ORAL REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
TO THE PLENARY OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD
AT ITS 180th SESSION

17 OCTOBER 2008
Mr President of the General Conference,
Mr Chair of the Executive Board,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

I have the honour to present, at this plenary meeting of the Executive Board at its 180th session, the report of the work of the Finance and Administrative Commission.

In accordance with the agenda approved by the Executive Board in plenary, the Finance and Administrative Commission considered nine items. It met four times, twice on Friday 10 October and twice on Wednesday 15 October 2008, in order to complete its work.

Mr Abdelatif Rahal (Algeria) was elected temporary Chair of the Commission pursuant to Rule 16.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, and I am grateful to him for having accepted this important responsibility. The assistance of Kamel Boughaba, his replacement, was invaluable in ensuring the completion of the work and I am grateful to him too.

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters met from 1 to 3 October 2008 to examine from a strictly technical point of view the administrative and financial aspects of items of the FA Commission that had been referred to it by the Bureau. The Report of the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters (180 EX/FA/EG) was extremely useful and enabled the FA Commission to obtain specific information and to be more effective in its deliberations.

The presentation that will follow takes the form of a summary of the most important issues that emerged from the Commission’s deliberations. At the end of the presentation, with your permission, Mr Chair, I shall propose that the Executive Board adopt as a whole the draft decisions contained in document 180 EX/67.

At the time of adopting the timetable of the FA Commission, one Member State had reiterated its request that items 18 and 40 be considered by the FA Commission. As the plenary had decided that those two items would be examined at the joint meeting of the PX and FA Commissions, the Legal Adviser explained that only the plenary could reverse its decision. It was agreed that that should be reflected in my oral report.

With your permission, I shall now review the items that were examined by the Finance and Administrative Commission.

May I introduce the first item:

Item 6 Report by the Director-General on the implementation of the reform process

Part I – Staff policy

The representative of the Secretariat informed Member States, as additional information, that the roster on consultants is now available and operational. This roster, she stated, will soon be available online to Member States as well.

While acknowledging the progress made by the Secretariat on staff policy reforms, Member States expressed the need for further work in this area. They first underlined the need to enrich the report to the Member States with additional information, notably regarding the number of nominations at Headquarters and in the field, internally and externally. They also emphasized the need to reduce delays in recruitments. Then, they highlighted the need to make further progress to attain gender parity, particularly at Director level. This, however, should not be achieved at the detriment of geographical distribution.
Several Members States requested information on the merit-based promotion programme and, in particular, the criteria for such promotions and the linkage with performance appraisal while a significant percentage of staff had no performance report yet. Concerns were also raised regarding the permanent nature of the promotion and the fact that the responsibilities of the staff promoted were not increased while the staff was being paid at a higher grade. Some Members argued in favour of cash awards instead of promotions, considering notably the long-term financial impact of such promotions. Some Members highlighted the considerable time that senior staff in Programme Sectors spend on the recruitment process when their time should be dedicated to the programme.

A question was asked on the progress made by the Secretariat regarding the review of the profiles and competencies of NPOs (as foreseen by the mid-term/long-term strategy) as well as the involvement of Member States in the recruitment of Young Professionals and staff on P1/P2 posts. The question of the possibility for temporary staff to apply as internal candidates to posts was also raised.

The representative of the Secretariat provided clarification as requested.

Regarding delays in recruitment, the representative of the Secretariat indicated that within the overall vacancy period, there was a period of five months during which the post remained vacant (two months external advertisement and an average of three months of notice for the candidate). She also mentioned that certain measures have been taken to reduce recruitment delays: the Secretariat is resorting more and more to the advance advertisement of posts. Also a recruitment officer has been dedicated to the pre-screening process, which greatly facilitates the task of Sectors/Bureaux and accelerates the overall recruitment process.

She recognized the need to continue efforts to achieve gender parity particularly at Director and above levels.

Regarding merit-based promotion, the representative of the Secretariat indicated that such promotions rewarded outstanding performance and were of an exceptional nature. The criteria which included performance, achievements and mobility were applied rigorously in a very thorough process which included the Staff Associations. All the staff promoted had performance reports attesting their outstanding record. The cost of such promotions was included in the “Reserve for Reclassifications and Merit-Promotions” approved by the General Conference for this biennium, and for the next biennia, they were to be absorbed in the staff costs enveloped of the respective Sectors/Bureaux.

She also indicated that the cash awards option was not favoured by the staff.

Furthermore, the representative of the Secretariat confirmed that the roster access will be widely disseminated, including to National Commissions and to Member States. She mentioned that the evaluation of the Leadership and Change Management Programme was positive overall, but that adjustments were recommended to the content so as to include gender and risk issues as well as more concrete case-management. The evaluation of the recruitment policy undertaken by IOS would be completed shortly. She stressed that recruitment was a managerial responsibility and that managers should dedicate the adequate time to such an important task. Work on the NPO profile has started and would be expected to be completed in 2009. She also confirmed that the call letters to submit applications from Young Professionals have been sent to Member States and National Commissions of under- and non-represented countries. She also confirmed that the provision whereby temporary staff were eligible to apply as internal candidates to posts had been deleted.
Part II – Decentralization

In introducing the debate, the representative of the Secretariat looked forward to the reactions and advice of the Executive Board particularly on UNESCO’s roles and modalities of action at country level (re. paragraph 17 of the document) and on the set of principles and guidelines to drive the design of UNESCO’s response to the decentralization challenges (re. paras. 18-22), indicating that all options which will be presented to the Board at its next session will reflect different ways of translating the same set of principles through various different structural adjustments, functional responsibilities, accountabilities and reporting lines.

Many Members appreciated the clear and informative qualities of the document, indicating their agreement in principle with its content as well as their support to the review of UNESCO’s decentralization strategy and its harmonious alignment with the United Nations country level reform. One Member expressed the view that the Organization’s decentralization strategy is slowly becoming a success story and should further be strengthened. Another Member pointed to the fact that the United Nations reform has significant impact on all agencies and a potential to boost UNESCO’s operational action on the ground.

A number of views and suggestions were made to guide the Secretariat’s work on the review of the decentralization strategy. Support for an improved UNESCO presence at country level was expressed, though it was stressed that this should not necessarily take the form of national offices. Instead, the review should focus on the reinforcement of the regional level with flexible mechanisms for the deployment of required and quality expertise and resource to timely delivery platforms to cater for national needs. The issue of clear reporting lines and hierarchy between the different field units was raised, as well as of appropriate linkages with and support from Headquarters. The need to factor in the revised decentralization strategy clear oversight and accountability and related mechanisms was emphasized. The general sentiment was voiced that the quality of UNESCO field staff remains essential for the Organization to affirm its role within joint United Nations programming initiatives and become more relevant to Member States, which requires high expertise and good negotiation skills. A close link between the review of the decentralization strategy and the implementation of the rotation policy was deemed crucial in this endeavour.

Some concerns were also expressed. Noting that the evaluation of the “Delivering as One” pilots and related consultations at the United Nations in New York were still ongoing, a number of Members States called for caution in the adjustments to the current decentralization strategy as they should ultimately align to the final decisions taken by the General Assembly in this respect.

One Member recognized that this initiative is still at an experimental stage and will provide useful lessons for other countries once the evaluation is finalized. At this juncture, the Member stressed the need for harmonizing business practices and establishing efficient communication tools, for redirecting efficiency savings to programmes, and for guidance, flexibility and financial support from agency’s headquarters. It was further suggested that the Director-General’s report to the Executive Board at its 181st session includes some examples to concretely illustrate the operations of “Delivering as One” pilots.

One Member underlined the need to link the review of UNESCO’s decentralized system to the decisions taken by consensus by all Member States within the framework of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/208 concerning the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations System (TCPR 2007). The corresponding challenge for the Secretariat is to become a more proactive player in complying with its provisions.

The representative of the Secretariat welcomed this linkage, stating that the “Delivering as One” initiative was only one facet of the United Nations country level reform which has been ongoing for a number of years within the framework of the TCPR debates of the General
Assembly, and which has progressively put in place a number of arrangements for greater United Nations on-the-ground coordination, including UNDAF and joint programming exercises. She indicated that while UNESCO is firmly engaged in “Delivering as One” pilots, notably on the programming and joint services aspects, it exercises caution in those dimensions such as the “One UN Houses” where considerable investment is required.

Members also addressed the issue of the positioning of National Commissions in the country-level approach. Some Members hold the view that by virtue of their inherent nature they may not play a direct role in the United Nations Country Teams. Others inquired on their possible contribution. The representative of the Secretariat indicated that in spite of their legal national entity status, there were a number of examples where Secretaries-General of National Commissions are accepted at United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) and working groups meeting in countries where UNESCO is non-resident, essentially as resource persons and liaison with the Cluster Office concerned, and without a decision-making responsibility. The conference organized by ERC and BSP in Hanoi in November 2008, bringing together Secretaries-General of National Commissions involved in “Delivering as One”, will further explore their possible positioning.

Clarification was requested on the statement in the document (para. 17) pertaining to a more flexible approach to decentralized programming stressing that UNESCO’s action at country level should be aligned to the approved C/5 document. In reply, the representative of the Secretariat stated that in its analysis of the situation at country level, the Decentralization Review Task Force (DRTF) observed that all main lines of action approved and budgeted for in C/5 documents may not consistently correspond to national priorities and UNDAF country demands. The DRTF will further investigate this matter and possible solutions will be presented in the Director-General’s report to the Board at its 181st session.

To a question on the agreement between UNESCO and UNDP, the representative of the Secretariat explained that a Strategic Partnership Agreement is being finalized the purpose of which is not placing UNESCO staff in UNDP field offices, but to work together to promote UNESCO’s fields of competence within joint UNCT programming exercises.

In response to a query on possible measures of attracting qualified staff members to the field, the representative of the Secretariat referred to flexible approaches to staff mobility such as short-term field assignments which on the one hand enables staff to gain direct understanding of field reality and work and, on the other, to acquire skills and competencies for future transfers to the field.

**Item 21 Preliminary proposals by the Director-General concerning the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011 (35 C/5)**

This document contains in Part II the preliminary proposals by the Director-General for the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011 (35 C/5), which will be the second programme and budget of the period 2008-2013 covered by the Medium-Term Strategy of the Organization (34 C/4).

The representative of the Secretariat reiterated that the Zero Real Growth estimate of $671 million was an indication of the level of resources needed to preserve the purchasing power of the Organization’s budget as compared to document 34 C/5, everything else being equal, and does not prejudice the way in which the Draft Programme and Budget (35 C/5) will be structured and its content. In addition, the Rapporteur of the Group of Experts further noted that the Group had determined that the budgeting techniques used to estimate the ZRG requirement were applied in accordance with 34 C/Resolution 92 of the General Conference.

Many Member States appreciated that only one budget scenario was presented. While some Members prefer not to take a position regarding the budget ceiling at this time, many others expressed support for maintaining the Organization’s purchasing power. Several Member States
recommended that the budgeting techniques be adapted to incorporate results-based budgeting concepts.

With regard to the preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for document 35 C/5, which will be presented at the next session of the Executive Board, many Member States reiterated that there should be fewer and clearly defined expected results, more prioritization and concentration of activities and rationalization of resources. Members also urged that savings should be identified in the administrative and non-programme services and be used to reinforce the major programmes. Certain Member States further requested that careful consideration be given as to whether programmes and activities which received poor evaluations should be continued.

Certain Member States also expressed concern about the present financial crisis, the current exchange rate trends between the United States dollar and the euro, and the possible impact on UNESCO’s future purchasing power. The representative of the Secretariat took note of the additional uncertainties created by the current financial crisis, particularly because the zero real growth estimates for document 35 C/5 were calculated before the financial crisis became fully apparent and because these estimates were the minimum requirements needed to maintain the Organization’s purchasing power at the same level of document 34 C/5. The representative of the Secretariat reminded the Commission however, that the regular programme budget is estimated using the constant dollar principle, which helps to insulate the budget from exchange rate fluctuations between the United States dollar and the euro. This is because the impact of currency fluctuations is reflected in the Organization’s financial accounts and not necessarily in the budget, as any foreign currency gains or losses are added to or deducted from the miscellaneous income account.

Item 24 Consideration by the Executive Board of the criteria for the selection of agenda items to be referred to the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters, and its methods of work

The above item relating to criteria for the selection of agenda items to be referred to the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters, and its method of work, was debated earlier in the Special Committee and a draft decision was sent to the FA Commission for its consideration. During the debate, the Commission benefited from the presence of the Chairperson of the Special Committee, who briefly presented the recommendations made by Special Committee (SP) as transmitted to the FA Commission. She explained the draft decision by stating that the Group of Experts should focus on technical aspects, remain neutral and contribute in a technical capacity. It was further explained that recommendations to draft decisions should be made on technical grounds. Proposals should be only of an administrative and/or financial nature showing their budgetary impact on financial and human resources. The agenda of the Group of Experts should be identified by the Chair of Executive Board in consultation with the Chairs of FX, FA and PX Commissions. It should be flexible enough to meet emerging issues. Only those members of the Secretariat dealing with items should attend the discussions. A procedural clarification was given to the effect that it was indeed for the FA Commission to finalize a draft decision on this subject, taking into account the work of the Special Committee.

Many Members appreciated the proposed drafted decision from the Special Committee and supported the importance of the Group of Experts. Some Members also noted the improved working procedures of the Group under its current Chairmanship. One Member cautioned the Commission on the use of clause 8(k) of the proposed decision relating to the agenda items of the Group of Experts which stipulates that the Group can examine any other administrative and financial matter that the Chair of the Executive Board, Finance and Administrative Commission and the Group of Experts jointly decide to refer to it for technical examination in order to assist the work of the Commission. The Group of Experts shall adopt a report by consensus and submit it to the Finance and Administrative Commission for its consideration. In the main, the work of the Special Committee, particularly on the criteria for the attribution of items, was considered most helpful and served as a basis for the Commission’s draft decision. Opinions differed on certain aspects of the
working methods, notably the format in which the Group of Experts should transmit its recommendations to the FA Commission.

It was also noted that the report from the Group of Experts shall include the questions raised by the Group of Experts, the additional information submitted by the Secretariat, and if appropriate, clearly worded and technically justified recommendations to assist FA in finalizing the draft decisions.

Item 34 Report by the Director-General on the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the likely implications thereof on changes to the Financial Regulations

The General Conference, at its 34th session, approved the adoption of IPSAS by the Organization effective January 2010. This item presents the information requested by the General Conference and provides updates on the status of implementation.

The representative of the Secretariat gave a short presentation on key concepts underlying IPSAS and the progress made by UNESCO to date in its implementation.

Several Members expressed their concerns on the timeframe of the project and the respect of the implementation deadline of 1 January 2010, despite the optimistic presentation made by the Secretariat. One Member stated that IPSAS is a project that cannot be implemented partially. The funding of the project was a further major concern, since there could be a shortfall in the budget, even though the Director-General ensured in his response during the plenary that the necessary resources will be found. The Members noted that both human and financial resources seem insufficient, and that these should be taken into account in the preparation of document 35 C/5. An important project like IPSAS should also come with considerable training since operations, as well as habits and mentalities, have to change.

The Members requested information on the role of the United Nations IPSAS project team and the role of UNESCO within the United Nations Accounting Standards Task Force. Further questions were raised on the increase in staff costs (ASHI) and the treatment of outstanding assessed contributions.

The representative of the Secretariat acknowledged the concern expressed by Members, in particular the need for training. However, he confirmed his optimism in a project that is currently in line with the plan. With a year and a quarter remaining to close the gaps and train staff members, and the assurance of the Director-General that the funding will be made available, there is every reason to remain positive. Regarding human resources, the introduction of IPSAS will mean that the profile of financial professionals will change requiring more analytical skills rather than administrative. He went on to explain the role of the United Nations IPSAS project team, which is to give guidance and advice, but the implementation at UNESCO is being done by an internal project team.

Item 35 Report by the Director-General on alternative funding mechanisms for unfunded liabilities of staff benefits

The representative of the Secretariat briefly summarized the two major issues for the Member States to consider, mainly: (1) the recognition of the staff benefits liability which is required under IPSAS and (2) the funding of the liability. With respect to the latter, the representative of the Secretariat informed the Commission of the four funding options proposed.

With reference to the commencement period for the Organization to start funding the liability, it was indicated that United Nations, New York, is currently confronting the same situation with the United Nations General Assembly, pending which funding modalities remain to be finalized. Furthermore, UNESCO’s External Auditor would certainly be drawing Member States’ attention
when IPSAS is implemented requiring full recognition on the balance sheet with a consequential negative reserve.

**Item 36 Report by the Director-General on the status of contributions of Member States and of payment plans**

The Director-General reports herewith on the status of contributions of Member States, on the cash flow of the Organization and on payment plans agreed with Member States in arrears in the payment of their contributions, further to 34 C/Resolution 02.

The representative of the Secretariat gave an update on contributions received since 31 August 2008. To date, outstanding contributions amounted to $140.7 million of which $85.7 million relating to 2008. He informed the commission that the cash flow was very precarious and that in the current financial market situation borrowing could be extremely difficult. He urged Member States in arrears to make necessary arrangements to pay their dues.

Many Members shared the concern of the Group of Experts on the high level of unpaid contributions and on the cost of non-payment and borrowing. They asked clarifications on the impact of the current financial crisis on the non-payment of contributions. They requested additional information on possible alternative mechanisms to improve the cash flow, such as fixing a deadline for payment or improving the current incentive scheme, the only means presently available to encourage Member States to disburse their contributions in time. Members questioned the efficiency of this mechanism to improve the cash flow. The issue of penalties and distribution of borrowing cost among late payers was also raised. Questions were also asked on the possible impact of the low cash position on the programme implementation and on the sanctions that exist in case of non payment of contributions.

In his reply, the representative of the Secretariat explained that the Financial Regulations set a clear deadline for the payment of contributions, but this date was difficult to enforce. He was not sure that the current crisis had already an impact on the non-payment of contributions as this has been an issue for a long time. He also stated the incentive scheme has mixed results and that a report was due for the next General Conference. He assured the Commission that the Secretariat was always very careful when resorting to borrowing in the case of absolute necessity. He explained the sanctions that existed through the loss of voting rights and reminded the Commission that there were also political considerations involved. He confirmed that programme implementation should not be affected by the cash flow situation if additional funds could be borrowed externally, when needed.

**Item 37 Report by the Director-General on the management of extrabudgetary resources and activities**

This report responds to the call in 177 EX/Decision 51 to report on the management of extrabudgetary activities. Particular reference is made to the Additional Programme and the Resource Mobilization Strategic Plan (180 EX/INF.5) such as an update on UNESCO's cost recovery policy.

**Additional Programme**

The representative of the Secretariat explained that the report constituted an update on progress in the implementation of the Director-General’s Action Plan for Improved Management of Extrabudgetary Activities in the four main areas covered by the Action Plan: programming, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring.

It was noted that a first Additional Programme of targeted/projected extrabudgetary activities was launched in March 2008, and had undergone its first six-monthly update to reflect emerging needs and funding opportunities like the Spain UNDP MDG Fund Achievement Fund. The first
update was also intended to be corrective, and to incorporate any activities which started in 2008, but which were omitted because of the novelty of the programming process. The updated Additional Programme incorporating new outlines pre-selected by ADG’s was currently with Bureau of Strategic Planning for review of its coherence with the regular programme.

Facets of the Additional Programme that were highlighted included the alignment with the regular programme, programme approach and responsiveness to country-level strategies corresponding to UNESCO’s programme priorities, which were combined with strengthened modalities for monitoring and evaluation.

Member States welcomed the coherent and proactive approach to resource mobilization, stressed the importance of alignment between the Additional Programme and the strategic objectives of the regular programme, efficiency, transparency and sound management.

Specific questions related to the existence of a resource mobilization policy, provisions for monitoring and the involvement of beneficiary countries in the establishment of priorities.

The Rapporteurs of the Group of Experts referred to the importance that the United Nations General Assembly attached to core resources remaining the bedrock of United Nations operational activities, the increased costs associated with the growth of extrabudgetary resources and the lack of the definition of basic costs. It was noted that the draft decision took into account the recommendation of the Group of Experts, as well as the positions of a number of Member States, and was built on consensus.

The representative of the Secretariat provided the following clarifications:

- the Extrabudgetary Resource Mobilization Strategic Plan presented as an accompanying information document (180 EX/INF.5) forms the basis of UNESCO’s resource mobilization policy;
- in addition to the regular monitoring by project officers, sector alert systems have been established to permit monitoring by the authority of each ADG;
- coordination with Member States and beneficiary countries occurs at two levels: consultation is undertaken with all Member States on the preparation of the C/5 document on which the Additional Programme is based. Where country-level activities are concerned, the Additional Programme is designed to take into account country-level programming processes and country development strategies in UNESCO’s fields of competence. Information on individual country-level proposed activities is available to all delegations on the database on UNESCO’s Intranet site.

Cost recovery policy

The representative of the Secretariat made a brief presentation on UNESCO’s cost recovery policy, noting that the policy had been built using United Nations harmonized principles and cost definitions. She further noted that the policy aimed at achieving full cost recovery in accordance with the General Assembly TCPR, while at the same time ensuring that the double charging of costs is avoided. The representative of the Secretariat further noted that the “Guidelines on the Cost Recovery Policy and the Budgetary Aspects of Extrabudgetary Projects” was developed as an internal tool to help programme specialists and administrative officers apply the policy and build comprehensive project budgets. The Commission was also informed that the current version of the Guidelines was available for distribution, and that the Guidelines would be updated as necessary to reflect developments as they occur within UNESCO and in the United Nations system in general. The Rapporteur also summarized the recommendations made by the Group of Experts on this item and made mention of the work done in order to submit a consolidated draft decision which took in consideration comments of Member States.
Member States which took the floor on this item supported UNESCO’s Cost Recovery Policy and encouraged the Director-General to continue to refine the policy and the guidelines to take into consideration the result of the 2008 cost measurement study and developments in the United Nations system. Member States further noted the important role that extrabudgetary resources played in achieving UNESCO’s activities, but warned against using extrabudgetary resources which can be variable in nature, to finance UNESCO’s core mandate. The representative of the Director-General took note of the comments made and thanked the Member States for their support.

**Item 38  Report by the Director-General on the implementation of the Participation Programme and emergency assistance**

The representative of the Secretariat informed the members of the FA Commission of the high quality of the results achieved thanks to a concerted effort to speed up the processing of requests, in accordance with the request made by the Member States in 34 C/Resolution 52.

The representative of the Secretariat presented the results of the Programme, emphasizing that requests were being processed more rapidly than before and that the percentage of funds allocated to Member States was currently 64.58%.

The Rapporteur of the Group of Experts commended the high quality of the documents submitted by the Secretariat, which met the expectations of the Member States satisfactorily.

Several Member States praised the Programme, which ensured the visibility of UNESCO in its Member States. Two Members States highlighted the fact that the Secretariat had asked them again for documents that had already been dispatched.

Several Member States requested that online training in formulating requests be made available to the National Commissions. In addition, it was stressed that the level of the funds allocated to the priority groups should not be affected by the current financial crisis. Lastly, one Member State noted that the Secretariat had not respected the percentage allocated to international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).

The representative of the Secretariat welcomed the Member States’ encouragement and took note of the various proposals provide training to members of the National Commissions.

Regarding the Member States which had highlighted the problem of the delivery of documents for which they were responsible and which had been dispatched, bilateral working sessions were proposed between the Secretariat and the two Member States concerned.

As for maintaining the level of funds allocated to the priority groups, it was pointed out that the measures taken by the Director-General had made it possible to meet the request previously made by the Member States in that connection.

Lastly, the representative of the Secretariat said that the percentage allocated to INGOs had been strictly respected and currently represented only 68.8% of the amount allocated to them (5%) under 34 C/Resolution 52.

**Item 55  Financial Regulations of the Special Account for the International Fund for the Promotion of Languages and Multilingualism (IFPLM)**

The representative of the Secretariat introduced the item, under which the establishment of a Special Account for the International Fund for the Promotion of Languages and Multilingualism was proposed. That would ensure that one of the principles of the United Nations, according to which genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, would be sustained beyond 2008, the International Year of Languages.
Furthermore, it was pointed out that the priority of the fund would be to make available in print and online content disseminated or produced by UNESCO in as many languages as possible.

During the discussions, some Member States requested information on the operational procedures and the proposed financial regulations governing the fund in relation to already-existing special accounts for publications and translations and the standard financial regulations governing special accounts. One Member State asked why the current proposal did not refer to the management rules previously mentioned by the Secretariat.

The representative of the Secretariat referred to Articles 6.6 and 6.7 of the Financial Regulations of UNESCO, which provide that the Director-General has the authority to establish a special account, which must then be reported to the Executive Board, which may make recommendations thereon.

At the end of the debate, the Commission requested that a revised version of the financial regulations of the proposed special account be submitted to the Executive Board at its 181st session.

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As I reach the end of my presentation, allow me, Mr Chair, to thank on behalf of the Commission, and on my own behalf, all those who have contributed to the success of our work.

- I should like to express in particular our thanks to the Group of Experts and its Chair, Mr Phillip Benade (South Africa), for the outstanding quality of its work.
- Mr Chair, I should also like to pay tribute to all our colleagues, members of the Finance and Administrative Commission and their deputies. The high quality of their statements and contributions, and the spirit of mutual understanding and dialogue that characterized our proceedings enabled us to reach consensus on all the draft decisions recommended to you and contained in document 180 EX/67.

I should also like to mention:

- the External Auditor, Mr Philippe Séguin, and his assistants, Ms Astrid Couzian and Mr Jérôme Bastianelli;
- the Chair of the Special Committee, Ms Shahnaz Wazir-Ali (Pakistan);
- the representative of the Director-General, Mr Amine Khene, and all his colleagues, who provided us with all the clarifications and assistance necessary for us to complete our work;
- the two staff associations of UNESCO (ISAU and STU), the representatives of which made statements during the examination of items concerning the staff. They took the floor prior to the examination of the draft decisions by the Member States;
- our excellent interpreters and translators and the document production service;
- the team of room clerks; and finally
- our Secretary of the Finance and Administrative Commission, Mr Agapito Mba-Mokuy, who so ably facilitated our debates. I should also like to thank as well, through him, all of his team: Mr Sameer Pise, Ms Emeline Mbonyingingo, Ms Anne Coupez and Ms Henriane Amorin, who displayed a high standard of professionalism and who never spared any effort to assist the Commission and the Group of Experts during the 180th session.
Mr Chair,
Mr Director-General,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your kind and patient attention. I am at your disposal to respond to your questions and comments.