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**DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S WRITTEN INTRODUCTION
TO THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Director-General's statement at the opening of the plenary meeting will focus on the proposed Draft Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (**34 C/5, second version, Corrigendum**), based on a \$631 million budget scenario. Recognizing that consensus was unlikely among Board Members on the core scenario of \$648 million, the Director-General decided to prepare a new scenario based on the minimum requirements of the Organization. This equates to the proposal of \$631 million. While this scenario does not fully reflect the resource level that the Director-General believes is needed for UNESCO to best fulfil its mission, it would nevertheless amount to a nominal increase of 3.4%, and a break with the extremely damaging cycle of zero-nominal growth of the past. Above all, the Director-General strongly hopes that the new scenario can be adopted by consensus, which is vital to the effective implementation of document 34 C/5.

2. Under the \$631 million scenario, the Director-General has set out a certain number of budgetary and programmatic adjustments, while seeking to maintain to the extent possible the same level of resources in five key areas: modernization of management tools; strengthening of personnel policy; closer collaboration with the United Nations system; strengthened decentralization system; and more attention to Africa. The allocations take into account the discussions of the Executive Board at its 176th session and at the July Information Meeting, as well as the deliberations of the Board's Drafting Group.

3. The Director-General's statement will also address UNESCO's contribution to United Nations reform efforts, as well as the upcoming General Conference, including the main exhibition organized to mark the occasion, "Planet Earth: From Space to Place".

II. SALIENT POINTS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Education

4. Halfway towards the 2015 target date for achieving education for all (EFA), UNESCO has given renewed impetus to its global coordination role, notably through the ongoing development of the EFA Global Action Plan, the resequencing of the main EFA mechanisms, and the establishment of an International Advisory Panel on EFA. At country level, the continued expansion of the UNESCO Education Support Strategy (UNESS) process is helping to improve the alignment of UNESCO's work with country needs, while the Organization's three EFA flagship initiatives are providing support in an increasing number of Member States in the priority areas of literacy, HIV and AIDS and teacher training.

5. In close collaboration with the two Deputy Assistant Directors-General for Education and the Education Sector Leadership Team, the Director-General has been actively managing the follow-up of the decisions related to the **Education Sector reform**, making all necessary adjustments to improve their effectiveness. The Education Staff Seminar held in Paris in June enabled staff members to become more closely involved in the implementation of some key reform decisions. The next benchmark for the reform's implementation will be the preparation of the 34 C/5 work plans. It is at this stage that the new MLA structure and the process associated with accountable decentralization will go into effect. Regional bureaux are already exercising their new functions by guiding the work-planning process in their regions and assuring the quality of the activities proposed for the next biennium.

6. Following a rigorous recruitment process, the Director-General has appointed Mr Nicholas Burnett to the post of **Assistant Director-General for Education**. Mr Burnett will take up his responsibilities on 27 September. Having worked for nearly two decades at the World Bank before joining UNESCO in 2004 as Director of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, he brings to the position extensive knowledge of basic education, especially of education for all and in particular in Africa.

His appointment will assure continuity in the implementation of the Education Sector's objectives, above all UNESCO's steadfast commitment to EFA, as well as the decisions related to the Education Sector reform.

7. Since the last Executive Board, the **EFA Global Action Plan (GAP)** has been more clearly and strongly linked with the wider mechanisms of United Nations reform, UNESS and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Progress has also been made in the process of applying the GAP at country level. As of August 2007, a strategy has been developed proposing criteria for the first countries where the GAP will be applied. The strategy puts a premium on building strong and effective partnerships through a joint situation analysis of country-level coordination, a clarification of respective responsibilities among agencies and a harmonizing of approaches and actions.

8. In order to give greater strategic focus and coherence to the EFA movement, and in response to the request by the 33rd session of UNESCO's General Conference, the sequence of **key annual EFA events** has been re-organized. An advance copy of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* will now be made available to the EFA Working Group, which this year is scheduled to meet in Paris from 13 to 14 November. This will enable the Working Group to distil the report's findings into strategic policy recommendations for consideration by the EFA High-Level Group, thereby facilitating the latter's deliberations and providing for a more focused and action-oriented agenda. The 2007 EFA High-Level Group will take place in Dakar, Senegal, from 11 to 13 December. The 2008 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* will be officially released on 5 December, with a major launch planned for 12 December in Dakar, alongside the seventh High-Level Group meeting. This report will provide an overall review of progress towards the six EFA goals.

9. The Director-General has set up an **International Advisory Panel (IAP)** on EFA to support the resequencing of meetings, maintain and enhance momentum on EFA, and provide a structured year-round consultation and follow-up process among the main EFA partners. The IAP comprises the four main EFA constituencies: developing countries; donors; multilateral agencies; and civil society, including the private sector. It has so far met twice, at UNESCO Headquarters (21 May 2007) and at Georgetown University, Washington DC (20 September 2007), with subsequent meetings planned in association with the EFA Working Group and High-Level Group events later in the year.

10. UNESCO has consistently emphasized the close relationship between **achieving EFA and reaching other development objectives**, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. The Director-General organized a ministerial round table breakfast during the ECOSOC high-level segment in Geneva, focused on exploring ways to strengthen education's role in poverty eradication. During the 34th session of UNESCO's General Conference, a ministerial round table will be held on "Education and economic development" (19 and 20 October) to address strategies for reinforcing these linkages still further.

11. As part of its lead coordinating role, UNESCO convened the fourth meeting of the Collective Consultation of Non-Governmental Organizations on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA) in Dakar, Senegal, from 3 to 5 September 2007. Participants called for: strengthened capacity for evidence-based advocacy at all levels; scaling up the broad-based movement to include all civil society organizations; and greater awareness-raising of education- and child-related rights. Efforts to harness and help deliver private sector contributions to achieving EFA have been enhanced through the UNESCO-World Economic Forum (WEF) initiative "Partnerships for Education" (PfE). A workshop was held in Geneva in June to identify principles and models for successful multi-stakeholder partnerships for education (MSPEs). The workshop also provided input for a comprehensive review and database of MSPEs, to be completed in November 2007 and launched at the WEF annual meeting in Davos in January. Progress has further been made in developing a strategy on awareness-raising and advocacy for MSPEs.

12. UNESCO is coordinating regional **EFA Mid-Term Reviews** with a view to both monitoring progress towards the EFA goals and strengthening national capacity in data collection and analysis. Within this context, UNESCO/Santiago presented to Ministers of Education at the Second

Intergovernmental Meeting on the Regional Project of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC II, Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 2007) an assessment of the region's progress towards EFA. The Dakar Pole and UNESCO/BREDA launched in September in Bamako the report on "Dakar+7: Africa's Achievements and Challenges in EFA". The regional review for Asia and the Pacific has been led by the Assessment, Information System, Monitoring and Statistic Unit (AMIS), a joint programme of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Regional Office and the Regional Bureau for Education. This assessment includes subregional syntheses, a regional report and subregional thematic studies on "reaching the unreached".

13. With respect to UNESCO's country-level action, the **UNESCO Education Support Strategy (UNESS)** process is instrumental in ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the Organization's education programme in response to Member States' needs and priorities. It is helping UNESCO position itself strategically in the "Delivering as One" approach, improve alignment with national education policies and strategies, and work in closer synergy with other development partners, including United Nations organizations, financial institutions and bilateral donors. The overarching aim is to include an education component into each common United Nations programming document at the country level in response to national development priorities. To that end, the UNESS planning tool can serve as a basis for developing, in collaboration with all relevant United Nations organizations in country, common United Nations education strategies and joint programmes.

14. The 11 first-round **Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE)** countries have undertaken a range of activities including research, advocacy, communication, partnership-building, and capacity-building for policy development and delivery of good-quality literacy programmes. The 11 second-round countries will start preparatory activities after the General Conference. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has reviewed and refined the LIFE strategy to reflect new data and facilitate implementation by countries. A monitoring and evaluation strategy was also prepared during a workshop from 9 to 10 July in Hamburg with participants from different LIFE countries.

15. As part of a major global effort to mobilize international support for literacy, and within the context of LIFE and the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), UNESCO has held the second and third of a series of **UNESCO regional conferences in support of global literacy**. Participants include first ladies, education ministers, policy-makers, civil society and private sector representatives, academics, education professionals and staff of bilateral and multilateral organizations. The Regional Conference on "Addressing Literacy Challenges in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches" took place in Beijing, China, on 31 July and 1 August 2007. The third regional conference on "Renewing Literacy to Face African and International Challenges" was held in Bamako from 10 to 12 September. UNESCO's main celebration for International Literacy Day was held within the framework of this conference and marked by the awarding of the 2007 International Literacy Prizes. From 29 to 30 November 2007, India will host in New Delhi the fourth regional conference for South, South-West and Central Asia. Two further conferences are scheduled for 2008: in Costa Rica in May for Latin America and the Caribbean; and in Azerbaijan in September, as a wrap-up event. Further information on the implementation of UNLD is provided in document 177 EX/8.

16. **The Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA)** was launched in January 2006 from 17 pilot countries. Meetings, seminars and workshops have been organized by UNESCO and national coordinators have been appointed in conjunction with the authorities of 17 countries. A meeting, attended by national officials and partners in the initiative, is to be held at UNESCO Headquarters from 6 to 9 November 2007 in order to evaluate TTISSA's first two years, which will make it possible to identify new lines of emphasis under the initiative for 2008-2009 in terms of both logistics (number of countries, financial and human resources, maintenance of coordinators and so on) and its operational scope (level of decentralization, distribution of tasks and responsibilities, projects, activities and so on).

17. Significant progress has been made in improving Member States' ability to implement education responses to HIV and AIDS through the UNESCO-led **UNAIDS Global Initiative on**

Education and HIV and AIDS (EDUCAIDS). This has been achieved by strengthening the capacity of in-country and international stakeholders, developing the Organization's ability to tap into country-level funding, and reinforcing its field presence. To enhance UNESCO's work in countries where it does not have a regular presence, part of its \$10.6 million allocation through the UNAIDS Unified Budget and Workplan (UBW) for the 2008-2009 biennium will be used to establish four UNESCO regional AIDS advisers. Located in Bangkok, Johannesburg, Moscow and Santiago, these advisers will help deliver technical support and services to Member States, and link up with other UNAIDS co-sponsors in support of joint programming and strengthened United Nations coordination. UNESCO is seeking to match its UBW allocation with additional extrabudgetary funds. Most recently, in August, the Italian Government confirmed a funding commitment of \$900,000 to support the second phase of the Families First Africa project, aimed at expanding capacity-building for laboratory technicians working in the field of HIV research, and providing access to information and training through centres based in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire. UNESCO and UNHCR recently released a joint publication on *Educational Responses to HIV and AIDS for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: Discussion Paper for Decision-Makers*, which focuses on the key components of Education Sector responses to HIV and AIDS in emergencies and reconstruction.

18. A major cross-cutting aspect to all of the Education Sector's work is fostering **South-South cooperation**. To give greater focus to action in this area, UNESCO is developing in collaboration with the Group of 77 and China a South-South cooperation programme. A Special Account for managing funds donated to this programme is being created. The Government of India generously provided a first donation. Additional funds have been earmarked from China's contribution to UNESCO for South-South cooperation, and recently the Kingdom of Morocco pledged its financial support. Guinea, Malaysia and Togo have also indicated their intention to contribute. Supplementary funding is being allocated from the Sector's regular budget to South-South cooperation pilot projects. Each regional bureau has developed and proposed a pilot project for immediate implementation. In the field of higher education and research, South-South cooperation is being strengthened through the new strategic direction given to the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme. More than 20 new Chairs/UNITWIN Networks have been established since the last Executive Board session, with the South-South or North-South-South dimension being augmented in their research and training activities.

19. From 13 to 14 September 2007, UNESCO held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, the **Third Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications**, an important complement to efforts to promote international cooperation and exchange. Drawing together over 140 participants representing key stakeholders in higher education, the 2007 event focused on "Learners and New Higher Education Spaces: Challenges for quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications". It promoted global dialogue and policy debate on these issues and presented tools to inform the education choices of students and other stakeholders.

20. In 2009, UNESCO will hold the **World Conference on Higher Education+10 (WCHE+10)**. Bringing together representatives of the academic community, decision-makers and other key stakeholders, this event will provide an opportunity both to review national, regional and global developments since the WCHE in 1998, and to define the challenges and perspectives for the future. The preparatory process will begin with a series of regional meetings aimed at providing for policy discussions that are action-oriented and relevant to country needs.

21. UNESCO's action in support of the **United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development** has focused on consultation, coordination and advocacy. The Organization is working together with the DESD Monitoring and Evaluation Experts Group (MEEG) to prepare the Global Framework for the monitoring and evaluation of DESD and a set of indicators. The MEEG held its second meeting from 19 to 21 September 2007 in conjunction with the second meeting of the DESD Reference Group, which brings together leading ESD experts from around the world. This meeting strengthened dialogue between ESD and EFA, with attention focused on identifying

mechanisms to enhance synergies and linkages at country level and with the DESD Mid-Decade Review process. Further details on progress under the UNDES is given in document 177 EX/9.

22. As part of efforts to develop innovative mechanisms for financing EFA, UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Argentina co-hosted the second meeting of the **Working Group on Debt Swaps for Education** in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 12 to 13 July 2007. The main purpose of the meeting was to further exchange lessons learnt on debt swaps for education, formulate guidelines for their future use, and discuss the Working Group's draft report to be submitted to UNESCO's Director-General. The Director-General will bring the Working Group's findings and recommendations to the attention of UNESCO's General Conference, in particular the Ministerial Round Table on Education and Economic Development, as well as to the EFA Working Group and High-Level Group and other relevant fora.

23. Over the past six months, UNESCO has given specific attention to addressing violence – both violence in schools and in the form of targeted attacks against the education system – as a major obstacle to achieving EFA. From 27 to 29 June 2007, an experts meeting was convened at Headquarters on **“Stopping Violence in Schools: What Works?”**. The meeting produced a number of recommendations in whose implementation UNESCO can play a fundamental role including the pooling of research findings for data dissemination, research and awareness-raising of the costs and consequences of school violence, and the sharing of good practices. In late April, UNESCO launched the study **“Education under attack”**, which highlights the increase of violent attacks on education personnel, students, institutions and premises. Symposia have been held in Paris and Geneva, with a third meeting planned in New York in November. These events aim to improve understanding of the reasons behind these attacks and identify prevention strategies.

Review of Major Programmes II and III

24. A draft plan for the possible implementation of the recommendations emerging from the **Overall Review of Major Programmes II and III** is in the process of finalization, for presentation to the General Conference at its upcoming session (34 C/13). The plan will also be shared with members of the Overall Review Committee at their sixth meeting, which will take place during the General Conference (25 October 2007). Furthermore, in order to facilitate the Conference's decision-making as concerns the science programmes, a mapping of science activities in the United Nations system has been prepared and will also be presented to the forthcoming General Conference (34 C/INF.13). Finally, in line with 176 EX/Decision 7, the international science programmes, as well as the Organization's main science partners, have been consulted on the possible implementation of the Review Committee's recommendations. The consultation of regional groups is ongoing and will come to an end just before the 34th session of the General Conference.

Natural sciences

25. There has been a major shift in the importance accorded to **global climate change** on the international political agenda, reflected in two new initiatives of the Secretary-General: to mainstream climate change into all relevant programmes and work streams of the United Nations system; and to “green” the system's administration.

26. With climate an important component of UNESCO's environment activities, the Director-General established an **Intersectoral Task Force on Global Climate Change** (TFGCC – DG/Note/07/27 of 29 June 2007) to enable the Organization to effectively contribute to these new initiatives. The TFGCC's mandate is to reposition the Organization and redefine the interdisciplinary framework and platform for UNESCO's climate activities through the preparation of a new strategy and implementation plan. The Task Force has so far held two meetings, producing a draft strategy, currently under consideration by the Director-General. The strategy aims to ensure a holistic approach that draws on the Organization's recognized areas of comparative advantage and provides a cooperative and coherent contribution to the Secretary-General's initiative. Once finalized, it will be shared with Member States.

27. IOS, the TFGCC and the Natural Sciences Sector are carrying out an **audit of the Organization's on-site energy use and conservation measures** in order to set realistic targets for change. The final report will include implementation measures and recommendations for dissemination to the Organization's field offices, with follow-up workshops scheduled for the months following the publication of the report. Already, measures have been taken in-house to improve energy efficiency, reduce waste, and reduce UNESCO's carbon footprint, including through the renovation works (e.g. double-paned windows and energy-efficient lighting); to upgrade the network cabling and electronic switches to improve bandwidth for effective web conferencing so consultative meetings with colleagues and other partners located away from Paris can be conducted in this manner; and in-house awareness-raising.

28. Following the move of the **World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)** secretariat to Perugia towards the end of this year, work on the World Water Development Report (WWDR), which will be launched at the fifth World Water Forum (Istanbul, Turkey – March 2009) will move from the current preparatory phase to the in-depth scientific research and analysis that underpins the Report. The **evaluation of WWAP Phase II** is now completed. Its conclusions are very positive, especially as concerns the Programme's role in raising global awareness of the water crisis and strengthening regional cooperation, and its Reports' presentation of a comprehensive overview of water and policy issues, including those that may be of a controversial nature in some regions.

29. Dr Ardakanian, the Director of the Regional Centre on Urban Water Management, a UNESCO category 2 centre based in Tehran (Iran), was recently appointed Director of the **UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity-Building**, based in Bonn (Germany). He will direct one of the two offices of the secretariat for the International Decade for Action – Water for Life that is coordinated by UN-DESA. The other office, in Zaragoza (Spain), has as its Coordinator a former UNESCO colleague, Carlos Fernández-Jáuregui. This arrangement follows the decision of UN-Water to establish two offices for this Decade.

30. It should be noted that to improve cooperation with field partners and ensure the proper coordination of activities of the **water-related category 2 centres**, a strategy has been prepared and endorsed by the 40th session of the Bureau of the International Hydrological Programme (13-15 June 2007). The strategy has now been submitted to the IHP Intergovernmental Council (June 2007), which should formally adopt it at an out-of-session meeting in September 2007, prior to its presentation to UNESCO's governing bodies. Information on the strategy can be found in document 177 EX/INF.9.

31. At its 40th session, the Bureau of IHP (June 2007) constituted a working group to review the draft thematic water programmes foreseen within the framework of the recently adopted Action Plan for DESD, in order to properly articulate them as fully-fledged programmes and ensure that they are scientifically sound. This is particularly true of thematic programme 8 on **Education for Sustainable Water Development**. The working group is also tasked to help engage all the relevant actors involved in UNESCO's water activities, including the IHP National Committees and water-related centres, in order to ensure their full participation in DESD.

32. In the area of biodiversity, the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Programme, in association with the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, organized an international experts meeting on **Indigenous Knowledge and Changing Environments: Biological and Cultural Diversities in Transition** (Cairns, Australia, 19-23 August 2007). Specialists from both the natural and social sciences, and indigenous peoples, deliberated on past, current and future responses of local and indigenous communities to changing environments, as mediated by their indigenous knowledge.

33. Four new members have joined UNESCO's **Global Network of National Geoparks**. Three are located in Europe: Papuk Geopark (Croatia), Lochaber Geopark (Scotland, United Kingdom), and the Geological and Mining Park (Italy). The fourth, the Langkawi Geopark, is the first member from South-East Asia (Malaysia) to join the Network. The Global Network now has 52 members, present in 17 Member States. The Overall Review of Major Programmes II and III recommended

that UNESCO's inscribed sites be examined for their appropriateness for **coordinated global monitoring of climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainable development**. Biosphere reserves, geoparks and World Heritage sites are already being used as locations for monitoring change, including through the use of earth observing space technology coordinated through the "Open Initiative on the Use of Space Technologies to Monitor Natural and Cultural Heritage of UNESCO Sites", testing adaptation strategies for sustainable development, and addressing mitigation efforts related to carbon sequestration.

34. The recently launched **Quranic Botanic Gardens** project (May 2007), jointly undertaken between the Natural Sciences and Culture Sectors, facilitates linkages between traditional Islamic respect for natural habitats, the cultures inspired by the Holy Books of Islam, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and science education.

35. In follow-up to the Plan of Action adopted by the G8 at its St Petersburg meeting, the Russian Federation organized a ministerial conference entitled "**Energy in a Changing World**" at UNESCO (31 May-1 June 2007), with the support of UNESCO. The main output was a Message addressed to this year's G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, presented by the Russian Federation.

36. Closely linked to climate issues, the **main exhibition at the 34th session of the General Conference – "Planet Earth: From Space to Place"** – anticipates the International Year of Planet Earth (2008), highlighting the Organization's work related to the sustainable development of our planet and demonstrating some of the long-standing earth science contributions which underpin the United Nations' efforts on climate.

37. In response to Recommendation 8 of the Overall Review Committee's Report, a **ministerial round table on the theme "Science and Technology for Sustainable Development and the Role of UNESCO"** will be organized during the 34th session of the General Conference (25-26 October 2007). The outcome of the round table will be a final communiqué setting out new issues and trends that science, technology and innovation policy makers need to address.

38. Work in **science policy** has been expanded with advisory services being provided to Member States including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Congo, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mongolia and Nigeria. The Egyptian Ministry of Education agreed on 13 June 2007 that UNESCO launch the Egyptian Virtual School Campus, which will be put in place over the next four years through the Avicenna Virtual Campus and help expand training opportunities for Egypt's one million teachers. Other countries in the region have expressed interest in pursuing this same methodology of teacher training in the sciences.

Social and human sciences

39. In the last six months, the Social and Human Sciences Sector has continued its action, with particular emphasis on youth, to promote ethical reflection and the establishment of innovative action research networks on issues relating to social development, democracy and action to combat discrimination.

40. Responding to the need to promote discussions and capacity-building activities in the field of bioethics in Africa, the **International Bioethics Committee (IBC)** held for the first time in sub-Saharan Africa its fourteenth ordinary session in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17 to 19 May 2007. The meeting gathered together more than 150 participants from 53 countries, with the active participation of numerous government representatives and experts from various African countries. On this occasion, IBC devoted an entire day of work and exchange to African perspectives on bioethics. An informal meeting of the **World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)** was convened in Paris from 22 to 24 July 2007 to review its activities and discuss the findings and recommendations of the expert team on the Overall Review of Major Programmes II and III.

41. UNESCO continued to make very good progress with the implementation of the **International Convention against Doping in Sport** which entered into force on 1 February 2007. As of 1 September, there were 64 States Parties to the Convention across all five of the UNESCO regions. In order to promote the Convention, UNESCO organized a regional conference among Arab Member States in collaboration with ISESCO and the Tunisian Government from 11 to 13 June 2007. The participants adopted a final declaration which *inter alia* called upon Arab Member States to become States Parties to the Convention prior to the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference.

42. In the context of UNESCO's efforts to strengthen the policy-research nexus, the eighth Intergovernmental Council session of the **MOST Programme** was held in Paris from 16 to 18 July 2007. The participants emphasized the Programme's development towards an international platform for horizontal cooperation, peer learning and exchange among high-level policy-makers in charge of social development, as well as the consolidation of MOST as a continuous, multiple flow interface between policy-makers, social scientists, NGO representatives and practitioners. During the meeting, a ministerial round table of Ministers of Social Development took place to discuss the institutionalizing of the MOST Fora of Ministers of Social Development and the strengthening of regional cooperation on issues related to social development.

43. Wishing to extend its action to young people, the Sector continued to organize **regional youth forums** on the theme "Youth and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples". After the Pacific region and the Euro-Mediterranean region in 2006, a forum was held for Asia in the Republic of Korea from 25 to 29 June 2007 and another for the Americas in Mexico from 9 to 15 September 2007. UNESCO's first African Youth Forum will be held from 24 to 28 September 2007 in Burkina Faso. All of the conclusions of these forums will be submitted to the Youth Forum of the General Conference, on 12 and 13 October 2007, and will provide inputs to the discussions of the ministerial round table on science and technology in the service of sustainable development, which will be held on that occasion.

44. Furthermore, **World Philosophy Day**, which will be hosted this year by Turkey, will be celebrated on 15 November 2007 and its theme will be "Dialogue: among whom and for what purpose?".

45. In order to contribute to global reflection on new trends and challenges in the field of **human rights and democracy**, the Sector is currently preparing, in close consultation with Member States, a plan of action for the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The commemorative events and activities will take place on 10 December 2007. An International Conference on "Democracy and Human Rights in Africa" will also be held in Cairo, Egypt, in December 2007, co-organized with the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights, and with the cooperation of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the International Organization of the Francophonie.

46. Finally, the regional network of the **Coalition of Cities against Racism and Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific** will be officially launched next October, on the occasion of the World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) which will be held in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea (28-31 October 2007).

Culture

47. The Culture Sector continued to implement its principal priority – ensuring the promotion of cultural diversity – by means of its complementary standard-setting framework and in particular the three key conventions in that respect on the world heritage, the intangible heritage and the diversity of cultural expressions.

48. The 31st session of the **World Heritage Committee** was held in Christchurch, New Zealand, from 23 June to 2 July, and the Committee included 22 new cultural and natural properties on the

World Heritage List: 16 cultural sites, five natural sites and one mixed site. In addition, for the first time in the history of the Convention, it withdrew a property from the List. Two new countries, Gabon and Namibia, had their first property included, bringing to 141 the number of countries represented out of a total of 184 States Parties. The List is now made up of 851 sites, 660 of them cultural, 166 natural and 25 mixed, representing approximately 80% cultural sites and 20% natural sites. The Christchurch meeting also enabled the adoption, in line with the wish expressed by the Board at its 176th session, of a strengthened mechanism for the effective implementation of decisions of the World Heritage Committee, activated in exceptional and specific cases. The Committee decided to apply the mechanism in three specific cases requiring particular monitoring: the five world heritage properties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dresden Elbe Valley (Germany) and the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls. The report on the management audit of the World Heritage Centre and the preliminary observations of the Director-General thereon were discussed by the Committee. The follow-up to the decision in that matter will continue to be the subject of internal consultations with the governing bodies and of debate at the General Assembly of States Parties to the 1972 World Heritage Convention, in accordance with the terms of the decision. The Director-General will refer to the issue in particular at the private meeting of the current session of the Executive Board.

49. UNESCO's contribution to the safeguarding of the **cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem** was the subject of discussions concerning both the follow-up to implementation of resolutions of the General Conference and decisions of the Executive Board, and the Israeli archaeological excavations at the Mughrabi ascent. The World Heritage Committee thus welcomed the finalization of the Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and – in the framework of the reinforced mechanism – decided that a report should be drawn up every two months by the World Heritage Centre until the Committee's 32nd session in 2008. The Committee also recommended the holding of a technical meeting between all the parties concerned to discuss detailed proposals for the final design of the Mughrabi ascent. It has not been possible to hold the meeting as yet as the parties wish to examine further the working papers to be discussed. It should be held in the next few weeks, if possible before the end of the current session of the Executive Board.

50. The **2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** now has 80 States Parties. The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held its first extraordinary session in Chengdu, China, from 23 to 27 May 2007. Important discussions took place there on the nature of the two planned lists and the relationship between them, the criteria for inscription on the lists, the Financial Regulations for the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and advisory assistance. At its second ordinary session, held in Tokyo from 3 to 7 September 2007, the Committee continued this process of reflection, notably on the preparation of the operational directives (inscription on the Lists, criteria and arrangements for accrediting NGOs, international assistance, identification of best practices) and the creation of an emblem for the Convention, the use of the resources of the Intangible Heritage Fund, the inclusion of masterpieces on the Representative List and the participation of communities, practitioners, experts, centres of expertise and research centres. A second extraordinary session of the Committee is scheduled to be held in late February 2008 in Bulgaria to finalize this work. The third session of the Committee will be held in Turkey in the final quarter of 2008. The next meeting of the General Assembly of the States Parties, due to be held in June 2008, might approve the operational directives. The States Parties could then be invited in September 2008 to submit nominations for inscription, and the first inscriptions on the two Lists could be envisaged for late 2009.

51. The Conference of Parties to the **Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)** was held from 18 to 20 June 2007 and attended by more than 400 participants. It elected the 24 members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Conference responded favourably to the invitation of Canada to host the first meeting of the Committee in Ottawa from 10 December 2007. The Committee will, *inter alia*, have the task of preparing the operational

guidelines to be submitted to the Conference of Parties at its second ordinary session in June 2009. Two expert meetings were held to prepare the Committee's work on specific subjects, one on international cooperation, held in Madrid, Spain, from 10 to 12 July 2007, and the other on the statistical measurement of the diversity of cultural expressions, held in Montreal, Canada, at the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) from 27 to 28 September 2007.

52. To date, the **Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001)** has been ratified by 15 countries. The Convention will enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification. Some 30 States have announced that they are preparing ratification, so the Convention might enter into force some time in 2008. A meeting on the protection of the underwater cultural heritage will be held on 23 November 2007 at UNESCO Headquarters. It is intended for Permanent Delegates and also the general public and will bring together international experts who will address in particular recent advances in underwater archaeology. Two regional awareness-raising meetings are due to be held before 2008, one for Latin America and the other for West Africa.

53. The fourteenth session of the **Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation** took place at UNESCO Headquarters on 5 and 6 June 2007. Noteworthy among the recommendations adopted by the 22 members of the Committee, which is pursuing its examination of the draft rules of procedure on mediation and conciliation, were those making reference to the encouraging progress made in bilateral negotiations between the countries concerned, an appreciation of the establishment of the legislation database, and the invitation to organize, with the financial support of Greece, an international conference of experts and actors in the field of return and restitution of cultural property. An extraordinary session of the Committee, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary, will be held in Seoul in autumn 2008, at the invitation of the authorities of the Republic of Korea.

54. **The sixteenth technical meeting of the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (ICC)** was held on 3 to 7 July 2007 at Siem Reap, Cambodia. The meeting, attended for the first time by a special expert in sustainable development, adopted a series of recommendations covering a wide range of subjects. They will be considered by the Angkor ICC at its 14th plenary meeting, which will be held on 27 and 28 November 2007 at Siem Reap. The plenary meeting will also discuss ways and means of improving the ICC's working methods, drawing on the experience of similar international coordination bodies administered by UNESCO.

55. An information meeting on the implementation of the **1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property** was held on 12 June 2007. It was an opportunity to report on the various activities undertaken by UNESCO in this field as well as, in particular, the status of ratification of the 1970 Convention and measures taken to implement it in recent years. The meeting also enabled an assessment to be made of the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, UNESCO's action in favour of the return and restitution of cultural property to its countries of origin and the strengthening of the museums in developing countries that house them.

56. **The task force responsible for guiding and coordinating UNESCO's contribution to the promotion of the dialogue among cultures** held its third meeting on 12 September 2007. The importance of UNESCO's contribution to the major international meetings on that subject was underlined, in particular those which will be held at the United Nations at the end of September and beginning of October, parallel to and during the General Assembly of the United Nations, and the meeting to be held in January 2008 in Spain, convened by President Sampaio, High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. UNESCO's positions and analyses should be widely disseminated to all the bodies concerned in order to contribute to the debate under way both in civil society and in the major multilateral institutions. Documents reflecting UNESCO's intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach, the conceptual base for the preparation of the

Organization's Draft Programme and Budget for 2008-2009, are now being drawn up and will be distributed to the governing bodies in the coming weeks.

57. UNESCO continued its efforts to promote the **dialogue** among policy-makers in **South-East European countries**, which began at the first regional meeting held in Ohrid in 2003. In that context, the Director-General attended the fifth regional summit of Heads of State, held in Romania on 7 and 8 June 2007, on the theme "Cultural diversity – a bridge between cultural heritage and the culture of the future". The final declaration adopted at the end of the summit reflects the regional political authorities' commitment to stronger regional cooperation among the States of the region with a view to recognizing and protecting their cultural diversity through heritage and creativity. The next regional summit of Heads of State will be held in Athens in 2008 on the theme "Cultural exchanges on sea, river and lake routes in South-East Europe".

58. The fourth **Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe** was held on 10 September 2007 in Zadar, Croatia. In the spirit of the Ohrid and Varna conferences, the ministers all called subregional cooperation projects to become genuine regional cooperation programmes capable of enlisting greater support from the international community. Romania offered to host the fifth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe, and Bulgaria offered to host an informal meeting on intangible heritage in the subregion. The ministerial conference in Croatia also enabled UNESCO to open the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology, the first of its kind in Europe, which will be dedicated to research and training in this field.

59. As part of the new intersectoral approach in the field of **languages and multilingualism**, the Director-General's Task Force on Languages and Multilingualism met five times between September 2006 and September 2007. In conjunction with the field offices, it conducted a programme review of the activities under way and drew up an intersectoral strategy which was submitted to the Executive Board at its 176th session and is reflected in the draft C/4 and C/5 documents. At its most recent meeting, the Task Force also set out the main lines of UNESCO's strategy for 2008, proclaimed International Year of Languages by the United Nations General Assembly. Work on an information brochure, a language website and Year 2008 was begun in that context. The strategic role of the Director-General's Task Force on Languages and Multilingualism is reflected in operational terms by the work of the intersectoral team of "language focal points", composed of programme specialists from the Organization's five programme sectors.

60. Owing to the progress being made in the preparatory work, the intersectoral **World Report on Cultural Diversity** is likely to be published in May 2008 on the occasion of World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. Following the second meeting of the Advisory Committee of Experts, held in Venice on 2 and 3 April 2007, research papers have been commissioned from experts from different regions of the world in accordance with the Committee's recommendations. The conclusions of the studies will provide inputs to the text currently being drafted. The Advisory Committee of Experts will hold its third and final meeting before the end of the biennium.

61. As part of its contribution to United Nations reform, UNESCO has been assigned the role of United Nations lead agency for culture, jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Spanish Government under the **Spanish Fund** for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, which has an endowment of nearly €500 million. UNESCO contributed, in particular, to the drafting of the terms of reference for the "Culture and development" component. Many UNESCO field offices have been active as part of multi-agency national teams in submitting project proposals for funding under the Spanish Fund. The highly competitive selection process will end in mid-October. The project proposals selected will be announced by the steering committee, composed of the UNDP Administrator and Spain's Minister of Cooperation, who is in charge of administering the Fund.

Communication and information

62. Over the last six months, the activities of the Communication and Information Sector continued to focus on promoting universal access to information and knowledge. Special attention was given to freedom of expression, as an integral part of efforts to achieve international goals and commitments, such as the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS 2003 and 2005).

63. UNESCO continued to play its leading role in the implementation of the outcome of the **World Summit on the Information Society** by implementing concrete activities included in the Geneva Plan of Action, facilitating the coherent implementation of the action lines in its areas of competence and – together with ITU and UNDP – ensuring the overall multi-stakeholder coordination of the facilitators of all action lines. In this regard, UNESCO organized the second series of consultation meetings in Geneva (21-25 May 2007) on the Action Lines it facilitates: Access to information and knowledge (C3), E-learning (C7), E-science (C7), Media (C9), Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content (C8) and Ethical dimensions of the Information Society (C10). In addition to promoting information-sharing on the various initiatives related to these action lines, the Geneva meetings served to reach an agreement on the principles of moderation and administration of the online platform that UNESCO intends to launch to facilitate the work of the multi-stakeholder team.

64. UNESCO took over the chairmanship of the **United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS)** at a meeting hosted at UNESCO in Paris on 17 July. UNGIS is the interagency mechanism established by the United Nations Chief Executives Board to coordinate the substantive policy aspects of the United Nations implementation of the WSIS outcomes. The Group is also to play a role within the context of the current drive for the United Nations to “Deliver as One”.

65. The European regional conference organized by UNESCO in Strasbourg (13-14 September 2007) in cooperation with the French National Commission for UNESCO and the Council of Europe on the theme “Ethics and Human Rights in the Information Society” is the third in a cycle of regional conferences convened by UNESCO on **the ethical dimensions of the information society**. After meetings for Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean, the purpose of this European Conference was to discuss and identify issues of priority for the European region and to raise stakeholders’ awareness of the ethical, legal and socio-economic aspects of ICTs. The European event, attended by more than 120 participants from some 26 countries, ended with a series of recommendations directed to all stakeholders – citizens, civil society, private sector, governments and international organizations – for the further enhancement of information ethics.

66. The celebration of the **World Press Freedom Day** on 3 May and the award of the 2007 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to the late Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya were among prominent activities aimed at sensitizing governments, civil society and the public at large to the importance of promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The main theme of the 2007 celebrations was press freedom, safety of journalists and impunity. This was also the topic of the international conference organized in Medellin, Colombia, where some 200 participating media professionals from around the world adopted a declaration laying the ground for a wide range of measures to improve the safety of journalists and punish crimes against them. UNESCO stands ready to implement the requests made of the Organization in the Medellin Declaration, as well as in the Declaration on Media, Development and Poverty Eradication adopted in Colombo in 2006.

67. In June 2007, a publication on **Model Curricula on Journalism Education** was launched at the World Journalism Education Congress, in Singapore. The proposed Journalism Curricula is a generic model that can be adapted according to each country’s specific needs. It takes full cognizance of the social, economic, political and cultural contexts of developing countries and emerging democracies, highlighting the connection between democracy and journalism and arguing for a more cross-disciplinary approach within journalism training centres.

68. In collaboration with Rhodes University's School of Journalism and the Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille (ESJ), as well as other experts, international networks, African teaching institutions and media development agencies, UNESCO finalized a unique **mapping of 96 African media/journalism training institutions**, a database and a consensus-originated set of criteria and indicators for defining potential centres of excellence among these institutions. The project helped identify 14 institutions in Africa that are well-positioned with respect to sustained growth, development and impact. Such a status can elicit respect from potential students and learners, from their own parent institutions where applicable, from the media they serve, and from donors and foundations in general.

69. On the recommendation of the International Advisory Committee of the **Memory of the World Programme** that met in Pretoria, South Africa, from 13 to 15 June 2007, the Director-General decided to inscribe 38 new items on the Memory of the World Register, bringing the total number of inscriptions since 1997 to 158. The UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize for 2007 was awarded to the Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna, Austria.

70. Adopting the "Kronberg Declaration on the **Future of Knowledge Acquisition and Sharing**" at a meeting organized by UNESCO and the German National Commission for UNESCO in Kronberg, Germany, on 23 June 2007, the high-level experts called for leaders in the public and private sectors to embrace change in organizations by providing opportunities and incentives to facilitate and motivate, as well as overcome typical barriers to, knowledge acquisition and sharing. They anticipated that in the coming decades the importance of acquiring factual knowledge will decrease, whereas the ability to find one's way in complex systems and to find, judge, organize and creatively use relevant information, as well as the capability to learn, will become crucially important.

71. On the basis of an agreement signed on 2 July 2007 between UNESCO and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, UNESCO will implement a \$72 million project on **ICTs for capacity-building in higher education in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**. The project, funded by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in a self-benefiting funds-in-trust arrangement, is the biggest ever extrabudgetary project implemented by UNESCO. The principal objective of the project is to enhance national ICT capacity through the construction of a nationwide area network connecting all Libyan university campuses and the establishment of local area networks, data centres, computer labs, e-classrooms, infrastructure applications, video on demand, specific application systems, online educational content, digital libraries and multimedia production facilities for each university.

Africa

72. As part of the follow-up to the **Eighth African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government**, held in Addis Ababa (29-30 January 2007) on the central theme of "Science, Technology and Scientific Research for the Development of Africa", a plan of action concerning UNESCO's participation in the implementation of the decision and declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Summit will be submitted to the Executive Board at its 177th session (177 EX/16).

73. Support for the regional integration process in Africa was continued. Accordingly, the **UNESCO Committee for NEPAD**, whose task is to advise the Organization on its contribution to the implementation of African Union/NEPAD activities in its fields of competence, met on 9 and 10 July 2007 at the Organization's Headquarters and made recommendations to UNESCO.

74. As part of the activities recommended by the Forum of African regional and subregional organizations to support cooperation between UNESCO and NEPAD (FOSRASUN), UNESCO organized at Headquarters, from 3 to 7 September 2007, a **training seminar for the focal points of African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Integration Organizations (RIOs)**. The purpose of the seminar was to ensure that the RECs/RIOs were better acquainted with all of the Organization's programme sectors and central services in order to facilitate

cooperation at the regional and subregional levels. All African regional economic communities and regional organizations, except the East African Community (EAC), participated in the meeting.

75. In response to a request from the African Union, UNESCO continued to support action to secure the integration of the Diaspora. Accordingly, the Organization participated in the follow-up to the meeting of the **Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora** (CIAD II, Salvador de Bahia, 12-14 July 2006) and provided technical and financial assistance for the African Union-African Diaspora conference held on 11 and 12 September 2007 in Paris on the theme "Towards the realization of a united and integrated Africa and its Diaspora".

76. Lastly, UNESCO organized in Cotonou, Benin, on 20 and 21 August 2007, pursuant to the recommendations made by the UNESCO Committee for NEPAD at its third meeting in 2005, an international symposium on **interfaith dialogue among endogenous African religions, Islam and Christianity**. The purpose of the symposium, attended by about 100 participants, was to make recommendations on conditions conducive to dialogue among these different faiths and to identify obstacles to interfaith dialogue.

Action in post-conflict situations

77. The Organization continued developing its assistance to **Iraq** (177 EX/64). Due to the prevailing situation in Iraq, mitigating the impact of sectarian violence, as well as violence targeting journalists, artists, academics, teachers and students, became increasingly an area of focus. In June 2007, a second bombing hit the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra, destroying two 36-metre-high minarets. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007, the Samarra Archaeological City was immediately included on the List of World Heritage in Danger. At the Iraqi authorities' request, and with support from the Government of Iraq and the European Commission, UNESCO will undertake the restoration of the Shrine. In education, new assistance is being provided to the Iraqi authorities in developing distance education, including for the increasing number of children who are internally displaced or refugees in neighbouring countries. Support to technical and vocational education, as well as secondary education, also remained priority areas of assistance during the past year.

78. Following last summer's conflict, UNESCO has been supporting **Lebanon** (177 EX/63) in its recovery and longer-term reconstruction efforts. The Organization has sought to mitigate the psychological impact of the conflict, especially among children and young persons, through educational and cultural activities aimed at healing trauma and promoting values of tolerance and intercultural understanding. In cultural heritage preservation, special attention has been given to the cleaning of archaeological remains and the medieval tower at the entrance of the ancient harbour of the Byblos World Heritage site, affected by the oil spill that occurred during the conflict. Moreover, the technical capacity for digital documentation of World Heritage sites in Lebanon will be strengthened through a UNESCO project recently approved under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Lebanon Recovery Fund.

79. As the international community reengages with the interim Government of the Palestinian Authority (PA) appointed in June 2007, new impetus is foreseen for institutional capacity-building in the **Palestinian Territories** (177 EX/62), including in UNESCO's fields of competence. During the past six months, UNESCO continued to advance further its technical assistance programme, with education and culture being the most prominent areas of cooperation. With violence in Palestinian society an issue of increasing concern, special attention was given to the protection of journalists, as well as the training of teachers in psychological and social support within the public school system.

80. The Director-General informed the Executive Board at its 174th and 175th sessions of the progress made in the implementation of 33 C/Resolution 66 on strengthening cooperation with the **Republic of Sudan**. The establishment of the UNESCO Office in Sudan is now complete and that of the antenna in Juba is under way. The Director-General has also set up an internal working group for reconstruction and reconciliation in Sudan, with the task of overseeing and giving impetus to the Organization's activities in Sudan and ensuring the overall coordination of them. In

the fields of education and communication, institutional and human capacity-building remains the priority. A working group composed of national and UNESCO experts has also been set up to address in particular the question of water resources management. A management plan for the World Heritage site Jebel Barkal and the sites of the Napatan region is being drawn up and support is being provided for the elaboration of a platform for the development of culture in Sudan.

81. Pursuant to 33 C/Resolution 67 of the General Conference, the Director-General set up a working group for strengthening cooperation with **Somalia**, presided over by the Africa Department, with a view to ensuring a coherent response by the Organization in that country within the larger framework of United Nations system efforts. Stress is thus being placed on the coordinated and intersectoral dimension of the Organization's action, which is supported operationally on the ground by the UNESCO-PEER regional programme, led by a coordinator and composed of three antennas in Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Garoowe, thereby ensuring the Organization's effective presence in Somalia. The Director-General has also decided to attach Somalia to the Nairobi Cluster Office (DG/Note/06/28 of 15 June 2006) in order to facilitate UNESCO's participation in United Nations consultation mechanisms and actions. In the field of education, the Organization is helping to identify and assess the most urgent needs with a view to setting up a priority assistance programme. In the field of culture, a meeting of experts was held in Nairobi (June 2007) on the priority of rehabilitating the Somali cultural heritage. Cooperation in the field of information and communication has focused on strengthening journalists' skills and developing an independent and pluralist press.

82. During the summer, several countries were affected by natural disasters of severe magnitude, leading to tragic loss of human life, trauma of affected communities and considerable physical damage. UNESCO took an active part in the United Nations response to two major disasters, namely the floods in **Pakistan** (July 2007) and the earthquake in Peru (August 2007). In both cases, UNESCO is contributing towards the early reactivation and reconstruction of the education system and services based on a holistic approach, notably internationally agreed minimum standards for education in emergencies. In the case of Peru, UNESCO as lead agency for the United Nations humanitarian response in the field of education, is also acting as the overall coordinator of all efforts undertaken in this area by the United Nations system and major international NGOs, in support of the Peruvian authorities.

III. UNITED NATIONS REFORM AND DECENTRALIZATION

83. The **Decentralization Review Task Force**, established by the Director-General in November 2006 and chaired by the Deputy Director-General, has completed the first phase of its work which mainly concentrated on immediate measures needed to reinforce the Organization's decentralized system. This includes enhancing the programme accountability of field offices and promoting the active participation of field offices in United Nations country-level reform processes. The Director-General's report on the Task Force's work will be presented to the Executive Board in document 177 EX/6 Part II, and will subsequently be submitted to the General Conference at its 34th session.

84. Based on the Task Force's analysis, a timely **reinforcement of field offices** involved in the 2007 UNDAF roll-out and in the eight "Delivering as One" pilots is being funded under the budgetary provision of 2% of overall programme funds established by the Director-General in the current biennium. In addition, in order to promote more effectively the inclusion of the Organization's expertise, priorities and standard-setting instruments in country-level planning and programming frameworks, the Task Force identified key messages, priorities and comparative advantages in each of UNESCO's fields of competence, highlighting the link between its global, standard-setting action and its operational action. These messages have been consolidated into a succinct document by BSP, which will be provided to United Nations Country Team members to illustrate the scope and breadth of UNESCO's role as a specialized agency within the United Nations system.

85. In the **second phase** of its work, which will start after the 34th session of the General Conference, the Decentralization Review Task Force will revisit the structure of UNESCO's field network in order to propose necessary adjustments to enable the Organization to take up the challenges of United Nations reform at field level.

86. UNESCO is contributing increasingly to the **UNCT programming**, in particular, to the One Plan of the eight "Delivering as One" United Nations pilot countries and has managed to have UNESCO's fields of competence reflected in response to the national priorities.

87. In parallel, UNESCO continues to be actively involved in the "ASG/ADG informal group" (or "Group of 10") established under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to provide advice and support to the eight "Delivering as One" pilot countries. UNESCO also **participates actively in various interagency working groups** on the alignment and harmonization of procedures to be applied at country level, such as the Human Resource Network, established under the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the CEB and chaired by UNESCO's Director of the Bureau of Human Resources Management. The Director-General will report to the Executive Board in document 177 EX/INF.10, and subsequently to the General Conference at its 34th session, on UNESCO's involvement in United Nations country level reform processes, including the "Delivering as One" pilots, and the results achieved in various countries through common United Nations system programming exercises. More information on UNESCO's engagement in the United Nations reform process will also be given in the Director-General's statement at the opening of the plenary session.

IV. UNESCO REFORM PROCESS AND MANAGEMENT

88. In accordance with 176 EX/Decision 39 (Report by the External Auditor on the procedures used to hire consultants for the restructuring of the Education Sector), the Director-General has presented, in document 177 EX/53, a progress report on the **implementation of the recommendations outlined by the External Auditor** as well as the decisions taken thereon by the Executive Board at its 176th session. Much progress has been made in the implementation of this decision and of the recommendations made in the External Auditor's report on the subject. Beyond the immediate steps announced in document 176 EX/INF.12, a number of actions have been taken to respond to the External Auditor's recommendations. These include: establishing an internal control policy framework; establishing monitoring mechanisms to ensure that internal control deficiencies are reported rapidly to senior management for remedial action; strengthening the role of the Administrative Officers and the Comptroller and clarifying their reporting lines, including creating the Bureau of the Comptroller; comprehensive training and refresher programmes on UNESCO's administrative regulations and procedures; and development of disciplinary measures under the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

89. The Director-General has presented in document 177 EX/6 a comprehensive report outlining the major achievements of the **staff policy reform**, and of the medium- and long-term staffing strategy. The document summarizes the progress achieved in the implementation of the human resources policy framework since 2005. It also presents a progress report on the implementation of the medium- and long-term staffing strategy endorsed by the General Conference at its 33rd session.

90. **SISTER 2.1**, the first version of the SISTER-2 tool, went live on 6 June 2007. Fields and functions not available upon the go-live are being progressively released. As is to be expected when implementing a complex IT tool such as SISTER-2, various functional and technical issues emerged, from which useful lessons were learned. For example, the Project Steering Committee decided to simplify the procedures encoded in SISTER-2 in certain areas and transactions, while making sure not to compromise the tool's ability to support "accountable decentralization" and an effective "delegation of authority". SISTER 2.1 is now being used on a daily basis to manage the 33 C/5 work plans and notably to conduct the qualitative and budgetary reprogramming exercises that take place at this point of the biennium. SISTER 2.1 will also be used to report on the results

achieved during the last semester of the current biennium. Furthermore, working under tight schedule constraints, the Project team is conducting consultations on the development of the second version of the tool (SISTER 2.2) which should not only accommodate the numerous new characteristics of document 34 C/5 (e.g. reduced number of programming levels, existence of intersectoral platforms, etc.) but ideally also be used to manage extrabudgetary projects. SISTER 2.2 is expected to go live immediately after the 34th session of the General Conference, in order to allow for the timely preparation of 34 C/5 work plans. Funds have been allocated to implement a comprehensive training strategy for SISTER 2.2 covering both the RBM and technical aspects of the tool. The first trainees will be the members of the SISTER-2 focal points network which is being established at Headquarters and in the field. These focal points will play a key role in the user groups and in the “change-control process” being set up as part of the post go-live governance and management arrangements for the tool.

91. Within the framework of the **FABS roll-out** to the field, good progress has been achieved with regard to the integration of the UNESCO Brasilia Office (UBO) in UNESCO’s central finance and budget system by replacing the current system (SICOF) with an adapted FABS solution. It will be recalled that the volume of UBO’s operations as well as the complexity of its current system necessitated the launching of a dedicated project in April 2007, under the guidance of a steering committee chaired by the Comptroller. The preparatory phase of this project is now completed and the solution design can start in collaboration with an external implementation partner chosen through an open international competition. The solution will be firmly based on the central FABS system while taking into account specific needs that UBO may have to support its business processes. UBO is expected to be fully integrated in FABS in the first half of 2008.

92. The new human resources management system – **STEPS** – has been in operation since April 2007, allowing in particular staff salaries to be calculated and paid from a more reliable and sustainable system as compared with the mainframe system used in the past. The latter is now being phased out allowing important savings to be made with regard to the mainframe maintenance and support. It is important to note, however, that so far, only basic priority functionalities grouped around payroll are available in STEPS. Preparatory work has started for a second phase of the project, which should enrich STEPS with more value-added functionalities, such as employee/manager online self-services, e-recruitment, personnel development and evaluation, and training and event management.

93. The **renovation plan of UNESCO’s Fontenoy Headquarters premises (Belmont Plan)** is advancing, under the monitoring of the Headquarters Committee. It aims to provide for modern, safe and healthy working conditions, while ensuring respect for environmental requirements and energy-saving standards. Two wings of the main Fontenoy building have been completely renovated, and work on the third is under way. The library, restaurant and printing shop have also been modernized, and are now open. The Director-General intends to inaugurate the renovated Fontenoy premises before the 35th session of the General Conference in 2009. The Executive Board at its last session invited the Director-General to identify adequate resources to cover the increased costs of the renovation caused by the rise in construction costs in the host country. A report thereon is presented in document 177 EX/55. The Director-General proposes to use the balance of unliquidated obligations from the 2004-2005 biennium. It is to be hoped that the Board will support this proposal, which would enable the Organization to outbalance the impact of cost increases and complete the Belmont Plan in its totality.

V. RELATIONS WITH MEMBER STATES

94. The database on **National Commissions**, which opened up in 2005, showed steady progress in the current biennium. To date, 111 out of 193 National Commissions have registered and received direct access to this database. Various manuals and training materials were produced and disseminated to facilitate access and data updates. The Practical Guide for National Commissions has been fully updated, and the new version will be launched during the

34th session of the General Conference. In addition, with the help of the software developed by the Secretariat, half of the National Commissions now have their own website.

95. The overall progress related to **partnership with elected representatives** (parliamentarians, mayors and local authorities) and the movement of UNESCO Clubs continued steadily. At the international level, UNESCO's cooperation with the Interparliamentary Union has been pursued with a view to strengthening the legislative, political and financial support for UNESCO's programme priorities. Regional parliamentary meetings also took place, notably the meeting in Rabat in June 2007 on Challenges in Education in the Arab Region. This meeting, organized with ISESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS, was also the founding conference of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians for Education (FARPEd).

96. Cooperation between UNESCO and the **United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)** was further strengthened through the signature of a cooperation agreement in June 2007. Shortly after the agreement was signed, UNESCO met with UCLG representatives to establish a joint programme of cooperation for 2008-2009.

97. UNESCO has been proactive in **strengthening other key relationships** and in exploring how to leverage respective competencies in ways that are mutually beneficial. In this regard, in September, UNESCO and OECD updated a previous agreement governing relations between the two organizations so as to take advantage of the growing synergy, complementarity and exchange of expertise.

98. Modalities of cooperation with **non-governmental organizations** have been improved, owing in particular to the designation of focal points in the programme sectors, the reinforcement of the capacities of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the development of regular cooperation between national NGOs and the National Commissions. Wide consultations with all NGO partners on the Sexennial Report helped to assess the contribution of NGOs to the work of UNESCO and led to the formulation of proposals for concrete action, which will be presented to the 34th session of the General Conference.

99. During the period from 1 January 2006 to 30 June 2007, UNESCO awarded 269 short-term **fellowships** in areas closely aligned to its priority programmes, under both regular and extrabudgetary programmes, for a total value of \$3,874,957. Two hundred and fourteen of these fellowships were awarded through cost-sharing arrangements with donors and the funds-in-trust projects. There was likewise progress in coordination with other United Nations agencies to harmonize policies in administration of fellowships and to share information on good practices.

100. The situation of the **Participation Programme (PP)** in September 2007 was as follows: 1,042 requests were approved for 147 Member States and Associate Members, and 63 requests for international non-governmental organizations, representing a total amount of \$18,654,432. Likewise, 35 requests for emergency assistance were approved for a total amount of \$1,147,200. The approval rates for the different categories of requests were: 100% for funds set aside for Member States and international non-governmental organizations; and 81% for funds set aside for emergency assistance. A number of OECD Development Assistance Committee member countries have replied positively to the call from the Director-General to favour least developed countries (LDCs) by abstaining from proposing PP requests. These countries include: Belgium, Canada, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America. In addition, India, which is not an OECD-DAC Member State, also desisted from applying for PP in favour of LDCs. In document 34 C/5, the Director-General intends to introduce a new system which enlarges the number of countries requested to refrain from submitting requests to all those with a per capita GDP over \$10,000 per annum in order to make more funds available for poorer Member States.