ORAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE (SP)
The Special Committee (SP) met on Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 April 2008, to consider six agenda items allocated to it (18, 19, 21, 22, 27 and 41). Ms Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Pakistan’s representative to the Executive Board chaired the meeting. She was elected for this position at the 178th session of the Executive Board. At the beginning of the meeting, H.E. Mr Seiichi Kondo, Ambassador/Permanent Delegate of Japan, was unanimously elected as the temporary chairperson. All 18 members attended; there were 20 observers as well. The Committee made proposals for Draft Decisions for all six items.

Highlights from the SP debate on the six Items are as follows:

**Item 18:** Follow-up to 33 C/Resolution 92 (para. 5) concerning relations between the three organs of UNESCO (179 EX/18)

It was introduced by the Secretary of the Governing Bodies, Mr Parsuramen. He noted that this item had been on the Agenda of the Board for several Executive Board sessions as implementation on Recommendations was still in process. The discussions brought out the following main points:

- The Executive Board should “close” those Recommendations that have been fully implemented and report accordingly to the General Conference.

- Find out a strategic and tactical way for reducing the number of agenda items. There is a need for clarification on how the Executive Board might be able to achieve this objective within the existing rules.

- Though interaction between the Delegations and the Director-General has improved, it needs to be enhanced among the Members of the Board to promote real discussion – It is a challenge and calls for innovative thinking.

- The introduction of Thematic Debates is an innovative change that allows for debate in areas beyond administrative matters; the debates should emphasize policy-oriented issues rather than administrative procedural matters; extend EB sessions for policy debates – if budget allows.

- A transparent and consultative mechanism should be established to select the themes and the speakers for the thematic debate.

The members then decided to propose that this item be kept on the agenda of the SP for the upcoming sessions of the Executive Board so that implementation progress of the outstanding Recommendations can be examined.

**Item 19:** Review by the Executive Board of the Methods of Work and the Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters (179 EX/19 and Add.)

At its 178th session, the Executive Board decided to adopt, on a temporary basis, the Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative matters as defined in 144 EX/Decision 6.10, to be reviewed by the Executive Board at its 179th session. A synthesis of the replies received by the Chair following his request for comments and suggestions addressed to the Members of the Executive Board was presented to the Committee. The SP had the privilege of the presence of the Chair of the Executive Board, Ambassador Yaï to introduce this important agenda item.

The following main points emerged from the debate on this item:
The mandate of the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative matters is very precise and clear and so it should be maintained.

There had been difficulties with the methods of work of the group. The group needs to concentrate on technical issues, and not on policy and political matters.

The report from the group should be available at least three working days before the commencement of the meeting of the FA Commission.

The need for the Group of Experts to have real expertise and experience in the area of finance and administration.

The Group of Experts needs to be well versed in financial and administrative procedures of UNESCO as well as the academic nature of the Organization’s work.

Meetings of the Group of Experts should be held in a small room (big enough to hold only the experts, so that they can concentrate on their work). To establish the experts as neutral/technical individuals they should be recognized by their name plaques instead of being recognized by the country’s name to which they belong.

Continuity of the same expert for the entire biennium, for consistency and effective functioning of the group.

The Chairperson should be from the Group of Experts – with skills to Chair the session on the basis of clear guidelines that “strictly” prohibit discussion of a non-technical nature.

Timely distribution of documents for consideration by the Group of Experts.

Establish clear guidelines on the methods of work for the Group of Experts and the Chair.

Amendments to be made to draft resolutions only if they have been agreed by consensus in the group; no more bracketed amendments.

Background of experts in Finance & Administration is important – experts must also be well versed in technical issues such as UNESCO’s financial management procedures.

Item 21: Report by the Executive Board on the implementation of document 34 C/5 with results achieved in the previous biennium (35 C/3) (179 EX/21)

This item was introduced by the Secretary of the Governing Bodies. He informed the meeting that during the last biennium, the Chairperson of the Executive Board had constituted an informal working group to prepare the report. It included representatives from regional groups, the chairpersons of the PX and FA Commissions, and the C/5 Drafting Group. The Executive Board produced its first report on the implementation for the programme to the General Conference last year (34 C/9 Part II).

The SP noted that since the biennium had just commenced there were few substantive matters to discuss on the implementation of document 34 C/5. However, document 179 EX/4 – Draft 35 C/3 was available, and the Executive Board should reflect on the modalities of preparing its report on the implementation of the programme for the next General Conference. The new report is to be completed by the 182nd session of the Executive Board. It was suggested that for the Executive Board to properly report on the implementation of the programme, it would require improved reporting by the Secretariat including assessment of outcomes against expected results.
The debate brought out the following main points:

- Acknowledgement that some progress has been made by the Secretariat in reporting, however, there is room for improvement.

- The online document is huge and difficult to manage.

- A drafting group might have to be established for preparing the report. It would require timely assistance from the Secretariat to get the report ready before the 2009 spring session of the Executive Board.

**Item 22:** Report by the Executive Board on its own activities, including its methods of work: the format of its report to the General Conference (179 EX/22)

The Secretary of the Governing Bodies introducing this item noted that for the last biennium, the report was produced as Part I of a Joint Report (with Part II covering the implementation of the programme and the results achieved). The Committee decided that since it is an ongoing process and concrete proposals will be submitted at the 180th session (Autumn 2008) the present discussion will be confined to preliminary considerations. It was also agreed that 34 C/9 Part I provides a model for the report.

To formalize these decisions the Committee recommended a proposal for a draft decision to this effect.

**Item 27:** Organization of the work of the 35th session of the General Conference (179 EX/27)

**Item 27** was introduced by Mr Parsuramen and Mr Millward. They briefed the SP on the ongoing process led by the President of the General Conference who has constituted an informal working group to examine issues related to the preparation for the next session of the General Conference. This group has been established on the request made during the sixth, additional meeting of the General Committee of the General Conference held on 31 October 2007 and the task entrusted to the President by 34 C/Resolution 88. This informal working group has held four meetings during which it identified five broad areas of study and nominated rapporteurs to report on them.

At its fourth meeting held on 31 March 2008, the informal working group examined the reports, debated each of them, and is now preparing a consolidated report that will be finalized at the end of June 2008. The final report will contain broad lines of agreement within the group.

During the debate in the SP clarification was sought about the official status of the report being produced by the informal working group. The Legal Adviser informed that the report of this group can be presented to the Executive Board as an INF Document. The SP will be expected to examine this report when presented as an information document to the autumn session of the Executive Board (October 2008)

**Item 41:** Proposals by the Executive Board on the implementation of 34 C/Resolution 1 concerning the rolling Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) and the future procedure for consideration by the General Conference regarding the Draft Medium-Term Strategies of UNESCO (179 EX/41)

The ADG/Strategic Planning while introducing this item highlighted two important aspects; (i) the need for amendments to be made to document 34 C/4 when necessary; and (ii) the procedures to be adopted in order to introduce the proposed amendments.

During the debate the following main points were agreed upon by consensus:
• Amendments to the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) should be referred to the General Conference only when emerging challenges or developments at the global, regional and national levels, pertaining to the Organization’s fields of competence, so demand.

• 34 C/Resolution 1, which refers to the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) as a rolling strategy should not be interpreted as requiring automatic initiation of a procedure for review of the MTS at each biennium.

• As it was too early at this stage for Member States to propose amendments to the Medium-Term Strategy, the discussion was to concentrate on making initial proposals for the necessary procedures – including appropriate criteria – to be followed when amendments are to be made.

All the six draft decisions recommended by the Special Committee are presented in document 179 EX/55.

The Chairperson of SP presented highlights of the debate on Items 21 and 41 to the PX Commission on 10 April, as a contribution to the debate on Item 4. The Chairperson also presented highlights of the SP debate on Item 19 to the FA Commission on 15 April. The proposal of SP for a draft decision on this item was forwarded to the FA Commission for consideration. It was adopted by the FA Commission with amendments.