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REPORT BY THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE UNESCO INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (IESALC) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INSTITUTE (2002-2003)

OUTLINE

Source: 155 EX/Decision 6.3, 31 C/Resolution 8.

Background: In accordance with Article V, paragraph 5.2.2 of its Statutes, the Institute's Governing Board submits its report on the Institute's activities to the General Conference.

Purpose: The Governing Board of the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) submits to the General Conference a report on the activities of IESALC during the 2002-2003 biennium.

Decision required: No decision is required on this document.

INTRODUCTION

The report of the Governing Board of the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) on its activities during the 2002-2003 biennium is submitted to the General Conference of UNESCO at its 32nd session in accordance with Article V, paragraph 5.2.2 of IESALC's Statutes.

SECTION I. GOVERNING BOARD

1. The Second Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Board (Havana, Cuba, February 2002) discussed and approved the report by the Director of IESALC for the period 14 May to 31 December 2001, and the Programme and Budget for 2002-2003, incorporating the observations made by the members of the Board.

2. The Second Ordinary Meeting (San José, Costa Rica, February 2003) discussed the Activities Report 2002, and identification of the main lines of action for IESALC for the 2004-2005 biennium. These lines of action were approved with modifications and adjustments by the Governing Board. They will be incorporated into the programme after the 32nd session of the General Conference. The 2002 IESALC Financial and Administrative Report outlined the administrative and management cost-reduction policy that has been carried out resulting in a higher development capacity for programme activities. The decentralized performance of programmes enabled greater regional coverage, expanding activities in all Member States of the region in a balanced manner. The "Terms of Reference for IESALC External Evaluation", based on the governing principles for evaluation of UNESCO Institutes, were approved in this meeting. The Inter-university Centre for Development (CINDA), Chile, is carrying out the evaluation, which should be concluded by 30 October 2003.

3. The Governing Board prepared and approved a draft for new Statutes to be submitted to UNESCO's Executive Board.

SECTION II. PROGRAMME AREAS

4. IESALC's programme for 2002-2003 focuses on four central axes centred around the Observatory on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, which constitutes the framework programme for all IESALC activities. Following recommendations of the Governing Board's Second Extraordinary and Ordinary Meetings, IESALC continued implementing the framework programme, Observatory on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, four fundamental programme areas plus a fifth programme area corresponding to information and documentation activities. The five areas are:

- high quality higher education within the framework of lifelong learning for all;
- higher education serving human and social sustainable development;
- management of higher education;
- internationalization and redesigning of international cooperation in higher education;
- information and documentation interchange.

5. These programme areas, programmes and projects also incorporate two cross-cutting themes:
- Eradication of poverty, especially extreme poverty (to break the poverty cycle based on gender, culture and religion inequalities); and
 - the contribution of information and communication technologies to the development of education, science and culture and the construction of a knowledge society.
6. IESALC has implemented 13 thematic lines during the current biennium. They are grouped by programme areas. Each thematic line is executed in collaboration with specialized networks, research centres, universities of the region, governments, rectors' associations and civil society. An updated series of studies enabled the formulation of public policies, the establishment of associative networks, and improvement of quality and pertinence, and development of the higher education institutions in the region. The themes included: gender, religious orientation, cultural diversity (indigenous), education and training, new contexts and social-educational demands, migration of professionals, legislation, reform processes, accreditation and evaluation systems, management of macro-universities, virtual education, internationalization, internal cooperation, university publishing houses and information and documentation interchange.

SECTION III. PROGRAMME AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

7. **Programme Area I.** In accordance with Major Programme I and the priority given to Education for All, IESALC contributed to quality improvement of higher education and the renewal of higher education systems as part of the effort to provide education that meets real needs at the individual as well as the societal level. To this effect, IESALC gave priority to studies, data analysis and dissemination of knowledge related to higher education in the region, thereby facilitating research-based policy-making.

8. To improve the knowledge base concerning higher education systems in the region, the Observatory's national reports subprogramme is devoted to analysis of the situation and trends of higher education in each of the countries in the region. These studies, based on a common scheme, are carried out in collaboration with institutions, researchers and specialists. In a first stage, the objective is the preparing, publishing and disseminating of this series of national studies. Subsequently, a comparative study will be made resulting in a regional report, which, periodically updated, will reveal trends and perspectives of higher education, and permit national realities to have input into regional and international scenarios.

9. Twenty-two national studies were initiated in coordination with local governments, institutions and specialists. Following similar lines to the national studies, but with a subregional focus, an integrated study was made on the situation and perspectives of higher education in 12 English-speaking Caribbean countries. In coordination with the Ministry of Education of the Bahamas and the College of the Bahamas, a regional workshop (Nassau, Barbados, October 2002) analysed the regional studies in the English-speaking Caribbean, and set the basis for the Comparative Regional Study of the Caribbean Region.

10. A regional seminar (Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, April 2002) in cooperation with the Colombian Development Institute for Higher Education (ICFES) analysed the degree of progress of the reports being elaborated, identified the difficulties encountered – mainly in the statistical information – and ways to solve them, defined more rigorously the reference terms of the studies, and established the strategy to elaborate the regional comparative report. Nine national workshops analysed and discussed the reports, with the participation of representatives of academic and

governmental communities, searching for negotiation and consensus mechanisms among the members and decision-makers that would enable the viability of the required reforms in the sector. The workshops were held in coordination with several public bodies. Completed case studies were put on IESALC's webpage and four national reports (Colombia, Cuba, Argentina and Venezuela) were published.

11. In order to analyse the effect of feminization of enrolment in higher education at present and in the future, 14 national studies are under way, of which three (Argentina, Colombia and Cuba) have been completed. A regional seminar (6-7 November 2003, Mexico) with the participation of the Union of Latin American Universities (UDUAL), will coordinate the studies to integrate the results and contribute to the formulation of public policies.

12. The role of the pedagogic-oriented university institutions in the training of teachers and professors is being studied and their impact analysed. Special attention is being paid to the diversification of contexts and the renovation of pedagogic processes in order to look at how higher education contributes to other levels of the education system. This programme is being developed in close coordination with governments.

13. In line with IESALC principles on respect for diversity, recognition of all and pluralism, religious dialogue has been promoted among the several institutions with philosophical orientation existing in the region. This university sector at present accounts for more than 10% of total enrolment, some 1.2 million students. A regional study to identify religious institutions in the region and a survey of their characteristics, their perspectives, and their university profiles is being prepared. An Inter-Religious University Dialogue was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, 5-6 May 2003.

14. **Programme Area II.** IESALC has undertaken an analysis of the challenges set, on the one hand, by globalization, knowledge societies and growing market integration and, on the other hand, by respect for and acknowledgement of ancestral knowledge and its contribution to sustainable development. IESALC encouraged new thinking about one of the most worrisome phenomena in the past decade – the migration of Latin American university professionals to other countries – through a study on migration of Latin American and Caribbean professionals, and its relation with training of professionals in the universities of the region, and a seminar on Regional Migrations and Integration (Caracas, 1-2 August 2002) in cooperation with the Latin American Economic System (SELA), and with the Andean Development Corporation (CAF). Recent changes in the migratory flow were examined and the impact of this flow (positive and negative) on regional societies. Three thematic studies have been designed to look at awareness of new demands facing higher education in a highly interconnected world, the effects of migration of Latin American professionals in the context of a job market for professionals increasingly globalized in terms of offer and demand, and recognition of indigenous knowledge systems and their role in local solutions for regional development.

15. New social demands and their implications in higher education are being examined in order to contribute to changes in higher education to improve its quality and to suggest new scenarios to meet new demands for technical and professional training. Activities include the preparation of documents, which served as the basis for the regional thematic analysis presented to a regional meeting in November 2002. They were also discussed at a meeting in the Dominican Republic from 24 to 25 June 2003.

16. IESALC promoted participative intercultural pluralism and a dynamic interaction on indigenous higher education through the creation of a specialized advisory network to serve as an academic forum for deliberation and dialogue. Activities included a regional study of indigenous

higher education programmes and institutions in Latin America, a regional meeting (Guatemala, April 2002) which brought together 31 directors and specialists of institutions and programmes of indigenous higher education from 12 countries and six representatives of higher education governmental and non-governmental bodies. A cooperative network of leaders and specialists was set up and *Indigenous Higher Education in Latin America* was published. Following a meeting in Colombia (April 2003), a ministerial commission is being created to formulate an indigenous higher education programme, with the participation of universities and civil society.

17. **Programme Area III.** Based on the commitments of the Dakar Framework for Action and directed at strengthening educational institutional capacity, research on legislative matters, reforms, management and evaluation of universities, especially the Latin American Macro-Universities has been promoted. Regional cooperation, and the creation of regional, subregional and national networks have been encouraged.

18. One subprogramme looks at the evolution and tendencies of legislation concerning higher education, and through a comparative study, the identification of the main transformations that could contribute with the modernization of legislation. Activities included 17 studies on the legal frames of higher education, and a specific study on legislation in the English-speaking Caribbean in progress; a regional meeting (Lima, Peru, August 2002), analysed the main trends and prepared a comparative study on regional legislation in higher education. Two national studies (Colombia and Uruguay) have been co-published, and the third (Peru) is in press. A CD-ROM containing legislation of several countries and the studies being made on the evolution of legislations in them is being prepared.

19. IESALC promoted educational reform in the region and provided the contribution to the Meeting of Higher Education Partners (Paris, June 2003). Activities included national studies to identify main transformations that have been undertaken in the light of recommendations made by the World Conference on Higher Education and two regional seminars on the reform processes (Caracas, November 2002), and on completed national studies (Bogota, June 2003). A special session of the Regional Seminar held in the Bahamas (October 2002) was devoted to discussion of reforms, programmes and development projects undertaken since 1998. Within the framework of the Paris meeting, a regional report on reforms was presented. IESALC is coordinating – at the request of the Ministry of Education of Venezuela – the national consultation and debate to prepare the draft Higher Education Act. To this end, it has supported, advised and participated in several forums, seminars and teamwork meetings with different education sector leaders and institutions.

20. IESALC, in close collaboration with competent national bodies, is helping strengthen national and regional evaluation and accreditation mechanisms to ensure quality of institutions and programmes of higher education. The Iberoamerican Network for the Evaluation and Accreditation of the Quality of Higher Education (RACES) was approved in Cartagena, Colombia, July 2002. Representatives of evaluation and accreditation national bodies from 15 countries participated as well as representatives of the association of universities of two countries, two regional organizations (OEI and SECAB), and IIEP. The Network was effectively set up in May 2003. Thirteen national and two regional studies were made on the past and present situation, and future perspectives of evaluation and accreditation in higher education, with a view to a regional comparative study, and the formulation of common policies for the region. In coordination with RACES, IESALC is advancing a project to develop self-evaluation software. In reply to a request by the Bolivian Minister of Education, technical assistance was provided in the definition of a national legal framework for the accreditation and evaluation process.

21. In order to generate policy proposals that contribute to strengthening present reform processes for the consolidation of macro-universities in Latin America, as well as the expansion of their levels

of governability, funding, academic quality and access, a number of activities have been carried out. A regional study analysed the situation of 20 macro-universities in Latin America. The First Rectors' Meeting of Latin-American Macro-Universities (Caracas, June 2002) brought together 29 participants from 20 countries. A cooperative network of 29 public universities was constituted. The second meeting (Mexico, March 2003) discussed the Network and approved the statutes and the working plan. IESALC sponsored the Third Discussion of University Management in South America (Buenos Aires, May, 2003) on the theme "The South American University facing the Crisis, Regional Integration, and the Future". Crisis management, funding, quality, cooperation and integration were discussed.

22. **Programme Area IV.** The thematic lines under this programme area are related to the cross-cutting theme: The contribution of information and communication technologies to the development of education, science, and culture, and the construction of a knowledge society. Within the framework of Major Programme I, through creating new associations in the university world and in society in general, the programme area aims at: establishing an international framework for recognition of qualifications and quality assurance in the scope of transnational education; increased international cooperation regarding academic mobility and validation of studies; and internationalization of higher education and research.

23. In the context of globalization and regionalization, new scenarios are being identified that involve cross-border delivery of education (distance courses), academic course offers from and for abroad, new educational providers (e-learning companies, expansion of the franchise model), and international mobility of professionals, and that are adapted to the growing cross-border flows characterizing the global era. *New Providers, Transnational Education, and Higher Education Accreditation* was published and presented during the Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Paris, October 2002). A subregional study was made on internationalization of higher education in the Caribbean. A meeting (San Juan, September 2003) on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and higher education is expected to promote a broad debate among specialists and university authorities from the United States and Latin America as regards the FTAA impact on higher education systems in the region. Eleven national studies analysing internationalization in higher education are being prepared for a regional seminar (Santa Cruz, Bolivia, November 2003).

24. Knowledge about and practice of virtual university education to improve its quality and pertinence, as well as its coordination with other forms of higher education, has been advanced as a result of studies on the development of virtual higher education that promote ongoing international cooperation and interchange. Activities that contributed to this include 12 national studies analysing the situation and trends of distant and virtual education, and the evolution of the application of new information and communication technologies in the present teaching/learning processes. Two subregional studies looked at evolution and trends in English-speaking Caribbean countries and in the six Central American countries. A regional seminar (Quito, February 2003), formulated proposals related to the situation and development of virtual education, and the use of new technologies for higher education.

25. Special attention has been paid to subregional cooperation in the English-speaking Caribbean countries within the framework of the Higher Education Observatory. Activities included an integrated study on the situation and perspectives of higher education involving 11 Member States and a subregional workshop (Nassau, Bahamas, October-November 2002) at which participants discussed the role of higher education institutions in the training of teachers, and the present situation and perspectives of higher education and the development of tertiary education institutes in the Caribbean. A special session was devoted to "reforms, programmes, and development projects undertaken in the Caribbean from 1998", as a contribution to the Meeting of Higher

Education Partners. Three regional studies are in progress on the internationalization processes of higher education in the Caribbean, the university press in the subregion, and the evaluation and accreditation processes. A study is being made on the impact of FTAA, the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the Caribbean.

26. In Central America national reports on higher education for each country are being prepared, as well as regional thematic studies on virtual universities, the university press and regional accreditation systems. The results will be presented at a regional seminar (4-5 November 2003). Under IESALC's technical assistance programme several activities were carried out in the Dominican Republic, including a study on higher education legislation and a study on accreditation and evaluation.

27. In order to make available information related to the higher education national studies, the thematic studies and other editorial projects in the region, 15 publications have been produced or are in press as IESALC publications or co-publications.

28. **Programme Area V.** Information is essential for informed decision-making and IESALC has therefore included among its priorities monitoring and diffusing of information on education for all and facilitating journalistic access to information related to higher education. To this end, IESALC has devoted special attention to consolidating a system of information interchange on higher education in the region through creating its own gateway. The gateway makes available news about the tertiary education sector, and documentation and analysis generated by the region's research centres and by IESALC itself, as well as other bodies of UNESCO.

29. Exploiting the advantages of new information technologies, and using its Information and Documentation Service (SID) and recently redesigned website, IESALC has created a periodical digital information space (*Digital Bulletin*), offering a panorama of the important news and coverage of relevant debates in the field of higher education. Originally targeted at high-level government officials involved in design and implementation of educational policies and at the university directors' boards, it now reaches a large part of the academic community and higher education specialists. To date, 40 editions of the *Digital Bulletin of Higher Education* have been distributed, covering 33 countries and 68 newspapers. It is distributed to over 21,800 recipients, mainly higher education managers and decision-makers.

32. SID has a wide range of publications, documents and reference works. Since October 2000, some 11,622 registries have been incorporated in the database. The public catalogue – available on the web – allows identification and retrieval of 11,622 bibliographic registries, 2,500 analytical summaries and digital images of the 1,089 most recently processed monographs. SID provides a reading room, unlimited access to the Internet, internal loan, referential orientation service, photographic reproduction of bibliographic material, assembling of selective bibliographies and sale of publications.

33. The project concerning the status and perspectives of the university publishing houses or university press in the region analyses the characteristics and status of existing facilities in order to carry out a comparative study to identify future perspectives and promote these institutions, which are vital for university development. Contracts were signed for 11 national studies. One subregional study was completed by the Central American Supreme University Council (CSUCA). Another contract was signed for a study in English-speaking Caribbean countries.