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**FINAL REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE UNESCO YOUTH FORUM  
OF THE 31st SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE HELD IN PARIS, FRANCE**

**(12-14 October 2001)**

## PREAMBLE

The UNESCO Youth Forum, organized by UNESCO from 12 to 14 October, embraced 131 participants from 83 UNESCO Member States and international youth organizations. This Forum held two plenary sessions and four discussion group sessions. The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, opened the Youth Forum with a speech of encouragement, in which he expressed his high expectations for the outcomes of the Youth Forum and UNESCO's commitment to take account of the Forum's proposal in the deliberations of the General Conference and in its work with youth in general. Following the speech of the Director-General, musician Mr Jean Michel Jarre shared his motivations as Goodwill Ambassador to UNESCO with the participants. The Youth Forum then proceeded to the election of Chairperson and Rapporteur. Ms Fama Amadou Diao (Senegal) and Mr Jetze van der Ham (Netherlands) were respectively elected President and Rapporteur of the Youth Forum. The President of the General Conference, Ms J. Moserová, acted as co-Chair.

The first discussion group session converged around the cross-cutting theme Poverty Eradication, and had as sub-theme "The need for a broad poverty paradigm". One delegate from Nigeria and another from Senegal, as well as two representatives from the Social and Human Sciences Sector of UNESCO, made brief introductions to the theme and prompted many reactions. Following these presentations, we split up into three brainstorming groups, identified by red, blue and yellow colours, in order to allow the delegates to experience a better environment for generating ideas. Each group identified two persons to be responsible for taking notes and to be members of the Drafting Committee. The designated Drafting Committee was composed of delegates from Australia, Benin, Czech Republic, Greece, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Senegal, Sweden, and the International Union of Socialist Youth.

The second session dealt with the theme "Globalization: challenges, opportunities and negative effects". Two delegates of Nigeria and Latvia and two representatives of UNESCO, from the Education and Natural Sciences Sectors, made stimulating presentations on the theme, before the departure of all delegates into the brainstorming groups.

The item on Information and Communication Technologies, which constituted the third session, followed in the afternoon. "Youth and e-governance", the first sub-theme under examination, was developed by delegates from Japan and Norway. The representative from the Communication and Information Sector presented his views on the theme that were examined further in the brainstorming groups.

The fourth session developed the ICT theme further, with a discussion on the promotion of the wider diffusion of information and knowledge about the realities of different cultures. The session was co-Chaired by the Chairperson of the Executive Board, Ms S. Mendieta de Badaroux, who also contributed to the session in her speech on the use of the Internet. After a presentation by the Culture Sector about the different programmes UNESCO is pursuing in this field, the delegates of Iceland and Nigeria gave inspirational speeches on their views of the topic at hand.

At the closing plenary session of the Youth Forum, the draft final report was debated and adopted. Finally, it was decided to include a declaration on "Terrorism and War" as an addendum to the final report. The plenary session closed with feelings of achievement and optimism about the possibilities created by the recommendations.

The Youth Forum of the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO congratulates the Organization, in particular the Youth Coordination Unit, for having testified, once more, its interest in young people by convening this second encounter and for its good development. We appreciate the opportunity given to us to be together. We are conscious of the stakes of the Forum, in what relates to, its potential contribution to the 31st session of the General Conference, evoked by the Director-General of UNESCO in his opening speech. We underline the need to improve it further, particularly by adapting the resources available for the Youth Forum to the expected outcome by starting the preparation of delegates sufficiently ahead of time and by allocating sufficient time and sufficient resources.

## **ERADICATION OF POVERTY**

### **Definition**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that poverty is a global problem and agrees to pay special attention to extreme poverty, which primarily exists in LDCs;

The youth of the world proposes a new vision of globalization, putting people before material values;

Aims at the eradication of poverty while recognizing that the alleviation of poverty is more achievable in the short- and medium term;

Stresses that since we as young people are the future, urgent and sustained action to eradicate or alleviate poverty among young people will further the development of the whole of humankind.

### **Causes of poverty**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Agreeing that poverty is a denial of basic human rights, including basic necessities for survival such as food and shelter,

Recognizing that poverty among young people has multiple causes, of which the Youth Forum would like to highlight:

structural inequalities in the present world system of trade and distribution of financial resources,

insufficient levels of democracy or proper access to decision-making structures that put young people at a disadvantage because of age discrimination,

lack of health or access to adequate health care and health education that, due to, for instance, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, is particularly serious for young people, and a good public health-care system being fundamental for the possibilities of a country to combat poverty,

lack of access to resources such as credits, land or titles to land,

corruption originating in the developed as well as in the developing world, as it diverts funds meant for poverty eradication,

discrimination against young women and girls,

foreign debts that are incurred by older generations and burden young generations,

lack of peace and political stability, including foreign occupation,

Stressing that young people of today show an unprecedented interest in the global issues that need to be addressed in order to eradicate poverty, actively participating in the new social movements and contributing to the formation of a global civil society,

Encourages UNESCO to facilitate the discussion of and the search for alternative models for development and poverty eradication, in which young people are engaged.

### **The minds of human beings**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Acknowledging that the empowerment of people, especially young people, living in developing countries is fundamental to the eradication of poverty,

Noting the indifference of many people in developed countries towards poverty which results from a lack of knowledge as a problem in the eradication of poverty,

Noting that feelings of shame connected to poverty, as well as the stigmatization of poor people, are obstacles in the struggle to eradicate poverty,

Acknowledging the importance of combating discrimination against marginalized groups, including indigenous people, immigrants and ethnic minorities,

Encourages politicians, who play a crucial role in the fight against poverty and who have financial power, to improve the public's knowledge and perception of poverty;

Calls for actions to stimulate community ethics that encourage people to work for the common good.

### **Awareness**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing the need for awareness-raising particularly among young people in both developing and developed countries on the causes, implications and consequences of poverty,

Further recognizing the need to spread information, in order to raise awareness, about poverty and especially about the exclusion that results from poverty,

Acknowledging that global poverty concerns everyone, not only because of its moral implications, but also because international crime, terrorism and human trafficking are direct results of poverty and exclusion,

Calls for the implementation of awareness-raising programmes on poverty in education, particularly in higher education curricula.

## **Information**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing insufficient access to knowledge for young people about our political and economical context as one of the main reasons for poverty,

Identifying the information gap between producers and consumer markets as a cause of poverty,

Acknowledging the exchange of knowledge between young people from developed and developing countries as one of the most effective ways to create understanding and insight into the world's economic situation, and that young people should be enabled to critically judge the information they receive,

Urges the agencies of the United Nations system to improve their information to young people, in order to enable us to participate efficiently in the design, implementation and evaluation of United Nations policies and programmes;

Stresses the need for enhanced coordination of the youth-related programmes of governments, aid agencies and NGOs;

Calls for data collection, particularly on the situation of young people living in poverty in developing countries, as this is crucial to the design of efficient poverty eradication programmes for youth.

## **Education**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing the need for education for all, especially for victims of discrimination, such as young women and youth with disabilities,

Acknowledging cooperation between both secondary schools and universities, from different regions of the world, as highly effective in the spreading of information, knowledge and ideas, as well as stimulating efforts to eradicate poverty. The problem of the “brain drain” should be addressed by increasing the quality of education and the possibilities for advancement in developing countries,

Acknowledging the importance of peer education: young people training young people are an underestimated resource,

Identifying radio and recorded information as a successful bridge across illiteracy barriers and which provides education for all,

Encourages students to participate in community projects;

Calls for education to aim at helping young people to create employment and generate income, particularly by adapting education to local employment opportunities and resources;

Calls for support for the young people who have missed the opportunity to be educated, such as street children;

Calls for an improvement of access to education in order for young people to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to fully participate in society;

Particularly stresses the need to focus on reducing the gender inequalities in education, including access to technological development;

Calls for efficient policies to end the deprivation of education and exploitation of children through child labour, notably by offering their families other sources of income;

Calls for an increase in the value placed on teachers, by providing them with comprehensive training, as they are assisting young people in shaping their futures;

Calls for a particular focus to be placed on projects where young people train other young people to train, whether in formal or non-formal types of education;

Calls for a better recognition of non-formal education, through closer cooperation between formal institutions for education and regional or national branches of youth NGOs;

Further calls for UNESCO National Commissions to make it a priority to educate key decision-makers and institutions about the aims and necessity of the education for all programme;

Stresses that the economic resources necessary to ensure education for all are already available; political will is needed to turn this essential objective into reality;

Demands free education for all; basic education is a basic human right.

### **Strategies for development**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing the need to spend a greater portion of development aid on education,

Recognizing that for any programme for the eradication of poverty to be effective, it needs to be compatible with sustainable development,

Supporting the idea that to a certain extent the solution for eradicating poverty lies within the poor countries. People confronted with poverty need to be stimulated to utilize their country's resources,

Acknowledging the need to reform the way international trade is organized as a fundamental part of the efforts to eradicate poverty, because only less unequal terms of trade would give developing countries an opportunity to expel poverty from our society,

Recognizing the need to establish land tenure systems that favour the just utilization of land,

Further recognizing the need to monitor the process of poverty eradication, making sure that Member States give young people the possibility to participate in the monitoring of the use of funds and financial support,

Stresses that long-term development has to be the main priority, leading developing countries to become independent from foreign aid;

Celebrates local youth initiatives that have direct or indirect consequences in alleviating poverty;

Points out that it is vital that any technology projects for developing countries be based on the needs of the local community, who must be involved in selecting the appropriate technology and allocation of resources;

Calls for the implementation of the United Nations objective of 0.7% GDP of developed countries to be spent on development aid;

Calls for alleviation of the burden on rural areas, brought on by debts and measures from international financing organizations and for the renegotiation of foreign debt in order to increase opportunities for rural youth;

Calls for an appropriate infrastructure of education in the developing world;

Calls for a reduction of military expenses in all countries, making these funds available for worldwide education;

Calls for protection and the right of education to HIV-positive youth and people with disabilities or who are differently abled;

Recognizes the importance of access to health and health care for all.

### **Concrete projects**

In order to achieve the goals mentioned above and to enable young people to participate fully in society and contribute to poverty eradication, the UNESCO Youth Forum proposes that UNESCO support the following concrete projects:

Micro-finance projects that enable young people to start up their own business;

South-South cooperation: exchange of successful projects among the developing countries;

The provision of an information channel about UNESCO's specialized programmes for youth;

UNESCO should host a database of young trainers and experts who can work as volunteers for UNESCO;

UNESCO should share information about successful projects through an interactive website;

UNESCO should encourage the United Nations and other international organizations to protect national and local cultures in their projects;

UNESCO should assist with the creation and the sociocultural role of universities in developing countries;

Development of a standard process for systematic contribution of ideas from youth delegates to country representatives to UNESCO;

Youth programme on the protection of the environment and natural resources, especially water resources, to involve young people in preserving and improving the environment at local, national, regional and global levels;

UNESCO should cooperate with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to support youth action by granting financial assistance.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

### **1. Types of technologies**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing that as there are different types of information and communication technologies, using the appropriate technology is vital and ICT projects must not be limited to the Internet,

Stressing that traditional media such as radio and television remain important instruments to spread information and should not be underestimated, for example by using them to build literacy, especially among women and girls, and that they may be used to distribute information about important issues such as AIDS,

Calls for printed literature and the telephone to be complemented with ICT solutions. For example, we could develop small printing presses to develop local newspapers, or provide telephone lines to villages so that they can have equal services.

### **2. Creating the basic conditions**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing that basic education remains the most important prerequisite for development,

Stressing that for the majority of today's young people computers are not as needed as books and teachers,

Recognizing that access to electricity and hardware is essential for the development of ICTs,

Calls upon UNESCO to encourage the development of alternative energy sources, as a key prerequisite for the development of ICTs;

Calls upon UNESCO to ensure that in all of its projects, the development of ICTs does not exceed the ability of the local population to use or sustain them;

Calls upon UNESCO to explore multi-sector projects which utilize ICTs as a component of a broader strategy.

### **3. Access to ICTs**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that access to information is important to be a full citizen;

Stresses that having access to the Internet must be made affordable so it is of use;

Calls for public spending on information infrastructure to provide free access, or at least low-cost access;

Recognizes that ICTs provide a resource for human development;

Recognizes that this resource for human development is largely unexploited;

Recognizes that ICTs can also be a resource for semi-literate people, for example interactive media;

Calls for fund-raising to provide the funds for new technology in less-developed countries, for example the development of telecentres;

Calls upon UNESCO to raise awareness of the potential to recycle computers;

Stresses the participation of young people in the development of new technologies. By involving them in the design of projects, young people will develop transferable and economically useful transferable skills to help on other projects. It will add youth expertise to the project which will ensure it is user-friendly, as most users will be young people;

Stresses that the use of ICTs in schools is crucial for e-literacy among young people;

Recognizes the need for each school to implement the use of ICTs;

Recognizes that there has been progress, but that youth NGOs need to be supported more in their efforts to increase the use of relevant ICTs in the developing world;

Calls for partnerships to be set up between UNESCO and youth NGOs that are promoting the use of ICTs.

#### **4. Use of ICTs**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Stresses that computers cannot yet replace the learning provided by human teachers;

Acknowledges that a shortage of teachers may be addressed by ICTs, as long as they do not replace teachers in the long term;

Calls for regular training courses on human rights for the teachers who teach new technologies in formal and non-formal settings;

Calls upon UNESCO to ensure ICTs are central to the Associated Schools Project;

Calls for new technologies to be used to strengthen the networks between schools in the North and South;

Calls for the development of programmes encouraging young women's participation in the ICT sector;

Recognizes that using the Internet offers an even wider range of opportunities for young people who are differently abled;

Recognizes that developing skills in ICTs is crucial to future economic development and can be used to combat the "brain drain" by opening up new opportunities, such as distance learning;

Calls upon UNESCO to promote linkage between various existing media;

Calls upon UNESCO to host a conference of student radio stations to build a global youth radio network;

Further calls upon UNESCO to develop such a network through distribution of technology and education, such as in a kit-format "radio in a box";

Calls upon UNESCO to affirm its commitment to popular cultures, through the exchange of different world music online, or in other formats;

Calls upon UNESCO to create music and other media and technology festivals as a means of distributing culture and promoting cross-cultural communication, considering development of a “World Youth Communication Week”.

## **5. Free information and communication**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Supports the promotion of the interactive aspects of the Internet and the combating of censorship;

Calls upon UNESCO to use all the tools at its disposal to encourage free movement of information and access to the Internet without censorship;

Acknowledges that it is not possible to have binding universal codes of conduct-ethics as far as ICTs are concerned, but that a dialogue about local and regional codes should be developed;

Stresses that education must include the development of media literacy and critical thinking and that UNESCO should create a resource to develop these skills in young people.

## **6. Increasing youth participation**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Noting that ICTs can be used to generate new policy ideas by facilitating discussion and communication between the government and youth,

Noting that governments are not listening enough to young people and that there is a lack of political will to involve them in decision-making processes,

Calls for the new opportunities presented by ICTs to be fully exploited, so that there is an increase in young people’s awareness and involvement in decision-making;

Calls for ICTs to be used to enhance transparency, including in government resource management;

Supporting the idea that young people appointed as UNESCO youth representatives must be able to use ICTs so that they can communicate with their constituencies and each other,

Calls for access to the Internet to be introduced at all the UNESCO National Commissions;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions to open their doors and create resource centres to which young people may have access.

## **7. Multiculturalism on the Internet**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that there is a major language barrier with the Internet as much of it is in English;

Recognizes that the Internet could be a tool for better presentation of and communication within cultural and language groups;

Calls for more information to be provided in local languages on the Internet;

Calls for improved access to education of a variety of languages;

Calls for support for further development of interpretation software in order to enhance the ability to translate into a variety of languages.

## **8. Internationalism**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that the Internet can be used as a direct tool to educate people in the aims of internationalism;

Recognizes that ICTs can bring together communities in friendship and within the global community. This can lead to a desire among youth to contribute and take action on important global issues;

Recognizes that the Internet can serve as an open platform to share information about cultures across previously daunting geographic barriers;

Calls upon UNESCO to set up a project to increase awareness of UNESCO and the ideals of a culture of peace and Education and Information for All.

## **9. UNESCO as a resource centre**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Congratulates UNESCO on the video-conference that it organized during the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system in Dakar. It was a good example of how to use ICTs to enhance participation;

Calls upon UNESCO to use ICTs, such as video-conferencing, in future events if they increase participation;

Recognizes that ICTs offer new opportunities for UNESCO to support education;

Recognizes that for UNESCO to promote internationalism it should provide resources for teachers;

Calls upon UNESCO to provide high-quality interactive courses for teachers, for professional development and for their pupils, via the Internet, for example in human rights;

Recognizes that because there are no transport or publication costs, UNESCO can begin to provide resources for individual students instead of just high-level resources and that a central online resource to provide all available useful publications would be an excellent commitment to the freedom of ideas;

Recognizes that a free online library would be an excellent present from UNESCO to the world at the start of the twenty-first century;

Calls upon UNESCO to develop, in partnership with universities in the developed world, a central online resource to act as a free online library for all students in the developing world;

Recognizes that ICTs offer UNESCO new opportunities to provide services to individuals as well as governments and institutions;

Recognizes that because there are no transport or production costs, if the developmental costs are met centrally, even complex software programmes could be provided free to everyone in the world;

Recognizes that software, such as translation software, voice-recognition software and language-learning software, would all be ways in which UNESCO could offer useful free services to the world. These would increase international communication, and provide positive press and perception of UNESCO at a far cheaper rate than commercial advertising. This press would generate future funds for other UNESCO programmes;

Calls upon UNESCO to establish a major project to develop free, complex software which is unlikely to be provided elsewhere on the Internet, particularly in regard to language programmes;

Recognizes that there is a lot of junk information on the Internet that can make it difficult to contact other organizations and get the maximum benefit from the technological opportunities to increase international communication;

Recognizes that the impact of globalization has moved more quickly in commerce than other areas. This difference is true for communications between non-business organizations worldwide;

Recognizes that an updated central list of youth and educational bodies worldwide would be very useful. UNESCO, with its National Commissions, is well placed to do this;

Recognizes that if a lot of people used UNESCO's website services, there would be a better perception of the value of UNESCO and more traffic to the other areas of the UNESCO website;

Calls upon UNESCO to provide useful services such as an international list of youth organizations active in the fields of competence of UNESCO and educational bodies worldwide;

Recognizes that a central resource of bulletin boards for specific areas of academic development would be a great resource. There would be thousands of professors worldwide who could take responsibility for writing the introductions and contributing to the discussions on a specific subject;

Acknowledges that many of these lists already exist, but that they are increasingly unclear and therefore not easily accessible to students;

Calls upon UNESCO to take advantage of its ideal position to provide the software and coordinate, via the National Commissions, the subject of young volunteers. This would be a great resource for students, especially if they could post questions to the list;

Calls upon UNESCO to empower and facilitate youth cultural exchange and dialogue among civilizations through the means of ICTs.

### **UNESCO Youth Forum**

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recalling that one of UNESCO's most important tasks is to function as a meeting place,

Acknowledging the importance of having a UNESCO Youth Forum, since the exchange of ideas and formulation of concrete proposals by young people is strengthened by such platforms,

Recognizing that face-to-face dialogue and discussion among young people is as important as technology and cannot be replaced, it is vital that UNESCO continue and fully support with the necessary resources the UNESCO Youth Forum, as part of the General Conference,

Recognizing it is crucial that we, the young delegates, utilize ICTs to facilitate follow-up to the Youth Forum,

Calls upon UNESCO to work with and help coordinate already existing youth-led structures and networks, particularly at the regional level, in order to improve young people's possibility to influence international policy-making;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions to improve and increase their cooperation with youth NGOs and organizations in our respective countries, particularly by promoting and facilitating the unification and coordination of youth efforts, for instance in youth-led national youth councils;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions to work particularly with youth NGOs and organizations that are active within the areas of competence of UNESCO and assist us in building networks for the sharing of information, experience and best practice with similar youth NGOs in other countries;

Calls for a permanent youth-controlled body composed of young people, set up by the Youth Forum and based at UNESCO Headquarters, to follow up this Youth Forum, and prepare and organize the next UNESCO Youth Forum, in cooperation with the Youth Coordination Unit of UNESCO;

Calls upon Member States to endeavour to bring youth representatives within their delegations to the General Conference. These youth representatives should participate in the Youth Forum, report to the UNESCO National Commissions and serve as contact persons for the follow-up of the Youth Forum;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions and Member States to assist in the fund-raising for youth delegates;

Calls upon the United Nations to ensure greater coordination and support for all youth-led forums within the United Nations system and calls upon UNESCO to take part in assisting the United Nations Youth Unit in this aim;

Calls upon UNESCO to include the Youth Forum in its regular budget;

Calls upon UNESCO to re-establish and reinforce coordination and cooperation between the UNESCO Youth Forum and the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system in order to enable the participants to be informed about adopted policies.

## **Addendum**

### **Youth Declaration on Terrorism and War at the 31st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Youth Forum**

We, the youth delegates from (country list) various countries, representing different regions, cultures, social and economic backgrounds gathered at the first International Youth Forum since the negative events of September 2001, have decided to express our voice, visions, hopes and dreams to encourage world leaders to:

follow our example and discuss common problems, challenges and disagreements through peaceful mechanisms such as the United Nations system, where each nation is assured its voice will be heard;

consider that we understand that there is no justification to killing innocent people, and that North-South dialogue, mutual understanding of religions and cultures, respect for each other and eradication of illiteracy are ways to prevent terrorism and war;

demand that the current world order be revised by searching for practical ways to integrate the millions of people who lack access to resources, are not politically represented and are willing to participate in the social and economic development process.

We, therefore, as young leaders, representing over 90 countries, wish to build a future based on education for all, a culture of peace, scientific cooperation, and respect of cultural diversity and call for a permanent dialogue among cultures and civilizations.