



**Conférence générale**

33e session  
Document d'information

**Генеральная конференция**

33-я сессия  
Информационный документ

**inf**

Paris 2005

**General Conference**

33rd session  
Information document

**المؤتمر العام**

الدورة الثالثة والثلاثون  
وثيقة إعلامية

**Conferencia General**

33ª reunión  
Documento de información

**大会**

第三十三届会议  
资料性文件

33 C/INF.25

27 October 2005

Original: English/French/Spanish

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by  
Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

Director-General of the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

on the occasion of his reinvestiture  
as Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO, 21 October 2005

Mr President of the General Conference,  
Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this solemn occasion as I address you, I feel the same emotion I felt six years ago, that mixed feeling of pride induced by trust so amply renewed, and gravity, in view of the scale of the responsibilities entrusted to me.

Admittedly, and this is also grounds for satisfaction, the commitments I made six years ago have been met. A short time ago I re-read the two “programme speeches” I delivered in 1999 to the General Conference and then the Executive Board and could not fail to note that the major part of the reform I proposed to undertake has been implemented.

In fact, the “reform” which I outlined was not only intended to rationalize structures and procedures: more fundamentally, it was aimed at increasing the relevance of our programmes and establishing the credibility of our action. On this point, I think I can say that we are heading in the right direction, that leadership has been consolidated in certain areas and recovered in others. I see tangible proof of our restored credibility in the decision of the United States to rejoin the Organization 19 years after leaving it and, more generally, in the uninterrupted expansion of the universality of UNESCO. The Organization now has 191 Member States with the recent arrival of Timor-Leste and Brunei-Darussalam and may soon have 192 with, I hope, the return of Singapore, as against just 188 when I arrived six years ago.

I say “our” credibility because I believe that we can all claim to have played a part in this collective success.

My thanks go first of all to the governing bodies, their successive Presidents and Chairpersons, and in particular to the Members of the Executive Board which have unceasingly backed me in my endeavours throughout these six years. The unfailing support they have shown me, their trust and the dialogue established between us have been a source of great comfort to me as it is true to say that the reform process has had its share of difficult decisions and necessary renunciations.

Then come the Member States, which have been able to place some of the questions UNESCO has been dealing with, for many years in certain instances, at the top of the international agenda and to seek in our fields of competence the possibility of fresh solutions to new challenges. The fact that the African Union has decided to devote its next Summit exclusively to education and culture is clear evidence of this. These six years have enabled me to maintain a fruitful dialogue with Member States, in particular by means of the missions I have carried out to more than 160 countries – a demanding task but one which has given me an invaluable understanding of the actual problems encountered at the local level, of the expectations expressed and of the possibilities that exist. I should like to underscore once more the high quality of the interaction I have had on these occasions, both with political decision-makers and with members of civil society, including the media.

Lastly, there is a party not often referred to in this kind of official ceremony, but to which I should like – formally – to pay tribute today: the staff of the Secretariat, without whom none of this

would have been possible. While it is the Member States that set the course and the Director-General who captains the ship, the quality of the crew makes all the difference. This crew, I must say, has hidden treasures of dedication, of devotion even, to UNESCO and its mission, which are what make it so mysterious and fascinating too for its Director-General. So to all of them, I must say many thanks, that is the very least I could do today!

I hope that all of you, governing bodies, Member States and Secretariat, will continue to support me in the same way throughout the four years that lie ahead. I also hope that with this support I will be able, in four years' time, to feel the same satisfaction at a job well done when I take stock of my second term of office.

Mr President,

Allow me to return again for a moment to my first address in November 1999. In it I referred to the Japanese concept of *fueki-ryuko*: *fueki*, the fundamental unchanging permanence of things; *ryuko*, the trends and changes of the era. As I added: "in other words, things which must change, do change; and things which must not change, will not change". More concretely, the mandate of UNESCO, as enshrined in the Preamble and Article I of its Constitution – to contribute to peace and security through education, science, culture and communication – is of the order of *fueki*, permanence, since all of us in this room have been at pains to underscore its topicality and relevance, 60 years after UNESCO was founded. In a period characterized by a sense of heightened uncertainty and vulnerability, the preventive approach – and thus the educational aim – which are the distinctive feature of UNESCO are more compelling than ever.

*Ryuko* is what changes, what must change in our way of planning our action, so that we can adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the present. In short, it is the reform of UNESCO which must be an ongoing process and cover both theory and practice, programmes and management. In this respect, the decision you have taken to launch an overall reflection process on the future of UNESCO is particularly timely, as it would enable us not only to define the scope and direction of the next Medium-Term Strategy, but much more, to influence the idea that we can form of UNESCO and its role in the decade to come. I think that this long-term perspective is essential to provide a firm foundation for the choices and priorities for action in the medium term.

This is all the more true as the United Nations system as a whole is undergoing a review, if not a radical overhaul, and UNESCO must, very soon, be in a position to make known very clearly the place it intends to occupy in this system that is being reshaped. In order for that to come about, we have a sort of common charter in the shape of the Millennium Development Goals, with a long-term deadline – 2015 – and a "roadmap" in the shape of the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Probably never before have the leaders of the whole world defined with such a wealth of detail the commitments they have made and the hopes they have placed in the United Nations system. It is up to us then to provide them with a convincing and methodical reply.

In order to do so, UNESCO must evolve into an institution whose leadership is acknowledged, not only when it comes to coordinating the implementation of international years or United Nations decades but, far more fundamentally, when it involves leading, in its various fields of competence and in particular education, the joint efforts of the United Nations system to achieve internationally recognized goals, both at the global level and at the level of countries themselves.

In this perspective, it becomes vital to concentrate our action ever more, not only on the hard core of our competences but also bearing in mind two sets of criteria: our "comparative advantage" and our complementarity with the rest of the United Nations system, in particular at the local level.

How our comparative advantage is defined varies, of course, according to time and context. I believe that today it has three facets that place us in a unique position to address the complexity of the future.

These three facets are:

- aptitude to intersectorality;
- aptitude to anticipate events and prepare for them;
- aptitude to build varied partnerships.

Of course, much has been done in recent years to take advantage of these three types of aptitude. We must, however, give them far more vigorous impetus in future, as they enable us without any doubt to make a difference and to assert the particular character of the Organization.

Intersectorality is a potential asset for UNESCO: although constantly endorsed, it has rarely been achieved. And yet, the extent of our fields of competence, long considered to be a handicap, might today or tomorrow prove to be a decisive asset in a world where the key words are complexity, interrelations and interdependence. Our added value will certainly be measured by our capacity to coordinate disciplines, approaches and methods effectively. This can only be the result of a deliberate effort, making a priority of team-work, ad hoc groups, networking and, above all, internal communication.

The aptitude to anticipate events and prepare for them is certainly one of the most essential competences that must be developed among the younger generations. It is without doubt one of the talents that UNESCO has always cultivated the most, since it has always emphasized prevention before cure. Prevention, which consists in anticipating an event and preparing the response, is today unanimously evoked. It is a state of mind which involves being attentive to the forces of change so as to mobilize efforts to face up to them, and not only to react; it implies an optimal use of knowledge, information, experience and good practice so as to enable everybody to be genuine agents of change and not passive spectators. This is exactly what UNESCO is trying to do.

Finally, UNESCO has a very specific vocation within the United Nations system, to act as a “networker”, that is to say to bring together a variety of partnerships: governmental and non-governmental, public and private, which combine their competences and resources around a single goal owing to the presence and approval of UNESCO. This is a considerable asset which has ensured the success of world summits convened by UNESCO at which governments and civil society have found the conditions for constructive dialogue. For some time now, we have been able to expand our cooperation beyond the network of our traditional intermediaries – what I have called the “UNESCO family”: National Commissions, UNESCO Chairs, category II centres, clubs and associations, national committees of intergovernmental programmes, and so forth. It is now being expanded to new stakeholders and new partners, including the private sector. Such a variety of partners and forms of partnership adds considerably to the Organization’s flexibility. We have started in recent years to advance along this path, but we now need a long-term strategic vision to determine what we really want to build with the private sector.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

By cultivating these key aspects of UNESCO’s comparative advantage, we will develop our distinctiveness and furnish the “value added” that the bare bones of structures and mandates cannot provide. Let me give you some examples of how we could reassert our leadership, in our core mandate and our core competencies, by emphasizing these three dimensions in future work.

Let's start with **education**. During this session of the General Conference, Education for All (EFA) has been reaffirmed as UNESCO's priority of priorities. EFA, of course, is not just about filling out the coverage of education systems, but about the use of education as a strategy for improving people's lives and for developing their communities and societies.

That is why UNESCO has a unique role to play in the field of education because all of its goals are educational in nature whereas, at the same time, it handles much more than education. No other international organization dealing with education can draw upon other sectoral inputs and orientations the way that UNESCO can. The challenge ahead, however, is to bring out more visibly and effectively what are the interconnections and interplay between the various sectoral contributions.

This is crucial in relation to the role of education, especially basic education, in the eradication of poverty and the reduction of social inequities and inequalities. It is evident in the way that literacy, language and culture are intimately linked. It is shown by the huge potential of ICTs in the domain of education, especially to overcome the problems of access and distance and to enable the wider circulation and availability of high quality learning resources. In regard to quality education, which is not just about cognitive achievement but also about values, attitudes and behaviour, there must be a place for learning about the world scientifically, for learning to live with others from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in relations of mutual respect, for learning about our rights and responsibilities as national and global citizens, and for learning to cope with uncertainty and rapid change. Thus, we have to remind everyone that EFA is not just about numbers but also about learning in all its richness.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships are set to play a growing role in EFA and UNESCO will endeavour to lead, facilitate and promote this development. In our capacity as an "honest broker", I believe that UNESCO is well-placed to do so. The EFA movement is already broad-based at the international level but at regional, subregional and national levels, there is scope for further widening of partnerships. The drive to achieve the EFA goals by 2015 requires that civil society and the private sector, for example, become better represented in the forums where EFA policies and strategies are developed and validated. Ultimately, our aim is to mobilize the whole of society and to create wider and more dynamic synergies that will serve the goals of EFA.

The third aspect of UNESCO's comparative advantage, forewarning and prevention, is perhaps best illustrated by the statistical information and analysis produced by UIS and through the annual *EFA Global Monitoring Report*. These are means of alerting national authorities and their EFA partners about trends which, if they continue unchanged, will result in a failure to achieve the EFA goals. UNESCO will be doing more to ensure that the policy lessons and implications of this information are more widely disseminated, especially through its own policy advice to national governments and through the encouragement of policy debate, especially at regional and subregional levels.

In the area of **natural science**, the three aspects of our comparative advantage are clearly evident in the area of water – our principal priority in this field – and in relation to natural disasters. In both, the question of intersectorality is central to our approach, taking account of the interrelated contributions of all of our sectors for purposes of analysis, problem-solving and policy development. The strengthening of our network of category II institutes should help to increase the impact of our work in this regard. The Indian Ocean tsunami disaster has shown that education and public awareness-raising must be integral aspects of early warning systems and that they must be culturally-adapted to ensure maximum effectiveness.

At the same time, there is a need to place policy-making on a sound scientific basis. This connects with the question of prevention and preparedness, in which science can provide information vital for anticipation and timely response. For example, knowledge of underground aquifers can be crucial in post-disaster situations where surface water supplies may be contaminated and untrustworthy. Similar information may be useful in dealing with the complex issues relating to trans-boundary water rights, which are considered a likely source of dispute and conflict in the years ahead.

The areas of water and natural disasters are also most revealing of the strategic significance of partnerships for galvanizing effective responses. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, in fact, are a vector of intersectorality and this is where UNESCO's convening power, for example, can help to create opportunities for solutions to emerge that correspond to the complexity of the problems. By bringing together countries, bilateral donors, the scientific community, and intergovernmental organizations in the follow-up to the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, UNESCO helped to fashion a coherent and coordinated response to the short-term and longer-term needs concerning early warning and preparedness.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The purpose of the **social and human sciences** is to understand societies and the transformations confronting them in order to equip ourselves more fully to cope with them.

There again, it is only thanks to our diversified partnerships, and by meeting the conditions of dialogue necessary to respond to the international community's most current concerns that UNESCO can discharge its function of intellectual forum and analyse the present.

This is true of the ethics of science and technology, and bioethics particularly, in which our Organization has successfully managed to establish itself as a unanimously recognized forum, working in liaison with the scientific community, civil society as a whole and other agencies of the United Nations system.

The new anxieties we have to contend with – the development of new forms of terrorism and inter-ethnic violence, pandemics, the crisis in intercultural dialogue, threats to human security, etc. – make our societies more opaque to themselves, uncertain of their future and even of their past. It is therefore urgent to centre our research on global problems at the heart of our present-day concerns. Our approach in this regard is based on an ethical dimension, focused on universal values of justice, freedom and human dignity. For this reason I am confident that, if we wish to help in the emergence of difference-friendly communities of memory that are freely formed, we shall have to rigorously occupy the field of history teaching and intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

In the field of **culture**, in which our leadership internationally is unquestionable, it is clear that the three facets I referred to earlier are particularly appropriate to meet the different challenges facing our Organization.

The defence of cultural diversity, central to our mandate for 60 years, has become urgent in recent years, in keeping with the pace of globalization. Member States have therefore wished to make it the principal priority in the field of culture in coming years and have placed it in the category of "common heritage of humanity" in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

In this context UNESCO has drawn up a whole series of standard-setting instruments seeking to protect cultural diversity, which finds expression not only through the tangible and intangible heritage but also in modern forms of creativity. In so doing, the Organization will prevent future irreversible losses for humanity, and will try to preserve, in the evolving forms inherent in culture, the cultural diversity of our world.

The birth of a new Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions has put the finishing touches to the standard-setting framework, and the vibrant support that the Convention has received from virtually all the Member States is unprecedented in the history of our Organization. At this juncture, I can only hope that the reluctance of some States which have not endorsed it will dissipate once tested against the facts, and that their fears, specifically with regard to the observance of human rights and the free flow of ideas by word and image, will be allayed by the way in which each State effectively implements this new Convention, Article 2 of which stipulates that “No one may invoke the provisions of this Convention in order to infringe human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

We must now ensure that all these instruments are applied through practical action.

The cultural field requires us to take action “outside the walls” and to work closely with all the sectors of the Organization. As was firmly asserted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, cultural diversity is in fact indissociably linked to the economic, social and ecological realms, and is a “collective strength” in the service of sustainable development which must irrigate not just the fields traditionally assigned to culture but also those of education, economics, health, the environment and international relations. Our interdisciplinary profile puts us in unique position to give substance to this complex approach reflecting reality, which defies watertight categories and disregards the compartmentalized fields of competence within which research is still too often conducted.

Thus, we shall also have to act in the sphere of languages. One of the “new gaps in knowledge” highlighted by globalization is that of other people’s languages. In this connection, one of our major projects for the future will concern languages and multilingualism. Education systems, cultural industries, cyberspace and scientific research should become plural contexts where each language can find, with the values and the knowledge that it conveys, the means to exist and find expression. In this regard, future societies will need to be “translation-oriented societies” in a setting where the local and the universal constantly dialogue on a non-hierarchical basis.

These challenges can only be taken up by establishing many and varied partnerships, combining several circles of partners who would rarely find reasons to meet. They include politicians, of course, but also researchers, educationists, civil society and its many forums, the private sector, which is showing increasing interest in contributing to these major projects, but also, and above all, the communities themselves which are the core stakeholders in cultural diversity.

This can be seen in the field of the world heritage, in which these multiple partnerships are increasing in numbers, and in that of the intangible heritage, with safeguarding plans involving a whole series of governmental, non-governmental and local stakeholders; it can also be seen in the field of cultural industries, where the projects launched by the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity are attracting a growing number of both governmental and private sector partnerships.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fostering of multi-stakeholder partnerships has been a significant feature of our engagement with the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process. Through its promotion of partnerships, UNESCO has placed itself at the interface between public authority, professional communities and private enterprise. UNESCO continues to be the champion of freedom of expression and the “caisse de résonance” of the concerns of the media themselves. But we are today also particularly interested in facilitating the development of public/private partnerships to assist Member States, especially developing countries, to develop greater capacity and sophistication in regard to policy-making in this area.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships also act as a crucible of creativity and intellectual exchange. In this regard, UNESCO’s role is that of an “honest broker” whose neutrality provides an arena where the exchange of new ideas, innovations and fresh approaches can flourish. In fulfilling its role as convener and catalyst, UNESCO can also furnish leadership and vision.

This is illustrated through our championing of the concept of “knowledge societies” during the WSIS process. Our aim has been to shift the terms of debate towards fundamental questions about the nature of society today and the direction in which it is changing. Above all, in addressing such core considerations as access and content, we have highlighted issues of inclusiveness, equity, diversity and freedom of expression.

Let me be clear: knowledge societies are not yet a fact, at least not in much of the world. By presenting a vision of what such societies might become, we have sought to widen the range of choice and possible action and to insist that the main lines of social and cultural development can still be shaped. It is a holistic and intersectoral vision grounded on the recognition that knowledge is becoming the driving force of economic development and social change.

Today, knowledge in all its forms and expressions provides the nutrients of development. However, the applications of knowledge through industrial and technological processes have an ambivalent impact on our world. The whole debate on sustainable development is predicated on this ambivalence. For UNESCO, sustainable development is the domain where our intersectorality will be put to the test. Indeed, it also will be the proving ground of our capacity for partnership-building and for prevention and preparedness. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) is the overarching framework but, from the outset, we must not confine ourselves to an over-narrow view of what “education” means in this regard. In effect, it embraces knowledge and how it is shared in a global context where the operative word is “interdependence” – between humankind and nature; between nations and cultures; and between the present and the future. I am determined that UNESCO shall take on the challenge of articulating and orchestrating this debate; in so doing, our relevance will be unquestionable.

Mr President,

Another area of work that UNESCO will address in the years ahead concerns the need to strengthen the coherence and complementarity of our action in association with the rest of the United Nations system, especially at the country level. The synergy among and integration with the operations undertaken by United Nations agencies in post-conflict situations have developed considerably in recent years, and UNESCO has played its part. What was the exception has now become the rule.



To do this, and I am determined to do so, we must strengthen the links with all our United Nations system partners – funds, programmes and other institutions – and especially with those “sister agencies” which are the other specialized agencies with which we share many common characteristics at the conceptual level and in operational terms. The next four years will be critical for laying the groundwork to ensure a sustained input and impact from UNESCO, especially in the fight against poverty, which many see as the overriding task of the international community. Our efforts need to continue to convince all our partners that poverty is not only a monetary phenomenon, but one that has distinct parameters linked to education, the sciences and knowledge, culture and cultural diversity and access to communication and the media, including freedom of expression. This will require that we clearly articulate our core competencies and our abilities to assist developing countries to build capacities and develop their own coherent national development strategies.

I am convinced that the role of the specialized agencies at country level is set to grow in the coming years. These agencies are able to make tangible contributions to development in Member States that cannot be furnished by United Nations funds and programmes. The specialized agencies, I believe, will be consulted more and more and be asked to undertake analyses and monitor trends in their fields of competence, thereby contributing to policy development and capacity-building. UNESCO and other agencies are in a position to engender a climate of evidence-based policy-making in a cycle of continuous improvement, building on processes of monitoring, research and the evaluation of programme effectiveness. UNESCO, therefore, must quickly acquire the means to play an active role at the country level in the areas of statistics, advocacy and dialogue over and above its more traditional role of providing policy advice, capacity-building and the elaboration of plans and programmes. And while UNESCO is not, and never will be, a financing institution, it must retain a role in the implementation of concrete projects, where its expertise is undeniable, not to mention its role as convener and honest broker, drawing upon its reputation for independence and impartiality.

This is why, for me, the area of decentralization is a real priority. Now that the design is completed, the foundations are laid and the main tools are available, it is necessary to make a qualitative leap – which implies strengthening the financial means, developing and improving human resources, and enhancing authority and the capacity to take initiative, along with the exercise of greater control and discipline. We need to be recognized and appreciated as an effective partner, attentive to the needs of Member States and a respected member of the United Nations Country Team. This challenge is for me a personal commitment – the four years ahead must bring decisive progress in this area.

Mr Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wanted to share with you my enthusiasm and my determination, which cannot be dampened either by the prospect of future troubles or by the difficulties we have just been through.

Allow me to point out in this regard that UNESCO has no battles, goals or dreams other than those of the international community that it serves. As I see it, my role is to offer the Member States a public forum for debate and mediation. UNESCO cannot, therefore, be a party to conflict, if conflict arises; it can only, perhaps, provide the stage on which it can be played out.

The balance between national, regional and international interests is difficult to find since it is forever shifting with the challenges that arise and with the caprices of history. Nevertheless, our Organization must never stop seeking that balance. That is, at least, the philosophy that I believe I

have transmitted and hope to continue transmitting in the future. I can only assume that you share the same vision since you have done me the honour of re-electing me as head of the Organization for the next four years.

This is, perhaps, the right moment to say again something that you already know: I feel happy and moved to be Director-General of UNESCO, especially now when our Organization is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary.

In my culture, when people reach the age of 60, we say that they are beginning a new life. I do not know if UNESCO is about to commence a new life. But as I am Japanese and have lived since my childhood with the terrible consequences of war, the year 2005 holds special meaning for me. It was 60 years ago that the Second World War ended and the world discovered the meaning of absolute horror.

The international community then decided to demonstrate its determination to do whatever was necessary to prevent the atrocities committed in that war from ever happening again. The United Nations was born from that desire for peace. The same determination brought UNESCO into being, an institution created to forge peace. A peace that was meant to be lasting because its defences would be anchored in the deepest reaches of the human mind.

From my childhood experiences arose my desire to devote an entire lifetime – my whole life – to serving peace. That is why the renewal of my mandate as Director-General of UNESCO has been the greatest reward for this commitment. A reward that entails a promise to take forward the task of modernizing and adapting the Organization to the world as it changes. So that the horrors of that conflict will never be repeated, ever again.

As I have noted on many occasions, UNESCO is a stimulating paradox. The paradox of an organization with both a local and global mission; an organization that is a unique forum for intellectual exchanges at the international level, but whose brilliance resides in the collection of empirical knowledge; an institution in search of a “civilization of the universal”, to employ the expression of one of my illustrious predecessors, and at the same time a champion of cultural diversity.

This is undoubtedly the mystery of our Organization and at the same time its most enchanting feature: a clear conviction that the universal, to which we must aspire, can only be constructed by pooling our diversities and that knowledge, in order to be global, must find its source in the multiplicity of local knowledge, just as the light illuminating our world is a combination of all the colours of the rainbow.

Thank you.