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SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Hundred and seventy-first session

**ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE GENERAL
DEBATE OF THE 171st SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON ITEMS:**

3. Report by the Director-General on the execution of the programme adopted by the General Conference
4. Report by the Director-General on the follow-up of decisions and resolutions adopted by the Executive Board and the General Conference at their previous sessions
5. Report by the Director-General on the reform process
20. Consideration of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2006-2007 (33 C/5) and recommendations of the Executive Board

1. Mr Chairman of the Executive Board, Mr President of the General Conference, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to begin by issuing a warm welcome to you all, especially the new Members, for what will be, I am sure, an important session of your Board. The year 2005 is a special year for the United Nations Organization and for UNESCO. We share the same birth year, 1945, and we share much more besides, most importantly the pursuit of “the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind”, as proclaimed by the United Nations Charter. UNESCO, of course, is an integral part of the United Nations system as one of the specialized agencies. That system, however, has come under tremendous strain in recent years as it seeks to adapt to a changing world and new international challenges. In these circumstances, demands for reform have become insistent both from within and from without.

2. Within the context of wider United Nations system reform, UNESCO has responded during my stewardship by pursuing an ambitious reform agenda that has enjoyed the support of Member States. I am the first to say that there is more to be done, especially to change the institutional culture of the Organization, but no one can deny that we have done a great deal.

3. However, nothing stays the same. New demands and challenges rise up and new ambitions need to be defined. Today, I believe that UNESCO is at a critical juncture when it must do what may seem like two contradictory things – first, it must have the confidence to stay the same and, second, it must dare to change radically. By staying the same, I am referring to its status and mission as a specialized agency with a distinctive role within the United Nations system. By daring to change, I am referring to the Organization’s urgent need to innovate, to engage in further reform, and to improve the ways in which it works.

4. The United Nations General Assembly summit in September will examine progress since the Millennium Declaration, in conjunction with the United Nations Secretary-General’s recently published reform paper. The Secretary-General’s reform package is geared towards focusing the activities of the United Nations, emphasizing in particular the need to ensure effective interventions at the country level in support of the Millennium Development Goals. This is equally true for UNESCO – and the objectives of the decentralization policy I have put in place are precisely directed to enable UNESCO to play a more effective and consequential role in the field.

5. But let me also emphasize that the significant role which the five main specialized agencies of the United Nations system can play in this concerted effort has not been fully recognized and mobilized. Together with the heads of the other specialized agencies – particularly ILO, WHO, FAO and UNIDO – I am determined to highlight the crucial role of the specialized agencies and to bring to bear their full effectiveness, creativity and impact. The domains, role and functions of specialized agencies cover a wide range of efforts – such as standard-setting and the normative role, the laboratory function, the intellectual function – whose impact on the development process is not always understood. I, for one, have taken a strong personal interest in helping to correct this misperception and to bring to the fore the full strengths and true value of specialized agencies. Often, we are only measured in terms of our capacity-building contributions but this represents only one part of our mission.

6. President Konaré, who leads the Commission of the African Union, has recently given his unqualified support to the role of specialized agencies in general and UNESCO in particular. His remarks at the recent meeting of African Union Ministers of Education in Algiers were most timely and very welcome. I quote: “We are convinced that the ongoing reform of the United Nations will see to it that the specialized agencies of the United Nations,

and particularly UNESCO, recover their full power, subject to making the inevitable adjustments and vital changes and adaptations. We need to ensure that the financial institutions no longer take over their responsibilities, and that their responsibilities are not emptied of their substance by the parallel creation of a multiplicity of competing programmes”.

7. These remarks are important because they express what many countries, in particular many developing countries, are saying. In this regard, an important debate took place in the United Nations General Assembly last autumn in the context of the 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. Resolution 59/250, adopted on 17 December 2004, reflects a genuine consensus among Member States achieved after considerable and sometimes heated debate. It represents a most interesting orientation for shaping the future of the United Nations system’s development cooperation, especially through inter-agency mechanisms that respect the institutional diversity.

8. One aspect of this agenda is its encouragement of all development partners, including the United Nations system, to adopt harmonization and simplification measures that help to reduce transaction costs and improve efficiency. This important issue was taken up in earnest by ministers of developed and developing countries at the Second High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, organized by OECD/DAC in Paris from 28 February to 2 March 2005, in which UNESCO participated as part of the United Nations delegation. The “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness” will have important implications for how international cooperation is conducted. For its part, UNESCO is considering those implications for its own work, especially at the country level.

9. Another influential contribution that will feed into the deliberations at the Millennium Review Summit and, prior to that, at the July session of the Economic and Social Council, is the report of the Millennium Project, authored by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, in which UNESCO staff participated on selected issues. While recognizing several virtues in the report – for example, its strong emphasis on Africa and on secondary, tertiary and adult education as well as the primary level – the report focuses on MDGs exclusively, at the expense of other non-MDG goals related to EFA, science, cultural development and communication and media, which is regrettable. The report barely mentions EFA or EFA-FTE and there is a disturbing lack of consideration for quality as a key dimension of education. Here, there is specific work to be done by UNESCO, namely, to bring other multilateral partners in line with the internationally validated EFA approach.

10. As mentioned earlier, consideration of United Nations reform and the Millennium Declaration agenda will dominate the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly summit in New York from 14 to 16 September. I plan to participate in this seminal event, which will allow all stakeholders to take stock of the accomplishments since 2000 and which will determine the course, speed and direction of future efforts to make the attainment of the MDGs a reality. I am in full agreement with the statement made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan a few days ago at the Chief Executives Board session in Switzerland that, collectively, all parts of the United Nations system must strive to make the September summit a success.

11. Being vitally involved in at least four, if not five, of the MDGs places a particular responsibility on UNESCO, including perhaps a burden of proof that progress really is being made. UNESCO has prepared itself well to make a constructive contribution to the MDG agenda through the revamping of our EFA approach, our stress on gender equity in education,

our emphasis on HIV/AIDS and education (which is now the basis of a UNESCO-led initiative within the UNAIDS framework), and our sustained efforts regarding water and related ecosystems. All this is complemented by our determined focus on Africa, especially in support of NEPAD, which promises to generate a major impact on the efforts to halve poverty by 2015.

12. It is true that the projections for the attainment of the ambitious MDGs are not too rosy. The eradication of poverty, above all, is and must remain the overriding goal of all of our efforts. I submit that we must mobilize all our resources and resourcefulness to assist Member States willing and committed to reach these goals. Our ongoing efforts to insert UNESCO as a full and effective member of the United Nations Country Teams – with a view to bringing to bear the perspectives from UNESCO’s domains in the CCA, UNDAF and PRS processes – are central to these endeavours.

13. Impact at the country level is a crucial test for the entire United Nations system. For its part, UNESCO’s efforts to intensify its action in situations of post-conflict and crisis illustrates, in many ways, our renewed, readjusted local mandate. As you know, we are increasingly called upon to restore and rebuild national capacities, where they have been eroded by years of unrest and violent conflict. UNESCO has also a key role to play in accompanying countries engaged in processes of democratization, by ensuring that fundamental human rights – such as freedom of expression – are at the very heart of such processes. Faced with such challenges, UNESCO’s added value has proven to be twofold.

14. First, we have demonstrated the capacity to provide highly qualified expertise and advice in translating global standards into legal and policy frameworks at the national level, within our fields of competence. In Iraq, for example, UNESCO is currently leading United Nations efforts to assist the Ministry of Water Resources in building up the necessary human resources and the technical and institutional capacity for an integrated water resource management at the national level and, eventually, the devising of the country’s National Water Master Plan.

15. Second, we have shown the capacity to revive scientific and intellectual cooperation where it has been disrupted, often by years of isolation. This is, in other words, our capacity to create the foundations for the “moral and intellectual solidarity” called for in the UNESCO Constitution, as a pillar of mutual understanding and peace-building. The Round Table on “The Revitalization of Higher Education in Iraq” is a good example of how UNESCO can create and sustain such spaces of dialogue among its key stakeholders.

16. In this connection, let me share with you our hope that a renewed peace process in the Middle East will enable the Organization to contribute much more than it has been possible of late. UNESCO will continue to support the Palestinian people, to build up their capacities and to strengthen their institutions. In this regard, I am particularly pleased to announce that UNESCO, with the support of Saudi Arabia, is currently exploring a large initiative to improve Palestinian students’ opportunities to study in universities and institutions of higher education within the Palestinian Territories. It is also my hope that UNESCO may very soon intensify its efforts towards dialogue in the Middle East, thus building on our recent initiatives in this field, notably in the area of academic and scientific cooperation.

17. Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, the year 2005 will be an important year for marking the stage we have reached in seeking to gain global leadership in the areas of UNESCO’s principal priorities. We feel we have brought something considerable to these

areas of challenge. This very month brings the fifth anniversary of the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, and this will stimulate both reflection and renewed determination. EFA, of course, is THE priority among all priorities. In document 171 EX/8, the Board is presented with the follow-up to date of its debate at its last session and the decisions then taken. It is a work-in-progress but we have indeed made progress – by initiating the global mapping process, by identifying more clearly the four main strategic objectives and thrusts of the Organization's EFA strategy, and by giving indications of the design and sequencing of the associated implementation plan. There will be considerable development of these aspects in the months ahead, in close collaboration with our EFA partners. This is the challenge that I have given the new Assistant Director-General for Education, Peter Smith, and I call upon Member States to give their full and unqualified support to him and UNESCO not only here but also in other governing bodies and other venues.

18. We clearly recognize the urgent need for greater coherence, cooperation and synergy within the EFA movement but we wish to avoid setting up heavy mechanisms or hasty, ill-considered palliatives that are not grounded upon a thorough understanding of education. The EFA strategy shows that we intend to work more closely with the Fast-Track Initiative and to make sure that UNESCO's work at the country level converges with that of its partners, especially in the development and delivery of the three Core Initiatives. We also intend to ensure that the High-Level Group meeting in Beijing leads to concrete commitments. Again, the support of Member States is crucial for this to happen.

19. What is new in the context of EFA is that all partners, it seems, recognize that we have the legitimacy to "take the lead". Although we recognize that many countries face serious problems, we still believe that the EFA goals are attainable. In the months ahead, we shall prepare a proposal that estimates, in financial and human terms, the further resources that we believe are required in order to enhance UNESCO's EFA role so that it is commensurate with countries' needs and partners' expectations.

20. Another domain in which UNESCO has furthered its leadership role within the United Nations system is the area of fresh water. It is widely acknowledged now that with its three pillars – namely, IHP, the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education and the UNESCO-led World Water Assessment Programme – UNESCO has developed the strongest water programme within the United Nations family. Your investment in mainstreaming fresh water as a principal priority has paid off well.

21. Two years ago, the Intergovernmental Council of IHP initiated the International Flood Programme as an integrated response to the challenge of the tremendous human and economic losses the world faces year by year. In order to make it a truly interdisciplinary interagency programme, I launched, with the heads of WMO and UNU, a new UNESCO-led International Flood Initiative at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe last January. The main objective of this Initiative is to halve the expected number of flood casualties over the next 10 years.

22. Also, UN Water, the system-wide coordinating body in freshwater issues, has given strong recognition to and appreciation of the leadership and catalytic role performed by UNESCO since the initiation of the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). Through WWAP, our Organization was able to bring together 24 United Nations entities to work towards the solution of the water problems facing the world.

23. While fresh water is the principal priority of the Natural Sciences Sector, another scientific area – tsunamis – has provided another domain in which UNESCO's leadership is being expressed and acknowledged. This was evident at the recent three-day coordination meeting in Grand Baie, Mauritius, that just ended on 16 April with the adoption of the Mauritius Declaration. UNESCO/IOC's Assembly is recognized as the responsible authority for establishing an International Coordination Group that would govern the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System. The Declaration calls upon the IOC secretariat to finalize the technical plans for the detection systems of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System and to develop a mechanism to coordinate donor assistance in relation to assessed needs. In addition, the Declaration reaffirms the participating countries' commitment to an open, free and unrestricted sharing of tsunami-relevant real time observational data in accordance with the IOC Oceanographic Data Exchange Policy. The Mauritius Declaration concludes by expressing appreciation for IOC's strong coordination role.

24. Mr Chairman, the year 2005 also marks an important time for our Organization in the domain of culture. As you may recall, five years ago, UNESCO was impelled by a tremendous momentum focusing on recognition of the vital importance of cultural diversity for the future of humanity, at a time when the threats to it were becoming increasingly urgent. UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, of 2001, has served as a key political platform laying the foundations for an inclusive conception of cultural diversity the benefits of which will be felt for a long time to come.

25. Two years later, inspired by this unifying spirit, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, today ratified by 12 States. Many other States have begun the process of ratification to the point that we can anticipate the convention's entry into force, three months following the ratification of the thirtieth signatory State, during the first quarter of 2006. This is a tremendous success for UNESCO, about which I am particularly pleased. It shows, as I have always been convinced, how much the Convention was needed to supplement, in a consistent and relevant manner, the very effective provisions already in effect with regard to the tangible heritage in the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

26. Today, that convention can pride itself on having practically become universal, with its 180 States Parties, while it had only 160 at the beginning of 2000. That is also a considerable success. We must now reflect carefully on the best way to ensure, within our own institutional framework, the necessary distinction between tangible and intangible heritages – which are often interlocking – so that the two Conventions, of 1972 and of 2003, as well as the guidelines governing their implementation, can function in a complementary fashion and enhance each other.

27. Another aspect of cultural diversity on which UNESCO has been called upon to focus in the last two years is the diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions. You have all been following with interest the preparation of the draft convention, and a report on the progress of the work is included in the agenda of your session. As I announced to the Member States on 3 March 2005, in transmitting to them my preliminary report, the second session of the Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts still did not yield a consensual text. The Executive Board will, therefore, probably wish to authorize me to convene a third session to pursue the work undertaken.

28. I should in that regard tell you that Appendix 2, which I announced in my preliminary report would be sent out "as soon as possible", will be distributed to you for information in a

few days. Consisting of a consolidated text, prepared by the Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts, in accordance with the recommendation made to him at the end of the second session, this Appendix must be examined jointly with Appendix 1, which I have called the “composite text” and which was distributed on 3 March 2005. Together, these texts can, in my view, be regarded as a working base that will enable the Member States to pursue their future deliberations in a spirit of harmony.

29. If we manage, as I fervently hope, to draw up the text of a convention on which all can agree and which proposes effective and supportive measures to meet the challenges to the diversity of cultural and artistic expressions in today’s world, we will have fulfilled a grand plan. The point is that with the 1972 and 2003 conventions, the international community now has the means to preserve the expressions and stamps of the cultures we have inherited through history and tradition. With the convention now being prepared, it will be contemporary expressions of creativity, which are the extension of the cultures we have inherited and foreshadow the heritage of the future, which will be preserved. At the end of 2005, the international community will therefore be much better equipped to safeguard cultural diversity than it was at the start of 2000.

30. Mr Chairman, in the face of the legitimate concerns raised by the spectacular development of science, medicine and their technological applications, UNESCO has also had to make an unprecedented effort over recent years in the fields of bioethics and the ethics of science and technology. This effort, based on capacity-building, the dissemination of knowledge and the sharing of information, has been accompanied by a large-scale and coherent enterprise of standard-setting codification in line with the expectations of the international community.

31. The adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights in 1997, and that of the International Declaration on Human Genetic Data in 2001, showed that it was possible to reach agreement on a set of common principles concerning the very essence of life.

32. Furthermore, the ongoing preparation of a Declaration concerning the main issues in the field of bioethics and human rights once again emphasizes the shared will to have a global benchmark for defining the responsibilities of the human being, especially with respect to the biosphere, while at the same time guiding the States towards the formulation of laws and policies relating to bioethics. I hope that at the end of the Second Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts, a consolidated text can be presented to the next session of the General Conference.

33. This coherent set of principles and practices is at the heart of the new social contract established between our societies and science, as is also equally demonstrated by the new questions being deliberated by the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST).

34. All of this sets the stage for the ethical reflection that we have to carry out in this assembly to make the progress and sharing of knowledge fully compatible with respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the human person. I am very proud that we have thus become an organization able to satisfy the conditions for dialogue required for difficult issues, placed at the centre of the concerns of the international community, which prompt us to assume the complex nature of the facts without anxiety, and with transparency and equity.

35. Mr Chairman, there is no question but that knowledge has become a driving force in economic and social development. UNESCO has made a considerable effort in the last five years to widen the debate on the information society and ensure acceptance of the concept of “inclusive and pluralistic knowledge societies”. It also obtained the recognition that these societies could only develop on the basis of four principles that it is striving unceasingly to bring to fruition: freedom of expression; universal access to information; the promotion of cultural diversity, multilingualism and local contents; and equality of access to education. This approach was approved by the international community, with the adoption during the first phase of the Summit, in December 2003 in Geneva, of a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action which put the seal on a consensus concerning the values which should infuse inclusive and pluralistic knowledge societies. UNESCO must now put the concept of knowledge societies to work and translate these principles into concrete actions. That is the objective of its contribution to the preparation of the second phase of the Summit that will be held in Tunis in November 2005.

36. The strategic partnerships that UNESCO has concluded with the informatics industry have also paved the way for the materialization of this vision of inclusive and equitable knowledge societies. The project, which was launched jointly with Microsoft and Intel to develop a “teacher-training syllabus”, seeks to establish standards and improve the quality of teacher training for the use of ICTs in their day-to-day work.

37. Mr Chairman, there is another reason why 2005 is, as I see it, a critical year. This is because it marks the completion of a set of reforms whose main lines and chief purposes were submitted to the Executive Board at its first session in 2000 (159 EX/5), and whose final measures are being implemented. A consistent set of 10 staff policies have been drawn up that are intended to provide the conditions for recruiting and managing efficient, motivated and high-quality staff. The most recent of these policies, since I have just approved it, concerns measures to counter harassment, whether sexual or moral. We have thus introduced an entirely renewed set of policies, which means that we are favourably placed in relation to the other agencies of the United Nations system but have to acknowledge that it is not that easily “taking root”, such is the prevalence of traditional reflexes and poor practices.

38. The necessary ingredients for developing a new management style are also in place, or about to be. A full table of delegation of authority is nearing completion and covers all aspects of the functioning of UNESCO, including programming and budgeting, staff, missions, financial administration, equipment and contracts. Such delegation of authority will of necessity have to be monitored. This will be the responsibility of a committee to oversee how managerial staff perform the duties delegated to them and manage the resources entrusted to them. The Internal Oversight Service (IOS), which has worked extremely efficiently and responsibly, and the introduction of an integrated information system complete this corpus. By the end of the year FABS will have been extended to all the field offices and the new SISTER system – easier to access and use – should have materialized.

39. The year 2005 is also critical since the first review of decentralization marks the end of an initial cycle in the restructuring of the Organization. However drastic it may have been, the restructuring of Headquarters has been completed fairly rapidly, even though regular adjustments are needed. I shall come back to this in a private meeting. The new two-tier field structure, with its own operating rules, is now in place and the study just conducted has shown its soundness. Admittedly, quite a few problems remain concerning management, staff, resources and governance, but this does not call into question the very essence of the concept.

40. Through this study, whose transparent and open approach has, I am glad to say, been welcomed, it is a new vision of the Organization that opens up, conceived as a whole whose various components complement one another and, ideally, are mutually reinforcing. There has never been any question for me of looking on the situation as one where we have the Headquarters in Paris as something quite distinct from the field units in the Member States. What we do have is a comprehensive network whose various members, wherever they may be, need one another and must learn fully to mobilize the many focal points available to them, in a somewhat unique manner within the system, particularly within civil society.

41. Mr Chairman, I now come to the final item of my introduction, concerning the Draft Programme and Budget for 2006-2007, which is before the Board for consideration. I embarked on the new C/5 document bearing in mind all the considerations that I have just briefly laid before you. The idea was to preserve everything that goes to make up the specific nature of our Organization, a specialized agency with a global mandate but one whose justification would nowadays be very limited if the purposes, standards and policies it defends worldwide were not embodied in action in the field, by transforming conduct and policies at local level. Hence the need for a more forceful approach, one that is more focused on the main priorities of our global mandate; hence the need to reinforce our presence on the ground and to infuse at the very core of the action of the United Nations system and of Member States the distinctiveness of our approaches and of our purposes.

42. I shall not go back today in detail over the conditions in which document 33 C/5 was prepared. My written introduction to the document and the particulars given in the written presentation of my address today need no further explanation. I should just like to re-emphasize that by absorbing in the \$610 million baseline all the necessary, that is, obligatory increases – the increased cost of posts, inflation, social insurance, security, loan repayments, and I spare you the rest! – I have shown that in no way was I relaxing the budgetary discipline I have displayed ever since I took office. In all, it is a saving of some \$57 million that has had to be made.

43. It goes without saying in this context that the “reinforcements” I have been able to make are “negative” or “hollow” reinforcements, that is, I have preserved some fields that have absolute priority from any cuts. In so doing, I have managed to cover all the obligations undertaken over preceding biennia and all the potential deficits which have built up (I am thinking here, for instance, about medical benefits and the renovation of Headquarters), and I must say I am proud to have in this way rid us once and for all of what were termed “the debts of the past”.

44. All this goes to explain why I considered that I had to propose, over and above the baseline of \$610 million, and in keeping with the Executive Board decision, a “reinforcement” of \$25 million. This “reinforcement” concerns only the highest priority areas within the principal priorities; it is intended to capitalize on our comparative advantage in these fields and enable us to strengthen our international role while improving our presence in the field, that is to say, by filling in the most obvious gaps in our field network. As such, the “reinforcement” of \$25 million seems to be an indispensable element in ensuring that the forthcoming Programme and Budget both satisfies all the conditions of discipline and rationalization that Member States have asked for, and lets UNESCO fulfil the promises inherent in the reform, in its sense as a clarification of UNESCO’s role on the international stage.

45. Some of you are wondering what UNESCO has done with the increase of \$35 million made possible by the return to the Organization of the United States. You will probably remember that the use of that increase was presented in document 32 C/5 in the third scenario, the \$610 million scenario, and then, once approved by the General Conference, included in document 32 C/5 Approved. In short, exactly the same approach as the one I am putting forward today: a targeted reinforcement of the most essential priorities in order to exercise genuine leadership in a few very specific fields and to be able to turn the new approaches into local realities. What I am proposing, in the framework of the \$25 million presented over and above the baseline, is intended to ensure continuity and complementarity with the efforts embarked upon in 2004-2005.

46. I know, however, that some representatives of Members of the Executive Board – independently of how they may judge the justification for the reinforcements I am proposing – are subject to the “zero nominal growth” imperative their government is applying to all international organizations. Concerned as I am not to make any move that might break the consensus on budget matters that is indispensable in my opinion, I have referred to the possibility of “innovative approaches”. I do not want to dwell on this option at this stage, as I would like first and foremost to listen to what each of you has to say and propose.

47. It is clear that for me these innovative approaches cannot be confined to a vague commitment to voluntary contributions, which at worst never materialize and at best could lead to a “UNESCO à la carte”. What I would like is a firm commitment of \$25 million to a programme decided upon by the General Conference that will enable me to reinforce the “priorities of priorities”, in particular so that we can shoulder our responsibilities in education for all. I will stop here for the debate which will, I hope most sincerely, enable, with a solid consensus, the renewal of the commitment of Member States to UNESCO, its role, and its mandate, a commitment of which the recent accession of Brunei Darussalam, which became effective on 17 March 2005, is a striking symbol. Thank you.