

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Hundred and seventy-fifth session

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE FOLLOW-UP
TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

**Report on the activities of the Overall Review Committee for
Major Programmes II (Natural Sciences) and III (Social and Human Sciences)**

SUMMARY

This document is intended to inform the Members of the Executive Board on the progress of the Overall Review Committee for Major Programmes II (Natural Sciences) and III (Social and Human Sciences), created by the Director-General following the adoption of 33 C/Resolution 2 by the General Conference. The Review will elaborate a forward-looking programme for UNESCO's science portfolio that will form an integral part of the preparation of documents 34 C/4 and 34 C/5. A full report of the Committee's work and recommendations will be submitted to the Executive Board at its 176th session.

No decision is required.

Background

1. At its 33rd session, the General Conference adopted 33 C/Resolution 2, submitted by Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, by which it requested the Director-General to undertake an Overall Review of Major Programmes II and III in light of the Organization's mandate, country and regional priorities, and today's global needs. This Review will elaborate a forward-looking programme for UNESCO's science portfolio that will form an integral part of the preparation of the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5).

2. To carry out the Review, the Resolution further requested the Director-General to constitute a team of expert scientific representatives from Member States inclusive of all regions, working in close partnership with the Secretariat. Following consultations with the Electoral Groups, the Director-General announced in Blue Note 06/14 of 28 February 2006 the creation of an Overall Review Committee, chaired by the Deputy Director-General, consisting initially of fifteen external experts serving in their personal capacities, together with the Assistant Directors-General for the Natural Sciences (SC), Social and Human Sciences (SHS) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the Director of the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP). The Director of the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) has an observer status. One of the external members subsequently withdrew for personal reasons. The full list of Committee Members is contained in the Annex to this report.

Overview of the First and Second Phases of the Committee's work

3. As was reported to the 174th session of the Executive Board, the Committee had its first meeting on 13-15 March 2006. Two further meetings were held on 10-12 May and 12-13 July 2006. At the conclusion of the third meeting the Committee identified a number of strengths and weaknesses in UNESCO's science programmes. Based on these observations, the Committee provided initial comments on the Director-General's Preliminary Proposals for the Draft 34 C/4 and C/5 to the 175th session of the Executive Board. These three meetings and the comments on the Preliminary Proposals comprised the Committee's First Phase of work, which was focused on information gathering.

4. The emerging ideas of the First Phase will be carried to the Second Phase of the Committee's activity, which will be the full, evidence-based exploration and development of a new strategic framework for UNESCO's sciences work. This phase will culminate in the delivery to the 176th session of the Executive Board of (a) its detailed contributions within the Draft 34 C/4 and 34 C/5 and (b) a substantive report detailing its work over the full period. Further action by the Committee, including response to reactions by the 175th and 176th sessions of the Executive Board, will proceed through to the submission of the Draft 34 C/4 and 34 C/5 to the 34th session of the General Conference and concluding with the production of the final documents as approved.

The three meetings of the Overall Review Committee

5. The first meeting of the Committee from 13 to 15 March 2006 was opened by the Director-General in the presence of the President of the General Conference and several Permanent Delegates. During this meeting, the Committee approved its Terms of Reference and a provisional working schedule and agreed on several modalities for its work, including a series of hearings from various experts to begin at the second meeting, and the provision of a dedicated website for the

Committee's evolving set of reference documents and communications among its members.¹ In depth presentations followed: by the Director/BSP on the C/4 and C/5 processes; by the Director/IOS on recent evaluations carried out by the Organization; and by the ADGs for SC, SHS and IOC on their overall programmes and activities. During visits to the Sciences Sectors, the Committee had the opportunity to hear further from the programme staff.

6. At its second meeting from 10 to 12 May 2006, the Committee members were again welcomed by the Director-General. In his address he took the opportunity to acknowledge the strong and constructive interest of Member States in this review process.

7. During the meeting the Committee's Secretariat was requested to provide background documents on the staffing and budgets of the large intergovernmental/international science programmes (ISPs), namely Management of Social Transformations (MOST), Man and the Biosphere (MAB), International Hydrological Programme (IHP), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), International Geoscience Programme (IGCP), and the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP); on the historical development of priorities in the Sciences Sectors; on the interactions with other parts of the United Nations system; and on United Nations country-level planning processes.

8. Two sets of hearings were held: the first with the Chairs or other officers of the six ISPs and the second with five scientific experts, namely Mr Khotso Mokhele (President of the National Research Foundation and Academy of Sciences of South Africa), Mr Uri Shamir (Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Technion – Israel Institute of Technology), Mr Ali Kazancigil (Secretary General of the International Social Sciences Research Council), Mr Marc Renaud (former President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) and Mr Thomas Rosswall (Executive Director of the International Council for Science (ICSU)).

9. Additionally, an information session was held with Permanent Delegates, opened by the President of the General Conference. Several delegations intervened during the proceedings, expressing their strong support for the Sciences Review and providing a number of issues for the Committee to take into account during the course of its work. These included the need for an integrated vision of the role of the Sciences within UNESCO's general mandate, the need for increased intersectoral cooperation, especially with the Education Sector, and the specific needs of the developing world, including new approaches to environmental protection.

10. At the conclusion of the second meeting, the Committee members agreed to provide written contributions on the strengths and weaknesses of UNESCO's science programmes, based on a set of questions to guide their reflection to be provided by the Secretariat. Committee members were also invited to participate as observers in the Director-General's Regional Consultations of National Commissions, taking place during May-July 2006, and to report their observations at the third meeting.

11. The third meeting, held on 12 and 13 July 2006, had an additional session on 17 July for Committee members unable to be present at the initial meeting. Formal items on the agenda included: (1) a presentation by the Director/BSP on the results relevant to the science programmes of the Regional Consultations of National Commissions; (2) a debate on intersectorality, following presentations by the ADGs for Education and for Communication and Information and by the Director for the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue on behalf of the ADG for Culture; and (3) presentations by Committee members on their assessments of the strengths and

¹ <http://review.hq.int.unesco.org/sites/review>

weaknesses of the science programmes and reports on their attendance at the Regional Consultations.

12. In addition, a third set of hearings was held on 12 July with: Mr Claude Huriet (Vice-Chairman of the International Bioethics Committee), Ms Berit Olsson (Director, Department for Research and Cooperation-SAREC, Swedish International Development Agency), and Mr Katepalli Sreenivasan (Director of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste, Italy). Mr Gaell Mainguy (President of the World Association of Young Scientists), who was originally scheduled to participate in the formal hearings, was unable to attend on 12 July and provided a separate presentation to the Committee on 13 July.

13. The Chair reviewed the timeline of work for the preparation of input to the Director-General's Preliminary Proposals for the 34 C/4 and 34 C/5 to the 175th session of the Executive Board. The Chair also outlined to the Committee the very detailed structure of the current Medium-Term Strategy and informed the members that the Director-General had agreed to review this structure with a view to showing a more direct link between UNESCO's main mission and its actual programmatic activities.

14. The following section contains a list of some of the key issues identified by Committee members during the First Phase of the review.

- (i) UNESCO has a unique role to play in the sciences in today's world, given its international credibility, its special mandate for science within the United Nations system, its ability to act as a facilitator for developing countries to participate in research and development, including the support of networks, and to ensure the articulation of research results in global, regional and national endeavours. These strengths are central to its vital role as a capacity builder.
- (ii) UNESCO also has a critical role in facilitating global, regional and country-level science policy development by improving the base of relevant scientific research knowledge and communication of that knowledge. This role is consistent with UNESCO's multilateral standing, its cross-disciplinary capability, its financial capacity and its respected global reach to both governments and civil society.
- (iii) However, the Organization is not exploiting these comparative advantages through dynamic, innovative and interdisciplinary programmes, which would exemplify leadership in the sciences, reflect emerging global priorities, and avoid duplication with other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations.
- (iv) The science programmes lack a high and uniform level of transparency across their management and budget activities, including detailed project-level personnel allocations, and adherence to standard procedures in such areas as selection of projects, evaluation of results, including performance indicators and sunset clauses in the management of activities.
- (v) Within the sciences programmes, there are too many small and isolated projects, involving direct action or funding efforts, which show little or no demonstrable impact relative to the efforts of other United Nations agencies.
- (v) The numerous ISPs, each with their respective decision-making processes and bodies, operate too autonomously, in separate "silos", despite the considerable mutual overlap both within the programmes and with many outside bodies. Thus, they fail to exploit

their potential for enhancing synergies through more strategic coordination with related activities across the United Nations system, as well as through administrative coordination.

- (vi) Intersectoral interdisciplinary activity both within the two Science Sectors and across the Organization is inadequate. In large part, this reflects a staffing and budget structure, which together creates a culture which hinders efforts to promote such activities. Therefore, UNESCO is missing the opportunity to design and manage its programmes in a manner which reflects the inherent interdisciplinary nature of all of today's major global problems.
- (vii) The science programmes lack visibility in the international arena, and reflect both their current limited impact and UNESCO's ineffective coordination and cooperation with other international science organizations, such as the International Council for Sciences. Furthermore, UNESCO is failing to take advantage of its National Commissions, field offices, centres, institutes, ISP Committees and Chairs to promote its science programmes. The absence of an effective communications strategy involving such proactive outreach, including to various forms of the media, is a great hindrance to UNESCO's efforts to promote its leadership in the sciences.

Next steps for the Committee

15. The Committee will hold its fourth meeting at UNESCO Headquarters on 30 and 31 October 2006. The main aim of the meeting will be to address Phase 2 of its work, taking into consideration the comments received from the 175th session of the Executive Board.

ANNEX

**LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE OVERALL REVIEW COMMITTEE
FOR MAJOR PROGRAMMES II AND III**

External Members

Mrs Fatma Attia, Professor Emeritus, National Water Research Center, Director of the Water Boards Project, Cairo, Egypt

Mr Jean Audouze, Research Director at the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique – CNRS (Paris Astrophysics Institute), former Director, Palais de la Découverte, Paris

Mr Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdellah, President, University Al Akhawayn, Ifrane, Morocco

Mr Alexander Boksenberg, Chairperson, United Kingdom National Commission to UNESCO and Chair of its Natural Sciences Committee, Honorary Professor of Experimental Astronomy, University of Cambridge

Mr Ian Bryceson, Professor, Department of International and Development Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Mr Marco Gandásegui, Professor, Center for Latin American Studies, Panama City, Panama and Member of the National Council of Education (CONACED), Panama

Mr Ping Huang, Director-General, Bureau for International Cooperation, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)

Mr Ashok Jhunjunwala, Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India

Mr Babacar Kante, Professor, Public Law and Political Sciences, Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis, Senegal

Mrs Rumyana Mihneva, Vice-President, Executive Director, Association Nationale du Patrimoine, Bulgaria

Ms Kathie Olsen, Deputy Director, U.S. National Science Foundation

Mr Luis Alberto Quevedo, Director of “Communication” Programme of Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) and Permanent Associate Professor of Political Science, Sociology Degree Course, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Mr Rem Petrov, Adviser, Russian Academy of Sciences, former Head of the Department of Immunology, Y.A. Ovchinnikov Bioorganic Chemistry Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

Mr Shinichi Yamamoto, Professor, Research Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University, Japan

Internal Members

Mr Marcio Barbosa, Deputy Director-General and Chair of the Committee

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Mr Patricio Bernal, Assistant Director-General, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

Mr Hans D'Orville, Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning

Mr Walter Erdelen, Assistant Director-General for the Natural Sciences

Mr Pierre Sané, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences