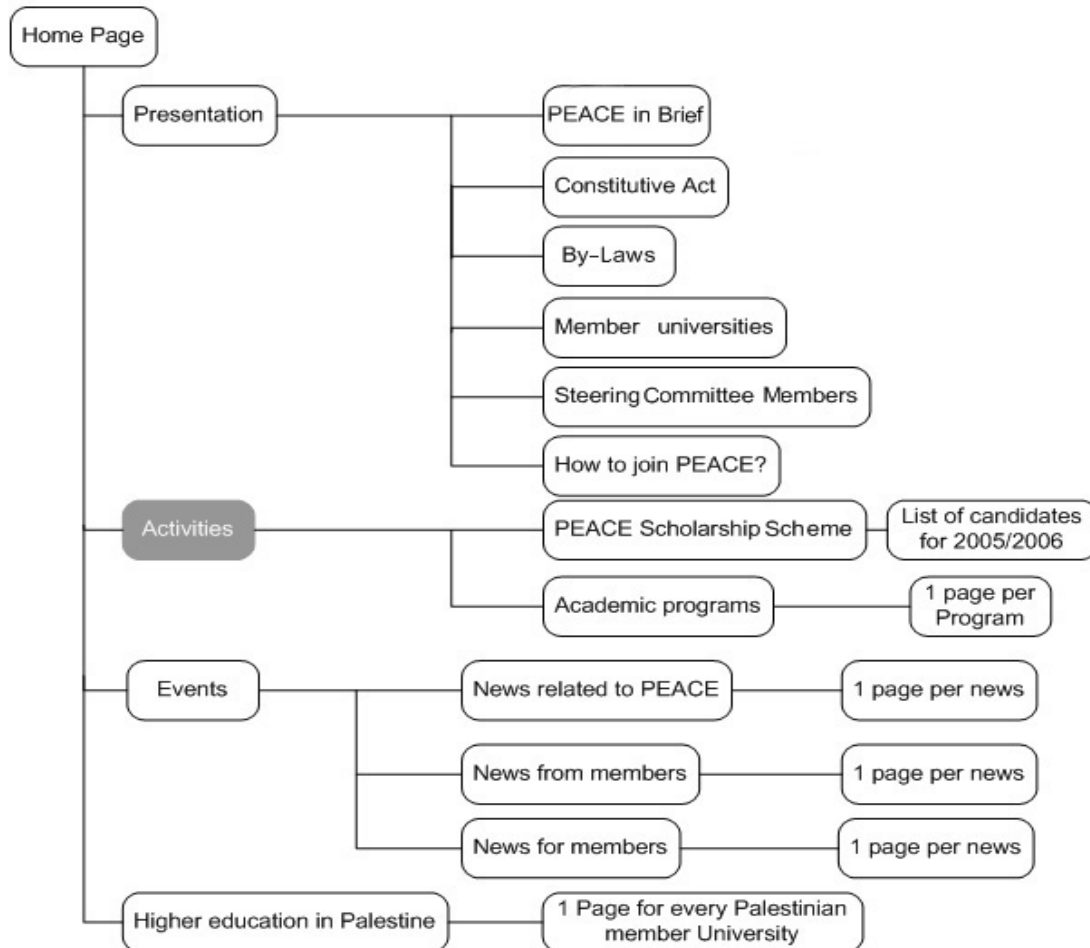
Special efforts will be made to *strengthening the international relations offices of Palestinian universities* so as to be able to make better use of the opportunities open up through international cooperation. This has become particularly important after the Palestinian universities have acquired access to the higher education programs of the European Union.

The Open Educational Resources (OER) Initiative for Palestine. This component will be based on the activities foreseen in the PEACE Plan of Action which are aimed at enhancing E-Learning and Open and distance Education facilities at Palestinian universities, especially the Avicenna Project for Palestine (see Annex 5)..

Particular attention will be paid to building up a *virtual library for Palestinian universities*, linked to PEACE member-universities abroad.

Annex 7 Proposed Structure and Content of the PEACE Programme Website

PEACE Programme



Key :

Clicable page

Non clicable page