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**JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET (32 C/5),  
AND ON RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREVIOUS BIENNIUM 2004-2005  
(DRAFT 34 C/3)**

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE SOCIAL SCIENCE – POLICY NEXUS**

**SUMMARY**

This report is intended to inform the Members of the Executive Board of UNESCO of the outcomes of the International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus (20-24 February 2006).

1. Under the aegis of UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST), the International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus (IFSP) endeavoured to break new ground in connecting social science research to policy, by offering an innovative space for a new kind of dialogue, bringing together social science and policy in the search for a common language and shared terms of engagement. Organized in conjunction with the Governments of Argentina and Uruguay, the municipalities and universities of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Montevideo and Rosario, and with the support of a wide range of academic, policy and NGO partners, the IFSP was designed to address contemporary transformations and the challenges they imply for social science and for policy across all the scales at which they operate: local, national, regional and global.
2. The IFSP was based on an 18-month consultation and preparation process. An International Steering Committee was established comprising 20 representatives reflecting in a balanced way the nexus between government (five ministers of social development), major international, regional and national social science research institutions and networks, United Nations sister agencies, the World Bank and other IGOs. The International Steering Committee held three meetings in Paris in 2005 and also met twice in Buenos Aires, before and during the event itself.

3. By including in its programme a wide range of different formats, the IFSP exemplified the need to rethink the spaces in which the social science policy interaction plays out. Alongside the plenary sessions on 20 and 24 February 2006, which set the tone for the event and drew conclusions from it, there were five high-level round tables, two consultation meetings and 99 workshops convened in response to an open call for workshop submissions issued in early 2005. The workshops, organized in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosario and Montevideo, were grouped into five themes, covering major current areas of concern with respect to the social science – policy nexus: “Global issues and dynamics”, “Social policies”, “Population and migration”, “Regional integration” and “Territorial decentralization and urban development”. A global online consultation exercise ensured wide participation and effective dissemination of the Forum’s work. Two thousand participants from more than 80 countries attended the Forum events, including 13 ministers of social development, education and health from Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as five Secretaries-General of regional organizations, numerous officials from local and national government, scholars and representatives from United Nations agencies, other international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

4. The general consensus emerging from the Forum was that current policies to address social transformations suffer from two related forms of fragmentation: first, between the production and use of social science knowledge; secondly, between the sectors and levels of policy, which often tend to contradict or to undercut each other. In order to address both forms of fragmentation, reinforcement of the connection between knowledge production and policy is required. This calls for support – in many cases increased support – for academic research, development of new spaces in which policy-makers and academics can shape shared agendas and knowledge bases, and, crucially, recognition of the fact that social knowledge is not exclusively the preserve of professionals. A participatory dynamic is at the heart of the necessary nexus between social science and policy.

5. Within this broad consensus, productive disagreement was in evidence on several points, which indicate the need for appropriate follow-up as well as underlining the strongly political nature of many policy debates. Among the more significant debates that ran through the Forum, one should note disagreement as to the renewed policy relevance of the state in a globalizing world and as to the risks for the independence and critical capacity of social science entailed by close association with the policy process.

6. During its closing plenary session, the IFSP formally adopted the “Buenos Aires Declaration calling for a new approach to the social science – policy nexus”, the text of which is appended. Among other issues, the Declaration reflects the recurrent call by IFSP participants for strengthening of the MOST programme in its role as a central mechanism to bridge the gap between social science and policy. In particular, MOST will follow up the call made in Buenos Aires by developing tools to make research accessible to policy-makers, strengthening its thematic research policy networks, and interfacing between such networks and the existing or emerging fora of ministers of social development.

7. In the spirit of the Buenos Aires Declaration, the IFSP should be not just an event but the start of a process, which will be taken forward by the networks and activities – including publications and follow-up events – that emerge from it, with the aim, ultimately, of reshaping the linkage between social science research and social policy.

**Buenos Aires Declaration  
calling for a new approach to the social science – policy nexus**

*We*, the participants in the International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus, which has brought together for the first time social scientists and policy-makers from more than 80 countries in all the regions of the world, coming from United Nations agencies, universities and governments, representing the full range of involvement in both social science and policy and meeting on the occasion of the closing plenary session of the Forum in Buenos Aires on 24 February 2006, after four days of discussions organized in the cities of Buenos Aires, Rosario, Córdoba and Montevideo,

*Inspired* by the Declaration of the 1995 World Summit on Social Development, the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Resolution, as well as by flagship reports on human development, world development and inequality by United Nations agencies and the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization,

*Taking note* of the demands placed on social science research by the development goals of the international community and of the impetus given by these and other international documents and initiatives,

*Taking into consideration* the Budapest Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge adopted by the World Conference on Science, which emphasizes the necessary enhancement of dialogue between science and society, as well as the Lisbon and Vienna Declarations on Social Sciences, both of which stress the indispensable contribution of social science to the social development objectives of the international community,

*Taking into account* several United Nations reports highlighting the sharp increase in inequalities between and within countries, and *greatly concerned* that the universal thrust of human rights, human dignity and justice is in many instances being eroded under contemporary social and economic pressure,

*Assuming* that the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals are not only the statement of new moral purpose but also the minimum threshold compatible with the proclaimed values of the international community, and *affirming* that failure to make serious progress towards achieving them would entail tremendous cost in terms of human lives, quality of life and social development,

*Convinced* that without moral vision and political will, the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals cannot be met, that meeting these goals requires new knowledge used in innovative ways and better use of existing knowledge, and that, in this regard, the social sciences have a crucial contribution to make in formulating development policy,

*Taking note* that addressing hunger and poverty, lack of education, poor health and environmental degradation – the five areas to which the eight Millennium Development Goals relate –, is crucial for human welfare, social and economic development, the achievement of social cohesion and the consolidation of democratic governance. None of these areas is solely within the purview of social science, but without social sciences none is fully comprehensible or capable of being addressed,

*We thus state* our conviction that better use of rigorous social science can lead to more effective policies and outcomes. Such use requires strengthening linkages between the social sciences and policies for social and economic development. For the knowledge that the social sciences seek is

precisely the knowledge that policy needs. The world needs new forms of interaction between social scientists and policy actors – and innovative spaces to make them possible;

*Commending* UNESCO, the Government of Argentina and the Government of Uruguay for their initiative in launching the process that has led to the International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus, it is with these urgent concerns in mind that we formulate the following recommendations and bring them to the attention of the international community:

1. We strongly encourage UNESCO to strengthen this initiative and facilitate similar initiatives at the regional level at the request of its Member States and in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.
2. We call upon UNESCO, through the MOST Programme and in close cooperation with the other organizations, institutes, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, to explore the ways and means for ensuring strengthened synergies and complementarities between the various policy-oriented social science research programmes within the United Nations system as a whole and international social science organizations and civil society.
3. With due respect for the autonomy of social science research, we encourage the establishment of new networks and the strengthening of existing ones at the national and regional level to bring together social scientists, policy-makers and non-governmental and grassroots organizations around their shared concern for the urgent demands of social and economic development.
4. We call attention to the existence of fora of ministers for social development at regional as well as subregional levels in developing countries and suggest the creation and consolidation of permanent nexuses between the latter and the above-mentioned networks.
5. We therefore suggest that the *International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus*, otherwise known as the *Buenos Aires Process*, be organized regularly in order to formalize and promote this linkage between both types of networks at the international level.
6. We call upon the regional organizations such as MERCOSUR and the African Union, in association with social scientists and civil society, to further develop the social dimensions of regional integration, and call upon the United Nations to facilitate interregional dialogues on regional social policies.
7. We call upon existing funding programmes, in particular donor agencies and multilateral and regional development banks, to participate in these new spaces of dialogue.
8. We also call upon United Nations, regional and national funding agencies to place particular emphasis in their programming on the development and enhancement of social science research capacities in the developing countries, with special reference to Africa, and to finance policy-relevant social science research.
9. We further call upon governments to support social science research and use evidence from research in formulating social and economic policies.

10. We stress that implementation of these recommendations requires relevant funding mechanisms and appropriate institutional structures to support both research capacities and the dissemination of social science research results. We further invite all academic communities, civil society, non-governmental organizations, governments, United Nations agencies, funding agencies and other relevant stakeholders to work towards this end.
11. We call upon all participating national and United Nations agencies to ensure dissemination of this Declaration and of the work of the Forum to all relevant parties that can contribute to the implementation of the present recommendations.

Finally, we thank the Governments of Argentina and Uruguay, and the local authorities and universities of Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rosario and Córdoba, for their major contribution to the success of the Forum and for their warm hospitality. We express our gratitude to the various organizations that contributed to this effort, in particular: UNRISD, UNDESA, ILO, the World Bank, UNU-CRIS, the International Social Science Council and the regional social science networks.