



Item 7.4 of the provisional agenda

**SIXTH CONSULTATION OF MEMBER STATES
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
AND RECOMMENDATION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION**

OUTLINE

Source: 27 C/Resolution 1.9.

Background: In accordance with the resolution, the Sixth Consultation was focused on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education as regards the basic education of four population groups, namely women and girls, persons belonging to minorities, refugees and indigenous people.

Purpose: The document presents Member States' reports received in the Sixth Consultation and the comments by the Executive Board at its 156th session, in accordance with the timetable and procedures for the Sixth Consultation as adopted in the above-mentioned resolution. It also presents proposals made during the examination of the reports regarding the renovation and revitalization of the entire mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation.

Decision required: paragraph 10.

1. As decided by the General Conference at its 27th session, the Executive Board's Committee on Conventions and Recommendations examined Member States' reports and the responses received from NGOs during the Sixth Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, the analytical summary of the 56 Member States' reports being presented in document 156 EX/21.* One report on the implementation of the Convention (France) was received after consideration of document 156 EX/21 by the Executive Board.

* This document is available upon request.

2. In accordance with 27 C/Resolution 1.9, the Sixth Consultation was focused on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation as regards the basic education of four population groups, namely women and girls, persons belonging to minorities, refugees and indigenous people. Member States were requested to provide concrete examples of general and specific measures, legislation and/or programmes devised and applied with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment of basic education for each of the four population groups.

3. The members of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations who took the floor when item 6.3 was discussed at the Executive Board unanimously emphasized that the struggle against discrimination in education is particularly important in the light of UNESCO's Constitution and of the Organization's unique role in the United Nations system regarding the right to education for all. They also underlined that the problem of discrimination in education in general, and in particular concerning some population groups, remained one of the most persistent and difficult in UNESCO's sphere of competence. To be adequately tackled, this problem demanded that new measures and monitoring mechanisms be devised and applied by UNESCO. The point was that the present system, which is based only on periodic reporting by Member States, is rather weak and very far from comprehensive. In this connection, one member drew attention to the fact that fewer than one third of Member States submitted their report at the Sixth Consultation and that 65 per cent of the States Parties to the Convention did not fulfil their obligation under Article 7 of that instrument.

4. A number of Committee members were of the opinion that UNESCO should broaden the information base and change the very nature of UNESCO's reports on the elimination of discrimination in education. Reports should critically reflect the situation regarding problems and practices persisting in the domain of discrimination in education, rather than provide short analytical summaries of the reports received from Member States. To that end, it would be pertinent, in particular, to take into account the relevant reports submitted to the United Nations on the elimination of discrimination against women, implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other United Nations instruments relating to the problem of discrimination, as well as reports of other intergovernmental organizations.

5. The following proposals were made regarding the renovation and revitalization of the entire mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation in question:

- (a) UNESCO should not only comment on reports received from Member States but also organize dialogue with individual Member States regarding the possible measures and actions that could be developed with a view to helping them find solutions to concrete problems they encounter in their practical struggle against discrimination in education.
- (b) In addition to the existing periodical consultations with Member States, UNESCO could consider a system of reports of the kind established by the United Nations regarding human rights.
- (c) UNESCO should improve the existing reporting system. In so doing, consideration should be given to the criteria for evaluating information provided by Member States and the possibilities for improving the level of accountability of governments. In this broader perspective, the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations should strengthen its original task of monitoring the implementation of UNESCO's normative instruments.

- (d) Moreover, a new system of research, generalization and elaboration of practical measures aimed at ensuring the widest possible democratization of education should be established by UNESCO, in particular through a series of international, regional and subregional experts' meetings.

6. A number of Committee members emphasized the especially serious situation regarding the educational rights of persons belonging to minorities, in particular their right to education in their own language. One member raised the question of the terminology used in UNESCO documents regarding minorities. He was of the opinion that the term "national minority" should be used.

7. Two Committee members drew attention to the dramatic situation regarding educational rights and the practical organization of education of such population groups as immigrants (legal and illegal). They expressed their regret that document 156 EX/21 did not touch upon that problem and did not refer to the links between poverty, economic development and implementation of education for all.

8. One member spoke on the dramatic situation regarding education, especially girls' and women's literacy. He was of the opinion that the approach taken to this problem in document 156 EX/21 was rather relaxed.

9. The report of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (156 EX/52) was then considered by the Executive Board at its plenary session. Following the Committee's recommendation, the Executive Board adopted 156 EX/Decision 6.3.

10. Having examined document 30 C/29, the General Conference may wish to endorse the Executive Board's decision as follows:

The General Conference,

Referring to document 156 EX/21 concerning reports and responses received in the framework of the Sixth Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education,

1. Notes with appreciation the replies of the 57 Member States which have submitted their reports to the Sixth Consultation, 31 of them being States Parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education;
2. Notes also comments from NGOs emphasizing their concerns and providing examples of their activities and projects aimed at the practical elimination of discrimination in education;
3. Appreciates the general efforts of Member States to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all, in particular for women and girls, persons belonging to minorities, refugees and indigenous people;
4. Reaffirms the importance of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education and of their implementation by Member States in order to make the full exercise of the right to education a reality for all;
5. Notes that since January 1985 the number of Member States which are States Parties to the Convention has increased from 77 to 87 (as of January 1999);

6. Invites Member States which have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention;
7. Recalls that the submission of periodic reports by Member States concerning the implementation of conventions and recommendations adopted by the General Conference is a constitutional obligation, and that the States Parties to the above-mentioned Convention have further assumed the obligation, under the terms of Article 7 thereof, to provide detailed information in their reports to the General Conference on the legislative and other action they have taken for the implementation of the Convention;
8. Recalls also that the periodic consultation of Member States on the implementation of the above-mentioned Convention and Recommendation is intended to enable the Organization to ascertain both the extent to which Member States are giving effect to these instruments and the obstacles which they encounter, and regrets that more countries did not reply in the Sixth Consultation;
9. Notes with satisfaction that the Sixth Consultation produced information that may be used by Member States for furthering the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education and ensuring the real equality of educational opportunity through the most effective examples of measures undertaken by various Member States, in particular regarding the disadvantaged population groups;
10. Invites Member States to intensify the exchange of information accumulated in the course of the Sixth Consultation;
11. Invites the Director-General to ensure that the results of the Consultation can be widely used, in particular through the preparation and publication of a collection of examples of practical measures that have proved to be most efficient in Member States and in the activities of NGOs which took part in the Sixth Consultation;
12. Also invites the Director-General to strengthen UNESCO action against discrimination in education to ensure the widest possible democratization of education and to study, in view of the Seventh Consultation and in cooperation with the United Nations, the possibility of creating a coherent mechanism of reporting on and monitoring the right to education as it is set down in various United Nations conventions on human rights, and to inform the General Conference at its 31st session about measures undertaken to this end.