UNESCO’s COOPERATION WITH AFRICAN REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Second meeting of the Forum of the Regional and Sub-Regional African Organisations in support of Cooperation between UNESCO and NEPAD (FOSRASUN)
Paris, 4 September 2006

SUMMARY
The purpose of this document is to bring to the attention of the Members of the Executive Board the final communiqué issued at the second meeting of FOSRASUN (Paris, UNESCO Headquarters, 4 September 2006), whose central theme was “regional integration through education”.

No decision is required.
FINAL COMMUNIQUE

Second meeting of the Forum of the Regional and Sub-Regional African Organisations in support of Cooperation between UNESCO and NEPAD (FOSRASUN)

UNESCO, Paris, 4 September 2006

1. On the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, the Forum of the FOSRASUN, composed of the regional and subregional organizations for technical cooperation, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission, the Secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and UNESCO, met on 4 September 2006 at the Headquarters of UNESCO in Paris. The session was preceded by a meeting of experts (1 and 2 September 2006).

2. Participating in the meeting were the representatives of the following organizations: the African Union (AU) and the secretariat of the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). The representatives of the Permanent Delegations of Member States accredited to UNESCO currently chairing these organizations as well as representatives of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), the African Development Bank (ADB), the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and civil society organizations attended the Forum. Also present at the meeting were representatives of programme sectors of the UNESCO Secretariat at Headquarters, the Bureau of Field Coordination (BFC), the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA) and representatives of the UNESCO cluster and national offices of Abuja, Addis Ababa, Bamako, Brazzaville, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Harare, Libreville, Nairobi, Rabat, Windhoek and Yaoundé.

3. It was recalled that FOSRASUN was established in 2003 as an instrument for cooperation between the African regional and subregional organizations for technical cooperation, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union/NEPAD and UNESCO to facilitate consultation, dialogue and the exchange of views and experiences at the regional and subregional levels in order to identify the best approaches for promoting human resource capacity around common points of interest that favour regional integration. This should be achieved through the identification and implementation of concrete regional projects by the RECs and UNESCO. In this context special focus should be given to themes within UNESCO’s fields of competence, mainly education, training, science, communication, preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, a culture of maintenance and a culture of peace by promoting democratic principles, tolerance and human rights.

4. The inaugural session of the second FOSRASUN meeting featured speeches by Dr Musa Bin Jaafar Bin Hassan, President of the UNESCO General Conference, and Dr Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission representing President Alpha Oumar Konare, as well as the keynote address of the Director-General of UNESCO.
5. Speaking on behalf of all the Member States, the President of the General Conference emphasized that this meeting is a new expression of the solidarity between UNESCO and Africa and constitutes a contribution to the concretization of the support of the partnership between the African Union Commission, the Regional Economic Commissions and UNESCO, and to the implementation of the objectives of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

He reminded the Forum that the UNESCO Secretariat established educational, scientific and cultural programmes for the African continent on the basis of the resolutions of the General Conference and the Executive Board.

He emphasized that rich countries have to mobilize resources in favour of the African Continent in order to eradicate poverty and famine. All the Members were invited to intervene within the framework of promoting socio-economic development and national programmes that address democracy, the place of women in the society, human rights and the prevention of diseases such as AIDS.

He also mentioned the problem of emigration and hoped that the new political leaders will be able to accelerate the implementation of new programmes aimed at African development.

6. In his statement, the Commissioner for Economic Affairs, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, expressed his sincere thanks and profound gratitude to UNESCO for inviting the African Union Commission to the Second Meeting of FOSRASUN. He further commended the initiative by UNESCO to establish active cooperation and partnership with the African Union/the NEPAD Secretariat and also the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which are the building blocks of the African Union.

The Commissioner commended the recently signed Cooperation Agreements between the AU and UNESCO as well as those for the RECs. The decision by the Banjul Summit to rationalize the RECs is considered as a milestone.

The Commissioner commended the work of UNESCO in supporting the cooperation between the RECs and the African Union Commission. In this respect, he stressed the need for the African Union Commission and UNESCO to continue working together, particularly in promoting education, science and technology, and culture on the African continent. In this context, he highlighted UNESCO-AU cooperation culminating in adoption and follow-up to the Second Education Decade for Africa and the preparation for the January summit 2007 on Science and Technology.

7. In his keynote address, the Director-General reaffirmed UNESCO’s commitment to the priority given to Africa and the Organization’s ongoing process in favour of regional cooperation. Introducing the theme of the second FOSRASUN, “Regional Integration through Education”, he reaffirmed UNESCO’s commitment to support African efforts led by the African Union. He stressed the importance UNESCO gives to education and training of human resources. He recalled the role played by UNESCO in supporting the African Union in elaborating the framework of action of the Second African Decade for Education adopted by the Khartoum Summit and in preparing the Draft Plan of Action for implementing this Decade. He specifically referred to the three core initiatives in support of EFA (TTISSA, LIFE, EDUCAIDS) as tools to be used to tackle the challenges of the Second Decade.

1 TTISSA: Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa; LIFE: Literacy Initiative For Empowerment (2005-2015); EDUCAIDS: the Global Initiative on Education and HIV/AIDS.
8. He also stressed the importance of teaching science and technology. In this area, he informed the participants that UNESCO is actively involved in the preparation of the next AU Summit devoted to Science and Technology, which is scheduled to take place in January 2007.

9. He drew the attention of the participants to the fact that peace and collective security are necessary for the development and the training of human resources. He also highlighted the key role UNESCO can play in the development of a culture of peace and in post-conflict situations in order to rebuild destroyed education systems, to rehabilitate damaged cultural heritage and to give vocational training to child soldiers.

10. In conclusion, and as recommended by the Ministers of Education of ECOWAS and CEMAC in January 2004, the Director-General pleaded for the use of transborder African languages and resort to the General History of Africa as an educational tool to help build acceptance in the minds of children of an “integrated Africa”.

11. After the inaugural session, a Round table on “Regional integration through education” involving all the Executive Secretaries of the RECs and the regional and subregional organizations, including Professor Dr Nagia Essayed, AU Commissioner in charge of Human Resources, Sciences and Technology, and Professor Adama Samassékou, Executive Secretary of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), took place. It provided an opportunity to share experiences through the presentation of concrete examples of subregional and regional efforts and plans to use education for furthering regional integration, and it identified areas where UNESCO could collaborate with the RECs and the regional and subregional organizations of technical cooperation.

12. During the discussions, the Forum commended UNESCO’s support to the preparation of the Khartoum Summit, dedicated to education and culture, and to the preparation for the Addis Ababa January 2007 Summit devoted to Science and Technology. The debates offered an excellent opportunity to exchange views on the decisions of the Khartoum Summit and on the need to ensure the implementation of its decisions through the development of action plans and strategies to mobilize support from other partners.

13. The Round Table was followed by a rich debate chaired by the AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs on “the mobilization of Partners in favour of regional integration: Partners’ points of view”. This session featured the interventions of NEPAD, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Permanent Delegations of Japan, United Kingdom, China and Brazil, and the French National Commission. They commended the key role played by multilateral and bilateral partners in mobilizing extrabudgetary funds in favour of regional projects in the fields of competence of UNESCO. All reaffirmed their commitment to the building up of a critical mass of educated Africans and pledged their support for an integrated Africa. They also requested that a reflection upon the role of UNESCO at the regional level be carried out.

After very rich and interesting debates the following recommendations were made:

14. It was reiterated that FOSRASUN should continue to bring together UNESCO and the AU approved Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in addition to other African subregional and Regional Integration Organizations (RIOs).

15. The Forum commended the support provided by the Director-General of UNESCO to the African Union Commission in the process of the preparation of the 6th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (Khartoum, 23-24 January 2006) devoted to education and culture. It also commended him for the assistance given for the finalization of the Action Plan of the Second Decade of Education to be discussed, approved and launched on 8 September 2006 in
Maputo by the Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union (COMEDAF). The Forum further invited UNESCO to give all possible assistance to the RECs and the RIOs in this endeavour and called for joint initiatives for mobilization of funds in this regard.

16. The Forum requested UNESCO to explore the possibility of developing with relevant partners a comprehensive strategy/programme for the development of the capacity of the AU, the RECs and the RIOs in its fields of competences. This programme could be implemented during the period of the next Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013) of UNESCO.

17. The Forum commended UNESCO for the Agreements signed with the AU, the RECs and the RIOs since the last meeting of the FOSRASUN (COMESA, ECCAS and IGAD (to be signed) and EAC and UEMOA (to be approved by the UNESCO Executive Board at its next session). Nevertheless, in order to make the general cooperation agreement between UNESCO and the organizations more operational, there is a need to undertake thorough assessment and stock-taking of ongoing activities and to develop joint initiatives. It was recommended that the next session of FOSRASUN take as its point of departure the problems and expectations of the RECs and RIOs so that UNESCO could address these and propose concrete responses. It was also noted that clarification of procedures in terms of added value for both UNESCO and RECs/RIOs, and adoption of an agreed implementation time-frame, were necessary for the smooth implementation of the cooperation platform in the regions. Therefore, the Forum further recommended that adequate budgetary resources be provided to the FOSRASUN Focal Points in the UNESCO field offices and the Africa Department in charge of the coordination of the Forum.

18. **Link between education and culture**: The Forum welcomed the decision made by AU on the link between education and culture and requested UNESCO to explore the possibility of organizing subregional seminars with the RECs and the RIOs on the role of education and culture in the process of regional integration. The need to use education and culture as tools for empowering and raising awareness of the youth about African heritage through the exploitation of existing African and Pan-African resources was underscored in this regard.

19. **General History of Africa**: The Forum reiterated the importance of the adaptation of the General History of Africa as a pedagogical tool for use across the regions. This project is in the Plan of Action of the Second Decade of Education, alongside the issue of promoting cross-border African languages. The Forum urged UNESCO and the AU to do their best so that finally the content of the General History of Africa is taught in the classrooms.

20. The Forum stressed the urgency with which each regional organization should examine the best ways to ensure that their Member States have ratified AU normative texts and conventions such as the revised Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa and all the normative texts in the fields of competence of UNESCO. The RECs, RIOs and the African Union commit themselves to supporting UNESCO’s efforts to facilitate Members States’ ratification and implementation of conventions adopted by the Organization in its fields of competence.

21. The Forum recalled the importance of the role that the National Commissions for UNESCO can play in the implementation of the UNESCO-NEPAD partnership towards regional integration and recommended that they be utilized to mobilize all national actors, including civil society. To this end, the National Commissions should be more fully informed by UNESCO’s field offices and more closely involved as well as trained in the issues at stake and related activities in favour of African integration.

22. In the field of **conflict prevention and resolution** the Forum recommended that the Director-General of UNESCO look into the possibility of setting up a Committee of African Wise People
composed of personalities who have experience in building peace in situations of crisis and post-conflict. One of the mandates of the committee could be the contribution to the elaboration of a methodology and success stories in this area which would help inter alia the training of media people to contribute to the fight against instrumentalization of ethnicity. In this perspective, a high-level seminar to examine this matter could be convened. The Forum recommends that the Director-General of UNESCO instruct the Africa Department to consult the RECs and RIOs so that proposals for VIPs can be forwarded to UNESCO.

23. The Forum underlined the need for more substantial collaboration between UNESCO, the RECs and the RIOs in the area of pre- and post-conflict. UNESCO was requested to involve itself in a variety of activities such as: participation in the observation and monitoring of elections as well as other peace–building activities; the development and production of relevant quality teaching materials; the implementation of programmes for teaching citizenship for peace; and the development of the Associated Schools Network through the strengthening of their peace-building mission and objectives of contributing to the protection of educational, cultural, scientific and media institutions.

Specific recommendations were made in the fields of competence of UNESCO

24. **In the field of education**, recalling the Khartoum decision about the need to achieve the rebuilding of education systems in Africa, the Forum commended the Director-General for the three UNESCO core initiatives in support of Education for All (TTISSA, EDUCAIDS and LIFE), and stressed the need to work closely with the RIOs/RECs and the AU/NEPAD to use these initiatives in successfully implementing the programmes of the Second Decade for Education. It further highlighted the following aspects:

   (i) the need for the RECs and RIOs to support their member states in harmonizing their education systems. To achieve this aim, the production of common pedagogical materials is essential;

   (ii) the development of subregional programmes for adult education, particularly for girls and women;

   (iii) encouragement of the exchange of experiences and best practices in HIV/AIDS preventive education and the need for the support of UNESCO in this regard;

   (iv) the use of ICTs for distance education at the subregional level for education at all levels and in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

   (v) the organization of special consultations on centres of excellence in each region.

25. **In the field of culture**, the Forum recognized the historical importance of the decisions made in Khartoum, and called for more assistance and involvement from partners in order not to lose the momentum generated in Khartoum. The Forum also recognized the role of intercultural dialogue and recommended the elaboration of subregional cultural policies and programmes in regional integration. It also stressed the following points:

   (i) reaffirmation of the pivotal role played by culture in sustainable development. The ratification of the relevant UNESCO conventions is an important tool to further regional cooperation and integration;

   (ii) the need for capacity-building in the RECs/RIOs in order to stimulate protection and promotion of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, including African
languages, and converting this heritage and resources of creativity into an economic asset using the development of cultural industries and the promotion of cultural tourism through innovative modalities of multi-stakeholder partnerships involving public, private and civil society institutions;

(iii) recognition of the cultural dimension of the fight against HIV/AIDS and UNESCO’s contribution in elaborating a cultural approach to fighting HIV/AIDS;

(iv) the proposal of the Director-General to support action in supporting the restoration of the Centre international des civilisations Bantu (CICIBA) and, with the agreement of its member states, turn it into a regional centre of African cultural intangible heritage;

(v) the strong support given to ACALAN and recommends to the Director-General that extrabudgetary funds be mobilized to help the Academy to hold regional seminars in view of introducing the main African cross-borders languages in curricula;

(vi) the need for the RECs and RIOs to support their member states in developing a mother-tongue based on bilingual or multilingual education with the support of ACALAN.

26. **In the field of science and technology**, the forum commended the fruitful cooperation between UNESCO, the African Union and NEPAD in the preparation of the AU Summit of January 2007 devoted to Science and Technology. This Summit is expected to highlight the important contribution Science and Technology could make to the attainment of sustainable development in Africa through the elaboration of new science and technology policies; the establishment of centres of excellence; the linking of subregional initiatives with those undertaken by UNESCO in support of the Science and Technology component of NEPAD; and the establishment of an African Science and Innovation Facility. The RIOs and RECs recognized the importance of water in all aspects of life and in sustainable development, and commended the priority accorded to water by UNESCO.

27. **In the field of communication and information**, emphasis was given to the following:

(i) the importance of creating knowledge societies in order to accelerate Africa’s sustainable development and its integration in the global economy;

(ii) the role played by ICTs in fostering and accelerating regional integration within the RECs, and throughout the African continent;

(iii) the role UNESCO could play in building capacity of the RECs and RIOs in the field of communication and information;

(iv) the need to support the outcomes of the Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora (CIAD) held in Dakar and in Salvador, in particular in its dimension of strengthening the links between Africa and its Diaspora in the perspective of the African Renaissance.

28. **In the field of the social and human sciences**, the forum recognized with satisfaction the ongoing efforts by UNESCO in the following areas:

(i) establishing a close link between theoretical social science research and public policies and the importance of networking in this regard;

(ii) the role played by intellectuals inside the regions and the Diaspora in addressing development, peace and integration problems of the RECs and the continent;
(iii) the importance of the ethical dimensions of scientific progress.

29. In their interventions, the representatives of the AU and NEPAD and the Executive Heads of the Regional Organizations and the RECs all recognized the important role played by FOSRASUN, and they stressed the common vision shared by their organizations and UNESCO in reinforcing regional integration, which should now be converted into joint action in a spirit of consultation and synergy.

30. Finally the Forum endorsed the report of the Group of Experts, including the annexes and their recommendations, and further invited the Director-General to bring to the attention of the next session of the Executive Board of UNESCO the outcomes of this second meeting of the FOSRASUN.

31. The Forum extends its thanks and congratulations to the Director-General of UNESCO, and his staff, for this welcome initiative and for the support given by UNESCO to the African development agenda as articulated by the African Union.

32. The Forum took into account that on the margins of the meeting the Secretary-General of ECCAS and the Director-General of UNESCO signed an agreement of cooperation between the two Organizations.

33. The Forum welcomed the offer by CEN-SAD to host the next meeting of FOSRASUN in Tripoli, Libya in 2008.

Adopted in Paris on 4 September 2006