

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Hundred and seventy-fourth session

Address by the Director-General

**on the occasion of the response to the general debate
of the Executive Board at its 174th session on items 3, 4 and 5**

- 3 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)
- 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

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

We learned yesterday that we are about to lose a great friend of UNESCO. Dr Inayatullah's term of office is coming to a close and, as always, her words have been full of wisdom and careful reflection and based on rich experience, being the longest serving Member of the Board and a former Chairperson. We will miss her enormously but, above all, we thank her for her innumerable services to the Organization. We wish her well in her future activities.

When Dr Inayatullah speaks, we should listen attentively. In her presentation yesterday, she said that the overall review of the United Nations system is "for real", and because she said it, we know it is true. And this should concentrate our minds on what must be done. Let me therefore begin my remarks once again with the question of the United Nations reform and its implications for UNESCO.

With regard to UNESCO's relation to the United Nations reform process, I can assure you that we are actively and constructively engaging with it, and will continue to do so. We do have some legitimate concerns, but we also recognize that change brings opportunities as well as challenges, and we must seize those opportunities when they are right for the Organization.

Your comments and support for the position I outlined regarding the future role of UNESCO in a reformed United Nations system are much appreciated.

I have noted the comments by a number of countries that recognize how important it is for UNESCO to continue combining its normative and operational roles and linking its global and local arenas of action. Having said this, we have to become more effective in those arenas of action, in particular in regard to local action. This is what our own reform process is ultimately about.

At the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) meeting in a few days' time, I will bear with me the feedback and orientation you have provided. The meeting in Segovia, to be chaired by Kofi Annan, will be an opportunity not only to share ideas with our United Nations system partners, including other specialized agencies, but also to listen to and interact with six members of the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence, including two of its three co-chairs. UNESCO must engage with the work of the Panel and the ideas it will generate.

With regard to the Global Action Plan for Achieving Education for All (EFA), I very much appreciate your broad support for the direction we are taking, but I do recognize that the text must be improved through a process of further consultation. As an instrument for better coherence and effective coordination among EFA partners, the Plan clearly needs more work. I have noted the suggestions made by Member States for a more action-oriented document with a clear division of roles and responsibilities between UNESCO and other convening agencies, and a timeframe for action. The debate here in plenary and in the PX Commission will provide valuable orientation as we further engage with our partners in the weeks and months ahead.

Most immediately, I will have an opportunity to discuss the Plan with key partners at the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Principals' meeting in Segovia on 8 April. The UNDG working document for this meeting entitled "Follow-up to the 2005 World Summit" comprises an Action Plan highlighting common actions for the 2006-2008 period. The UNESCO-led Global Action Plan on EFA is here cited as an evolving international partnership which is completely consistent with the UNDG Action Plan in its strategic and operational approach.

I can assure the Board that, over the next three months, we shall continue and, indeed, intensify the consultation process with our four EFA convening partner agencies to agree on a clear division of labour and to work jointly, in a well-coordinated manner, to achieve the EFA goals by 2015.

The consultation process is expected to culminate in an endorsement of the Global Action Plan by the heads of agencies in Saint Petersburg in mid-July on the eve of the G8 Summit. I am very grateful to the Russian Federation, which, as host of the G8 Summit, has done much to ensure that EFA gets the high profile it deserves at this meeting.

The Global Action Plan is also guiding the reform process of the Education Sector. Along with the Assistant Director-General for Education, I have noted the many comments made by Members of the Executive Board on the Education Sector reform. The Assistant Director-General for Education will provide specific remarks on this matter in the Programme and External Relations (PX) Commission.

I fully agree with the need to integrate the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), as well as other EFA-related initiatives, more closely with EFA strategies. In fact, this is reflected in the Global Action Plan, which not only integrates other initiatives such as the Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) and EDUCAIDS, but also connects with the EFA-Fast Track Initiative (FTI) and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI).

A number of statements by Board Members highlighted the success of the E-9 ministerial meeting in Monterrey, Mexico, in February. The E-9 initiative has acquired a new lease of life in recent years, and has tremendous potential to become a driving force within the EFA movement.

In particular, I welcome the deep interest in South-South collaboration for sharing experiences and good practices in education, including the idea of developing forms of triangular cooperation. Other forms and modalities of South-South cooperation, of course, will also be explored and supported. Furthermore, we recognize that South-South cooperation is not just confined to primary education. UNESCO will make efforts to follow up on the letter and spirit of the Monterrey Declaration made by the E-9 countries, including the proposal to establish a Secretariat unit to carry this work forward through the Education Sector reform.

The idea of triangular North-South-South cooperation in education is imaginative and innovative. I recognize that UNESCO needs to do more to develop and advocate new ideas that will take the global educational debate forward and invigorate policy development processes. The mention by Norway of the important link between migration, mobility and education is another area where UNESCO might well make a signal contribution. We have already made a useful recent contribution to thinking about cross-border higher education. We also need to think more strategically about information and communication technologies (ICTs) and education, as some of you have suggested. I anticipate that, as a result of the Education Sector reform, UNESCO will become better equipped to contribute creatively to shaping the education agenda in coming years, especially but not only in the area of EFA.

Several statements made reference to arts education. UNESCO is in favour of the renewed attention being given to arts education, but I am convinced that the real task now is to put the outcomes of the recent Lisbon Conference into practice at country level – and this is primarily the responsibility of governments and their national partners.

Numerous Member States complimented UNESCO's visibility in the Fourth World Water Forum held last month in Mexico City and the breadth and scope of UNESCO's water programme. Beyond the activities in the area of scientific knowledge for the management of natural resources, and the building of capacities towards that end, as carried out by the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, tribute must be paid to the high quality report produced by the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). The *World Water Development Report*, whose second edition is entitled *Water: A Shared Responsibility*, examines key issues, and is perhaps the flagship output of our water programme.

Several of you voiced your concern at the increasingly decentralized nature of the modalities for implementing our water actions. First, allow me to express once more my deep appreciation to the Italian Government for its generous offer to host the WWAP Secretariat in Perugia, Italy, thus enabling the sustained action of WWAP into its third phase.

Once the move is implemented, it will mean that two of the three pillars of UNESCO's water action – UNESCO-IHE and WWAP – are decentralized. Let me add that a new fourth pillar of UNESCO's water action is emerging, which is the setting up of a worldwide network of category 2 institutes in water-related areas. Nevertheless, I would like to assure you that the governance of UNESCO's water programme will remain here at the Division of Water Sciences, as it has always been, and the WWAP Secretariat will continue to function as a Section of the Division of Water Sciences, financed from extrabudgetary resources.

I was most gratified by the support expressed for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), in particular for its action in establishing a Global Tsunami Warning System. In this regard, I took note of the remarks of Fiji and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines regarding the vulnerability to natural disasters of islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean. Let me assure you that the needs of these regions have not been ignored. Within the strategy for providing global protection against tsunami hazard, the 40-year-old Pacific Tsunami Warning System will be conducting its first end-to-end Pacific-wide tsunami exercise for the Pacific Ocean on 16 and 17 May 2006. The exercise will place all Pacific Basin countries in a Tsunami Warning System that will require each participating country to practise its emergency response decision-making for the arrival of a destructive Pacific-wide tsunami upon its shores.

With regard to the Caribbean region, at the International Coordination Group (ICG) meeting held in Bridgetown, Barbados, in January 2006, the Caribbean countries took the decision to incorporate their regional tsunami warning system into a multi marine hazard early warning system, which should include forecasts on storm surges and hurricanes, for example. The meeting endorsed the offer made by Puerto Rico to host the Coastal Hazard Centre at the University of Puerto Rico. In its initial stages, the Centre will be supported by the Pacific system in Hawaii, which will act as an interim regional warning centre for the Caribbean region, as it did for the Indian Ocean.

The Barbados meeting accepted the generous offer made by Venezuela to host the second meeting of the International Coordination Group for the Tsunami and Other Coast Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean Sea and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARTWS), which will take place during the first week of December 2006. Trinidad and Tobago was elected chair of the Caribbean ICG, with the United States of America and Venezuela being elected co-chairs.

Concerning the Overall Review of Major Programmes II and III, whose first meeting took place from 13 to 15 March, I noted with great satisfaction the immense interest and expectations raised by the launching of this process. I noticed in particular a common will among Board Members to reinforce the essential role of the sciences in the fight against poverty, and the need to contribute to the production of new forms of knowledge at the global level. This is very encouraging indeed, and I trust that the Overall Review, whose second meeting will take place from 10 to 12 May at Headquarters, will help us in designing a forward-looking strategic framework for the future sciences programmes of UNESCO.

In response to certain queries, I should like to stress that Member States will have several important opportunities to discuss the findings of the Review Committee. Possibilities are being explored to facilitate the participation of some members of the Committee in the regional consultations of National Commissions. On the other hand, at its 175th session, in October 2006, the Board will examine a progress report on the work achieved by the Overall Review. Finally, I will present the conclusions of the Overall Review, whenever they are available, to the Executive Board and the General Conference, which may amend the draft 34 C/4 and 34 C/5 documents accordingly.

Concerning the Social and Human Sciences Sector, I have taken good notice of the very positive comments made by several Members of the Board on the outcome of the International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus, held in Argentina and Uruguay from 20 to 24 February. This Forum has indeed offered an innovative space for new kinds of dialogue, bringing together social science and research in the search for a common language, at a time when we are facing major global challenges, such as migrations, good governance and poverty. I have already asked the Deputy Director-General and the Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences to organize an information meeting with the Permanent Delegations on the follow-up to the Forum after this session of the Executive Board.

Mr Chairperson,

In regard to culture, I have taken careful note of the crucial importance ascribed to the three conventions, the ones I always called the “main” conventions – even though I think that all the standard-setting instruments adopted by UNESCO in the field of culture form a coherent whole. The idea of the integrated implementation of the 1972, 2003 and 2005 conventions seems crucial, to my mind, to ensuring complementarity and effective synergy among these three conventions, which are of major importance to cultural diversity.

In that connection, I am delighted that many speakers have stressed the great importance ascribed to these instruments. As you know, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage will enter into force on 20 April 2006 and it has already been ratified by 47 States to date. From what I have understood, a very large number of countries are also about to complete procedures for its ratification. Only this morning I have been informed that the French National Assembly has just unanimously authorized its ratification. There will soon therefore be 50 States Parties. I am most gratified at the interest shown in this Convention in all regions of the world, as borne out by the geographical breakdown of ratifications: 5 for Group I; 11 for Group II; 7 for Group III; 9 for Group IV; 9 for Group V(a); and 6 for Group V(b).

The same may be said of the 2005 Convention. Your statements show that many States have already initiated procedures for its ratification. I hope that in two years' time I shall be saying the same of the 2005 Convention as I have just said of the 2003 Convention. I am pleased to see that UNESCO's instruments in the field of culture, in particular the three main conventions, are thus acquiring genuine legitimacy among Member States, and I wish, in particular, to congratulate

Mauritius, the only State so far to have ratified the 1972, 2003 and 2005 conventions. In fact I had the opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister of Mauritius on that subject during his recent visit to UNESCO Headquarters. Many meetings and communication materials are planned for this biennium, in particular in the field, to raise Member States' awareness of the issues involved in the 2005 Convention; four feasibility studies for regional observatories on cultural diversity have also been launched. The development of partnerships for the protection and effective promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions will also be central to our efforts.

I have also noted your encouraging remarks about the efforts made to facilitate the work of the World Heritage Committee. I am confident that our joint and concerted efforts will serve the interests of this flagship UNESCO Convention well, in particular if we take the necessary time to examine the state of conservation of properties and the periodic reports.

In response to the representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis regarding UNESCO's support to celebrations that will be organized in 2006 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, we shall certainly cooperate not only in the Caribbean but also in West Africa, where such celebrations are expected to take place.

As to UNESCO's activities in the field of communication and information, I should like to share with you my satisfaction at the recent selection of the Lebanese journalist May Chidiac as the winner of the 2006 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. I shall meet Ms Chidiac next week in Paris. I shall then have the opportunity to present the prize to her at a ceremony organized as part of World Press Freedom Day, on 3 May, in Sri Lanka, which will host events for World Press Freedom Day this year.

I also wish to reiterate my commitment to pursuing the cooperation established between UNESCO and professional organizations of journalists in order to improve security conditions relating to the exercise of the profession of journalist. I take this opportunity to invite all Member States to take the necessary steps to create conditions conducive to ensuring that the information professions may be exercised in safety, especially in conflict areas.

I have noted with satisfaction the positive views expressed about the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) despite its meagre resources. Indeed, as a result of the reforms that have been introduced, the IPDC has undergone new and very encouraging developments. I hope that such progress will encourage Member States to lend it growing support.

The interest that you have shown in our activities in connection with the World Summit on the Information Society has been most gratifying. The role assigned to UNESCO in the follow-up to the Summit places a very great responsibility on the Organization. It is in that context that I shall organize the holding in Geneva, on 12 May 2006, of the first meeting of all partners involved in the implementation of action line C8 relating to cultural diversity.

I would now like to turn to a subject that has been at the heart of your comments and thoughts, namely, intersectorality. Many of you have noted failings in this field and asked for more effort to be made.

I can only agree with you, even though I am on occasion tempted to remind you that we must not forget the importance of sectoral knowledge, that store of expertise that constitutes the strength and specific nature of a specialized agency such as UNESCO in relation to the various funds and programmes of the United Nations.

Like you, I am indeed convinced that the intersectoral approach is one of the Organization's comparative advantages. This kind of approach is more necessary now than ever before, even though this is particularly complex with a sector-based structure like ours.

There must be no doubts about the Organization's capacity to adapt its working methods to emerging challenges: major intersectoral initiatives have recently been launched in all the main programmes of action, showing an aptitude to reason in terms of programme rather than sector.

I am thinking in particular of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which has been designed around various concepts encompassing UNESCO's fields of competence and provides us with an exemplary opportunity to establish close programme and conceptual links between cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, education, sustainable development and social cohesion.

These are just a few examples and I might add to them the many cross-cutting projects which have radically transformed the approach to and vision of intersectoral work within the Secretariat.

This culture of intersectorality in UNESCO is a priority for me, as I see it as being the laboratory for a practice of cooperation and dialogue that should also be applied to our relations with the agencies of the United Nations system. In the case of the World Summit on the Information Society, for instance, we will also be judged on our coordination activities carried out with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

It is accordingly a continuous, interactive process that demands flexibility and imagination. I know that we can do it, as evidenced by all our field offices which practice intersectorality every day as a matter of duty and necessity.

Statements on decentralization focused mainly on five points:

1. The architecture of the field office network, perceived by some as being poorly adapted to UNESCO's role in international cooperation;
2. The need for more vigilant monitoring by Headquarters both of strategic orientations and of administrative and financial procedures;
3. The number and level of expertise of field staff;
4. The need for greater integration of UNESCO's work in the joint efforts of United Nations country teams;
5. Synergy between field offices and National Commissions.

The review of the decentralization strategy which started in 2004 and continued throughout 2005 nevertheless acknowledged that the system put in place was essentially sound, being based on intersectoral cluster offices as the principal delivery platform for programme implementation, with a network of specialized regional bureaux providing them with technical support and expertise as needed.

The review, however, while confirming the relevance of the cluster approach, did identify the failings you have stressed. A start has been made on corrective measures and, whether they concern human resources, the integration of field units into UNESCO's Finance and Budget System (FABS) or measures taken to actively involve field offices in inter-agency initiatives at the country level,

progress has been made, even if it has been slow and, where some are concerned, short of the target. Need I remind you, though, that the reform I embarked upon as soon as I took office in 1999 has taken place in a context of negative budget growth without any financial support that would have enabled us to speed up the consolidation of all the new procedures introduced?

That being said, several reforms are under way that should help us to make a genuine “qualitative leap forward”. For example:

- a Table of Authority and Accountability as regards programming has been produced which clearly sets out the roles, responsibilities and obligations of each actor in the process, at Headquarters and in the field;
- a similar table will also be drawn up for the Organization’s extrabudgetary action;
- a performance contract is being developed for directors at Headquarters and in the field;
- an ongoing training effort is under way for field staff at all levels and in all fields. This biennium again, almost 50% of the total amount set aside for staff training is allocated to field staff;
- the reform of the Education Sector and the overall review of Major Programmes II and III will no doubt provide us with useful lessons that will be incorporated into the next global review of the decentralization strategy, scheduled for 2008.

In short, we are aware of the shortcomings of the decentralization strategy and we are seeking the best way of remedying them in the now-familiar context of austerity. This situation reflects a vision of the Organization that aims to maintain a balance between UNESCO’s overall standard-setting functions and its operational role at the country level.

I have heard the criticisms from some of you regarding the management of UNESCO’s extrabudgetary funds. These remarks concern both the absence of an overall strategic framework for resource mobilization and utilization, and weaknesses in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of extrabudgetary activities. I wish to reassure you that I am paying serious heed to your concerns. It is true that at the very beginning of the reform process, the management of extrabudgetary funds was given a lesser priority. However, as I explained to you in my initial presentation, extrabudgetary funds have been growing year by year even without considering Brasilia. Since the findings of the External Auditor’s first report on the overall management of extrabudgetary funds for the 2002-2003 biennium, I have been deploying major efforts to remedy the problems identified, and I have provided regular reporting to the Executive Board to this effect. Last year, I established an ad hoc working group on extrabudgetary activities, which submitted to me a set of proposals for an action plan that I have approved. This action plan is outlined in document 174 EX/INF.4.

I would like now to come to the question of geographical distribution that many of you have mentioned. I would like to say that since my first mandate, I have paid particular attention to this recurrent issue. As a result, the global trends over the past five years (June 2000-March 2006) show a clear, positive move towards an improvement in geographical representation. I am pleased to note an improvement in the global representation level of Member States from 144 to 162, which means that 85% of Member States are now represented within the Secretariat. UNESCO has the highest rate of representation among United Nations agencies. Not only has there been a significant decrease in the number of non-represented countries (from 44 to 29), we have also seen an increase

in the number of normally represented countries (from 67 to 74), with a moderate but continuous reduction in the level of over-represented countries (from 31 to 24).

We will continue to implement a number of important measures with a view to making further improvements. In the context of the Young Professionals 2006 intake, 10 new Young Professionals joined the Organization in April 2006, eight from under-represented Member States and two from non-represented Member States. For your information, the 2007 Young Professionals intake will be launched soon; in this regard, I appeal to non- and under-represented Member States to participate actively by presenting highly qualified candidates for the vacant posts.

I am nevertheless aware that there is a marked imbalance at senior levels which must also be dealt with. The active participation of Member States again is needed to encourage highly qualified candidates to apply for advertised posts. Since some of you have mentioned the criteria of appointment, I would like to draw your attention to Article VI.4, of the Constitution, which states that “The Director-General shall appoint the staff of the Secretariat in accordance with staff regulations to be approved by the General Conference. Subject to the paramount consideration of securing the highest standards of integrity, efficiency and technical competence, appointment to the staff shall be on as wide a geographical basis as possible”. That is why I have said consistently that competence should be the first criterion.

I would also like to address the question raised by many concerning gender balance in the Secretariat, and respond to the call for concerted efforts to increase the representation of women at senior levels. I am pleased to note that the global trend over the past five years shows that clear progress has been made in this matter. In fact, compared with other United Nations agencies, UNESCO’s Secretariat has one of the highest rates of women’s representation in the Professional category and above, with 47% women as of March 2006. For Professional staff (P-1 to P-5), parity has been reached (51%). I think that UNESCO is the only United Nations agency to have reached gender parity in the Professional category. Women are a majority in the junior grades (60% in P-1 to P-3), and represent 41% in the P-4 to P-5 grades.

However, an imbalance remains at the Director and above level, where women represent 20%. By 2015, we intend to reach the target of 40% of women at the senior management levels in accordance with the medium and long-term staffing strategy approved by the General Conference in November 2005. To this end, greater efforts will be made to recruit or promote women to senior management positions.

With regard to my proposal to merge the secretariats of the two governing bodies, on the basis of the reactions expressed by Board Members in the private session and then in plenary, I will pursue my consultations with the Chairperson of the Executive Board and the President of the General Conference.

Before concluding, I wish to return to the serious question raised by many of you, touching on both respect for the beliefs of others and freedom of expression. I have already had the opportunity, in my opening address, to convey to you my convictions on the question, which I believe is not only at the very heart of our mandate, but also one of the *raison d’être* of our Organization.

I was most gratified to note that those who spoke on the subject reiterated their resolute and unreserved support for respect for the two principles that are part and parcel of UNESCO’s mission: respect for moral and religious convictions and respect for freedom of expression. They share with me the desire to make every effort to avoid oversimplifications and a dangerous confusion of issues. On a subject such as this there is a particular need for a common approach in order to find lasting solutions to a crisis that must be handled with the utmost attention and rigour. I should therefore

like to associate myself with the wish expressed by some of you that the issue should not introduce into the Board the divisions that it created outside UNESCO, and that any decision taken on it should be based on consensus. In this connection, Mr Chairperson, I greatly appreciate the efforts that you have made in order to reach such a consensus.

I welcome the proposal by the Ambassador of Lebanon, which in fact reflects a major concern expressed by the Ambassador of Morocco, to organize an international meeting on the subject under the aegis of UNESCO. Our Organization is quite capable of facilitating a meeting of this kind in which divisive debates would be replaced by a respectful and balanced approach, for this alone can help us to take up, once again, the thread of a dialogue that is today threatened by a conflict of ignorance.

We have already begun to reflect on the form that such an initiative might take. The tenor of your debates has strengthened my conviction, and I shall continue my consultations on the subject.

Mr Chairperson,

I have not answered all the numerous points raised over the last two days of rich and dense debates, because I wanted to avoid giving too long a reply, but I believe that the interaction that we will have today will certainly enable me to expand on this initial presentation. My Assistant Director-General and Director colleagues will also have the opportunity of replying to you either in the Programme and External Relations Commission (PX), in the Finance and Administrative Commission (FA) or bilaterally over the coming days.