

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Hundred and seventy-first session

Items 11, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 65 and 66 of the agenda

**COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
ON ITEMS PRESENTED BY MEMBER STATES WHICH MAY
HAVE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Following 170 EX/Decision 5.1, which states that “the Executive Board shall not take a decision involving expenditure unless it has before it a report from the Director-General on the administrative and financial implications of the proposal”, the Director-General is presenting his comments on several items presented by Member States at the present session of the Executive Board.

**Item 11 Reactivation and strengthening of centres of excellence in the fields of biology,
molecular biology and tropical ecology (171 EX/10)**

1. This item proposes the reactivation and eventual merging of the Latin American Centre for Biological Sciences (CLAB), the International Centre for Tropical Ecology (CIET) and the International Centre for Scientific Cooperation Simon Bolivar, into one category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO. Venezuela would also like to explore the possibility of obtaining financial support from UNESCO for the proposed category II centre.

2. The Director-General welcomes the proposal by Venezuela, which could potentially make important contributions to the Organization’s activities in the ecological and basic sciences. The Director-General therefore recommends that a feasibility study be carried out on the three centres that would constitute the proposed category II centre, in line with the criteria for category II centres that will be adopted by the General Conference at its 33rd session. The study should also endeavour to identify the financial implications of the proposed Centre and different sustainable funding modalities to respond to those implications. The results of the feasibility study would be presented to the Executive Board at its 172nd session.

**Item 57 Proclamation of 2007 as a United Nations International Year of Planet Earth
(171 EX/52)**

1. This item proposes the year 2007 as the United Nations Year of Planet Earth, with the objective being to thereby demonstrate the unique and exciting ways in which the Earth sciences can help present and future generations meet the challenge of ensuring a safer and more prosperous world. It aims to do this by exposing current and new knowledge to the public, policy- and decision-makers and the media on how society can profit increasingly and at progressively higher

standards from the expertise available from the approximately 400,000 Earth scientists around the world.

2. The Director-General endorses the proposal by the United Republic of Tanzania to support all efforts leading to the declaration, by the United Nations General Assembly, of the year 2007 as the International Year of Planet Earth. The proposal will bring positive contributions to its newly re-focussed Earth sciences programme through awareness-raising activities among politicians, decision-makers and the general public regarding the important contributions of the geosciences to the planning of sustainable socio-economic development. As stated by the authors of the proposal, it should have no financial implications for the Organization.

Item 59 Cross-sectoral activities in technical capacity-building (171 EX/54)

1. This proposal requests the Director-General to develop cross-sectoral activities within UNESCO – drawing on a dedicated unit in the Natural Sciences Sector – to emphasize building capacities in the basic and engineering sciences in developing countries, and mainly LDCs and post-conflict countries, to address elements of the goals for sustainable development outlined in the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations, including safe drinking water and poverty reduction. It further invites the Director-General to utilize existing budgetary resources to accomplish the development of these cross-sectoral capacity-building activities and to develop benchmarks and an evaluation process. Lastly, it invites the Director-General to take the necessary measures for the development of a cross-sectoral capacity-building programme and to submit a report on progress at its 174th session.

2. The Director-General endorses the idea and underlying concept, as it responds to the principal and other priorities of Major Programme II for the 33 C/5, builds on already ongoing activities and existing Secretariat structures and contributes to a new, welcome intersectoral activity in the crucial area of capacity-building, which is one of the main functions of UNESCO.

3. It would be the intention of the Director-General to prepare the development for a dedicated cross-sectoral technical capacity-building programme, drawing on the available modest staff resources in SC, with additional support required from extrabudgetary sources so as to be able to involve external expertise and advice. The various dimensions of the proposed programme, including its linkages with already existing programmes (such as the basic science programme) and institutes, decentralization aspects targeting in particular LDCs and post-conflict countries, benchmarks, evaluation arrangements, cost implications and resource requirements would be elaborated and presented by the Director-General in the report to be submitted to the Executive Board at its 174th session.

4. In that connection, reference could also be made to the draft 33 C/5 which already contains some intersectoral activities with limited capacity-building components pertaining to science, technology and engineering. They are listed under “Summary of intersectoral action and mainstreaming activities” in draft 33 C/5 as follows: United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (para. 08106); access to scientific and technical information and ICTs (para. 08105); science and technology education for all (para. 08109). Lessons from these intersectoral efforts may also benefit the elaboration of the newly proposed intersectoral programme, drawing on inputs from all other sectors dealing with technical capacity-building (ED, CLT, CI).

Item 61 Organization of a UNESCO regional ministerial conference on the strategic role of renewable energies in sustainable development in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, first half of 2006) (171 EX/55)

1. This item, which stems from a discussion of the matter at the 32nd session of the General Conference, proposes the holding, in the first half of 2006, of a regional conference on the theme “The strategic role of renewable energies in sustainable development in Central Asia” at the level of ministers responsible for environmental protection and energy matters in Central Asian countries. The objectives of the conference would include the focussing of the international community’s attention on the acute energy problems experienced in the rural areas of this region, and highlighting ways of harnessing renewable energies and formulating national policies in this area in order to meet the needs of the affected communities.

2. The Director-General welcomes the proposal of Kazakhstan to organize this conference, which addresses one of the Organization’s important concerns. He therefore recommends that the Executive Board look favourably on this proposal with a view to making a small catalytic contribution from the regular budget. Beyond this, the Secretariat stands ready to provide technical support to the local organizers and to assist the Kazakhstan authorities in mobilizing extrabudgetary resources that will complement UNESCO’s regular budget contribution.

Item 62 Information on the First World Congress on Literacy (Havana, 31 January-4 February 2005) (171 EX/56)

1. The Director-General notes with satisfaction the information and report on the First World Congress on Literacy which the Cuban authorities organized in Havana on 31 January – 4 February 2005 and in which UNESCO took part. A total of 25 countries were represented at the Congress.

2. While appreciating the general spirit of the Declaration of Ministers of Education, Deputy Ministers and Representatives of Ministries to the First World Congress on Literacy, the Director-General nevertheless feels that the proposal the Congress has sent forward should not be endorsed by the General Conference. First, it would seem that the request is premature. No scientifically conducted assessment, evaluation and costing have been carried out to determine its outcomes and the extent of replicability. Secondly, and most importantly, UNESCO cannot make an unprecedented commitment in favour of one approach above many others with similar claims. UNESCO does not believe it is feasible for such a bilateral initiative to become a UNESCO programme as such, with all the attendant financial and other responsibilities that would arise in regard, for example, to fund-raising for a bilateral initiative.

3. As a standard-setting agency, UNESCO seeks to learn and facilitate learning from such innovative experiences. The Education Sector is currently supporting a study on the Yo Si Puedo method to encourage reflection, analysis and recommendations for enhancing the method and for the identification of lessons learned. The outcomes of the study will be internationally disseminated and will be placed on the UNESCO website.

4. The Director-General encourages Cuba to continue with its exemplary efforts aimed at assisting the international movement to create a literate and learning society and to do so through existing bilateral relations with countries individually or collectively. Indeed, when the Yo Si Puedo method won the honourable mention of the King Sejong International Literacy Prize in 2002, one of the reasons was that it serves as a model of South-South cooperation. The Director-General is pleased to continue UNESCO’s collaboration with Cuba. But he feels that UNESCO, not being a funding agency, and given the diversity of situations and contexts, cannot commit its budgetary

resources to promoting one single method, which could open the floodgates to many more such requests, nor can it align itself with one particular set of bilateral cooperation relations.

Item 63 Proposal for the establishment of an IHP-Help Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee, UK, under the auspices of UNESCO (171 EX/57)

1. This item proposes the establishment of a Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee, under the auspices of UNESCO. This proposed category II centre would complement the activities of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme by creating an interface between water law/policy and the natural sciences, and in so doing promote the sustainability of contemporary water resource management systems.

2. The Director-General welcomes the proposal by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which would contribute significantly to bridging the gaps between scientific knowledge, water-related legal instruments and water-related management. The Director-General therefore recommends that a feasibility study be carried out on the proposed category II centre, in line with the criteria for category II centres that will be adopted by the General Conference at its 33rd session. The study should endeavour to identify the financial implications of the proposed Centre and different sustainable funding modalities to respond to those implications. The results of the feasibility study would be presented to the Executive Board at its 172nd session.

Item 65 Protection of the rights of broadcasting organizations (171 EX/59)

1. The proposal presented by India raises pertinent and timely issues that are closely related to the building of knowledge societies and the impact of new technologies on access to information.

2. In the light of its commitment to promote freedom of expression in all media, including cyberspace and preserve a fair balance of the interests of the right holders and those of the public as such, also in the digital environment, UNESCO follows closely the ongoing discussions currently taking place at WIPO on a possible new treaty for the protection of broadcasting organizations. The Organization has also carefully studied the various proposals and positions submitted by Member States participating at WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights, as well as followed the related debate in the context of the ongoing World Summit on the Information Society.

3. However, taking into account that UNESCO co-administers with WIPO and ILO the Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonogrammes and Broadcasting Organizations ("Rome Convention", 1961) and that the next session of its Intergovernmental Committee is to take place at UNESCO Headquarters from 27 to 28 June 2005, the Director General suggests, at this stage, to submit this proposal for the Committee's consideration, and to report to the 172nd session of the Executive Board.

Item 66 International Programme for Environmental Development (IPED) (171 EX/60)

1. This item proposes the establishment of an International Programme for Environmental Development, the objective of which will be to build the capacities of nationals from developing countries in the safeguarding and sustainable management of the environment. The programme, which would be under the management of UNESCO, UNEP, UNDP and the relevant Italian authorities, would be financed by the Italian Government and would be housed in a secretariat that would be provided by the Italian Government. The proposal has no financial implications for the Organization.

2. The Director-General welcomes the proposal by Italy, which would contribute significantly to the Organization's activities in the area of the environment, particularly to capacity-building in this domain. The Director-General therefore recommends that a feasibility study be carried out on the proposed Programme, which would seek, among other things, to identify the modalities for cooperation between the proposed partners in this initiative, the centre/institute/other body that would house the Programme, and the relationship of such centre/institute/other body with UNESCO, the substantive input required from the Organization, and the modalities foreseen for the monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Programme. The results of the study would be presented to the Executive Board at its 172nd session.