

Hundred and seventy-first session

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Item 15 of the provisional agenda

CREATION OF A WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY

SUMMARY

This item has been included in the provisional agenda of the 171st session of the Executive Board at the request of Morocco.

An explanatory note and a proposed decision are presented below.

Decision proposed: paragraph 10.

Background to the proposal

1. Following a request from the Association des Amis de la Philosophie, the Moroccan Minister of Culture informed the Director-General of UNESCO in March 2004 of the intention of the Kingdom of Morocco to work towards the establishment of a World Philosophy Day.

Legal grounds for the proposal

2. The proposal of the Kingdom of Morocco is based, *inter alia*, on Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that “everyone has the right to education” (para. 1) and that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality (...). It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, (...) for the maintenance of peace” (para. 2).

3. Similarly, the proposal is based on the right of all to “full and equal opportunities for education (...), the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and (...) the free exchange of ideas and knowledge” and on the responsibility of the States Parties to the Constitution of UNESCO to “develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives” (UNESCO Constitution).

The importance of philosophy and UNESCO’s role in its promotion

4. Philosophy is a discipline that fosters critical and independent thinking, develops the intellectual capacities needed to understand the world and promotes tolerance and peace. It is therefore vital to the development of humanity.

5. UNESCO’s role in the promotion of that discipline derives from the Organization’s Constitution and its capability as a laboratory of ideas, the intellectual arm of the United Nations system.

6. The Organization fulfils that role through its philosophy programme and a series of activities related to it, including:

- support for Member States in their thinking on the discipline, such as the reflection that led to the 1995 **Paris Declaration for Philosophy** (of which Morocco is a signatory);
- the celebration of **Philosophy Day** since 2002 at UNESCO Headquarters (with the participation of the Member States). Similar celebrations are also held in more than 70 Member States;
- the drawing up of the **UNESCO strategy on philosophy** (2004-2005), in concert with the Member States.

7. Those activities and many more enable UNESCO to promote research, studies and exchanges in the field of philosophy, to encourage the teaching of the discipline, to modernize the corresponding education system, and to draw attention to philosophy, marginalized and menaced by obscurantist and totalitarian thought.

Interest raised by the Moroccan proposal

8. All the Member States and individuals consulted wholeheartedly supported the Moroccan proposal. They agreed that UNESCO should launch an international effort to further recognition of

the importance of philosophy and the need to give new impetus to the discipline and for its promotion at the national, regional and international level.

9. The Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco availed itself of the opportunity afforded it by the third consultative meeting on UNESCO's strategy on philosophy (3 January 2005) to present the essential information on the proposal and to distribute the draft resolution that it intended to present to the Executive Board at its next session. The great majority of the Member States present at the meeting (Canada, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Holy See, Iran, Italy, Jordan, Palestine, Peru, Romania, Senegal, etc.) warmly welcomed the initiative. Some even expressed the wish to co-sponsor the proposal.

Draft decision

10. The following text will first be submitted to the Executive Board at its 171st session (12-28 April 2005). It will then be presented to the General Conference of UNESCO at its 33rd session (October 2005).

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates in Article 26 that “everyone has the right to education” (para. 1) and that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality (...). It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups (...) for the maintenance of peace” (para. 2),
2. Recalling also the Constitution of UNESCO, which declares that “the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives”,
3. Mindful of the eminent role played by philosophy in the development of humanity,
4. Convinced of its importance and concerned about the need to protect it from the dual threat represented by obscurantism and extremism,
5. Recalling the fundamental role of philosophy in the promotion of tolerance and peace,
6. Underlining UNESCO's aim of imbuing public opinion with moral and philosophical ideas that would strengthen respect for the human person, the love of peace, solidarity and the attachment to a cultural ideal,
7. Recalling UNESCO's aim of encouraging progress in philosophical studies, supporting the activities of associations, universities and all other institutions with a similar goal, and fostering international exchanges and publications in the field, in particular through the holding of Philosophy Day at UNESCO, which has been celebrated since 2002 at the Organization's Headquarters and in more than 70 Member States,
8. Urges Member States to:
 - (a) pursue their efforts to promote philosophy within their countries;

- (b) support the proclamation of a world philosophy day to confirm the traditional place of that discipline in civic life so that philosophy may pursue its universal mission in the service of cultural diversity and peace in the world;
 - (c) strengthen the teaching of that discipline in their countries and encourage initiatives involving philosophical activities by different partners in the discipline;
 - (d) use the guidelines established by UNESCO, such as the strategy on philosophy that is being drawn up, and promote them within the framework of the international cooperation on questions relating to philosophy education and within the scientific community;
9. Takes note of the feasibility study produced by the Director-General (171 EX/INF.12) – including an estimate of the costs and an indication of the expected results – on the celebration of a world philosophy day, for which it thanks him;
10. Recommends to the General Conference that it proclaim, at its 33rd session, the third Thursday of November every year “World Philosophy Day”;
11. Requests of the United Nations General Assembly that all the States members of the United Nations participate in this celebration.