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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON UNESCO ACTIONS PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY

SUMMARY

Source: By 179 EX/Decision 42 (Part II) in which the Executive Board requested the Director-General to present to the General Conference at future sessions a stand-alone report on the actions carried out by the Organization as a contribution to the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality, describing the progress made and the experience and results obtained, as well as the amount of expenditure, by the programme sectors in line with the Gender Equality Action Plan for 2008-2013 (GEAP) and on contributions to gender equality in the context of common country programming exercises.

Purpose: This document provides the first stand-alone report on the Organization's contributions to women's empowerment and gender equality. It provides an overall assessment, from January 2008 to July 2009 of UNESCO actions on:

- Overall trends with respect to women's empowerment and gender equality
- Actions by programme sectors pertaining to women's empowerment and gender equality and progress achieved towards outcomes identified in GEAP (Annex)
- Key challenges and lessons learned
- Issues to be resolved
- Moving forward

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By 179 EX/Decision 42 (Part II), the Executive Board requested the Director-General to present to the General Conference at future sessions a stand-alone report on the actions carried out by the Organization as a contribution to the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality, describing the progress made and the experience and results obtained, as well as the amount of expenditure, by the programme sectors in line with the Gender Equality Action Plan for 2008-2013 (GEAP) and on contributions to gender equality in the context of common country programming exercises.

2. The Board also invited the Director-General: (a) to intensify his efforts to ensure that the interests of women and men are equally promoted in the planning and implementation of all UNESCO programmes; (b) to give full support to the programmes relating to women's empowerment and gender equality; and (c) to submit regular reports to the General Conference on the results of his efforts.

3. This first stand-alone report focusing on UNESCO's programming describes trends with respect to gender equality issues in policy and strategy documents and summarizes progress attained to date towards achieving the outcomes identified in the Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2008-2013 by the programme sectors. The document also identifies key lessons learned and challenges encountered along with issues to be resolved before concluding with specific recommendations for moving forward.

4. Overall, UNESCO improved its performance in addressing gender equality considerations in both policy and strategy documents, reflecting the strategic commitment in the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 which designated gender equality as a global priority. The Organization also reinforced its actions in favour of women's empowerment and gender equality in and through its fields of competence especially at the country level. In addition, 2008-2009 witnessed renewed high-level commitment to strengthening gender parity in the UNESCO Secretariat.

II. UNESCO PRIORITY GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN FOR 2008-2013 AND HRM GENDER PARITY PLAN FOR 2008-2015

5. The designation of gender equality as a global priority in the Medium-Term Strategy (34 C/4) called for an effective and reinforced contribution to gender equality worldwide through all UNESCO's programmes and internally in the Secretariat. Regarding the latter, a "Gender Parity Action Plan" was developed by HRM (179 EX/5 Part I) and submitted to the 179th session of the Executive Board (May 2008). This plan, which the Board took note of, sets out the steps envisaged to attain gender parity in the Secretariat in decision-making levels by 2015 as called for in document 34 C/4.

6. At the 181st session of the Executive Board, a complementary "Priority Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) for 2008-2013", focusing on the programmatic aspects was developed under the leadership of the Division for Gender Equality of the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP/GE), and submitted to and endorsed by the 181st session of the Executive Board (181 EX/4, Part I Add.2). By 181 EX/Decision 4, the Board:

"10. Further invites the Director-General to:

- (a) determine stages in the implementation of the Priority Gender Equality Action Plan and report on progress and challenges in the biennial report in 2011, with emphasis on cooperation with other United Nations agencies;

- (b) highlight the priority of gender equality, and report on progress made thereon, including indications of resources earmarked for coordination purposes and for interventions by the programme sectors, beginning with document 36 C/5”.

7. GEAP provides a road map to translate UNESCO’s commitment to Priority Gender Equality into specific actions and outcomes by adopting a systematic gender equality (GE) perspective. This document which has few parallels in the United Nations system describes what actions UNESCO will take between 2008 and 2013 through its programme sectors in order to contribute to the pursuit of women’s empowerment and gender equality. GEAP is also linked to UNESCO’s participation in, and contribution to, United Nations system inter-agency activities, in particular concerning the promotion of gender equality in programming, including in the framework of the “Delivering as One” approach and other United Nations reform initiatives globally, regionally and at the country level.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

8. UNESCO’s overall objective is the pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment through action in all of UNESCO’s fields of competence. For UNESCO, gender equality is a fundamental human right, a commonly shared value and a necessary condition for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

9. During the 2008-2009 biennium, and in keeping with the guiding principles of GEAP (GEAP, paragraph 20), UNESCO has been using both (i) reinvigorated gender mainstreaming and (ii) gender specific programming (i.e. addressing specific rights and needs of girls/women or boys/men) approaches in order to improve effectiveness and sustainability of results, as well as efficiency of resources of UNESCO-supported programmes and initiatives in Member States pertaining to women’s empowerment and gender equality. This dual approach of mainstreaming and targeting at the same time is in line with other United Nations and international agency approaches and aims at making the overall efforts more effective.

IV. ACTIONS AND PROGRESS – GENERAL FOCUS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

10. Regarding progress in the implementation of gender parity in the Secretariat and more specifically, the progress towards achieving gender parity in decision-making levels by 2015, a separate report prepared by HRM is submitted to the 182nd session of the Executive Board (182 EX/41).

11. In terms of programming, UNESCO focused in 2008-2009 on: (i) **capacity-building** in order to institutionalize efforts to empower women and promote gender equality, both in Member States and within the Secretariat; (ii) systematic and strong **policy dialogue** for continued support to women’s empowerment and gender equality at all levels; and (iii) upstream **policy advice** to Member States based on evidence and value-added (GEAP, paragraph 26 and Box).

12. Regarding **capacity-building**, BSP/GE translated its “UNESCO’s Capacity Development and Training Programme for Gender Mainstreaming” – which was developed and tested since September 2005 – into an interactive **e-Learning Programme** with the aim to enhance UNESCO staff’s capacity to develop and implement gender-responsive and gender-transformative programmes in line with GEAP. This **e-Learning Programme**, consisting of six modules, each of which can be completed in 15-20 minutes, is available for staff at Headquarters and field offices via intranet and CD-ROMs. The **e-Learning Programme** is followed up by training workshops conducted by BSP/GE. In 2009, BSP/GE has undertaken/planned training workshops in China and Viet Nam for UNESCO field offices and UNCT staff in those two countries, as well as for the staff of IIEP (Paris) and IBE (Geneva).

13. BSP/GE also collaborated with UNDP, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) and other stakeholders to produce the “Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change” which is being used at the United Nations level and in climate-change related meetings to raise awareness among policy-makers on the specific linkages between climate change and gender equality. UNESCO was also responsible for the translation of the manual into French.

14. Furthermore, UNESCO’s Priority Gender Equality was supported through the inclusion of gender equality considerations in the formulation and implementation of key policy and strategic documents and initiatives, including the draft 35 C/5 and various intersectoral platforms.

15. As regards **policy dialogue**, gender equality considerations were mainstreamed into the overall proceedings and/or addressed through specific sessions in major UNESCO events organized by different sectors. Among the most important were the 5th World Water Conference, World Higher Education Conference, World Climate Conference-3 (UNESCO is the lead agency responsible for organizing the “Gender and Climate Forum”), and major meetings related to EFA. Furthermore, BSP’s Foresight Section organized a special session on “The Potential Impact of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis on Women and Gender Equality” within the framework of the UNESCO Future Forum “The Global Financial and Economic Crisis: What Impact on Multilateralism and UNESCO?”. This was the first time gender equality issues were specifically addressed in a conference dealing with the impact of the crisis.

16. These high-level dialogue activities were complemented by several sessions of the UNESCO Forum for Gender Equality, organized by BSP/GE, with the objective of focusing attention on different gender equality issues and engaging in dialogue to raise awareness. These sessions organized with the participation of representatives of United Nations agencies and Permanent Delegations included: (i) Gender Equality in the United Nations and Beyond (January 2008); (ii) The Gender Dimensions of Climate Change (June 2008); (iii) Status of Women in Turkey in the Last Decade (October 2008); and (iv) Justice and Equality: Myths and Stereotypes (November 2008). BSP/GE also participated in and contributed to various policy dialogue activities organized by programme sectors and external partners, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Alliance of Civilizations Second Forum.

17. Policy dialogue was also promoted through the organization of a high-level programme of activities within the framework of the celebrations of International Women’s Day. In 2008, UNESCO’s International Women’s Day Round Table focused on financing for gender equality (“Gender Equality: Make it Your Business”) with the participation of leading women philanthropists and in 2009, the theme was “Priority Gender Equality: Next Steps Forward” where women Ambassadors to UNESCO, representing different regions, discussed UNESCO’s role in implementing its priority gender equality and the future challenges in this regard.

18. UNESCO also continued to be actively engaged in policy dialogue on gender equality issues in the context of the United Nations reform and Delivering as One. In addition to high-level meetings such as the Chief Executives Board (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies (notably HLCP and UNDG), UNESCO continued to contribute to discussions on gender equality at all levels and particularly through the involvement in the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) and the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality. UNESCO is the co-manager (with UNDP) of the IANWGE Task Team on Gender and Climate Change.

19. In order to provide **upstream policy advice** to Member States based on **evidence and value-added**, relevant activities undertaken by the programme sectors and related progress achieved are presented in detail in the attached **Table**. At the central level, BSP continues to monitor all programming activities in terms of their contribution to women’s empowerment and gender equality through monitoring with a gender equality lens. In 2009, the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) developed an approach for the evaluation of all 34 C/4 Strategic Programme Objectives (SPOs) that includes coverage of the Priority Gender Equality. These evaluations will

provide information on the outcomes achieved, challenges and lessons learned, and indicative amounts allocated to the achievement of gender equality related outcomes.

20. Furthermore, managed by BSP/GE, policy and action research as well as pilot activities are carried out to contribute to the gathering of **evidence and value-added for upstream policy advice** in the following areas:

- UNESCO-Sony Ericsson Women's Tennis Association Tour Partnership for Gender Equality (UNESCO-SE WTA Tour) – As a result of funds raised, UNESCO is currently supporting five projects on women's leadership in Liberia, Cameroon, Jordan, China and the Dominican Republic.
- UNESCO is involved in the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force (IATF) on Adolescent Girls. The purpose of the Task Force is to support the United Nations system in ensuring that programmes of cooperation with governments and civil society document the situation of marginalized adolescent girls and prescribe practical action to fulfil their rights.
- In the area of HIV and AIDS, UNESCO, in collaboration with the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), is launching a new online forum on HIV, AIDS, culture and gender. The online forum precedes the forthcoming book being published by UNESCO and the SSRC entitled "The Fourth Wave: Violence, Gender, Culture & HIV in the 21st Century". The articles in the book (which are posted as working papers on the website) all address the questions of why and how the AIDS pandemic has become increasingly "feminized". It is expected that this online forum will help initiate a conversation among practitioners, policy-makers and scholars on why the responses to the epidemic seem to be failing women.
- Preparation of policy briefs on a selection of articles of the UNESCO/Social Science Research Council's upcoming book entitled "The Fourth Wave: Violence, Gender, Culture & HIV in the 21st Century". The policy briefs aim at providing programmers, practitioners and policy planners with knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of HIV and AIDS interventions so that gender inequalities that underlie the epidemic are fully taken into account in their complexity and are appropriately addressed.
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Co-sponsors and Secretariat identified the promotion of gender equality and action for women and girls as key outputs in both the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 Unified Budgets and Workplans (UBW). For this purpose, UNESCO has participated, in collaboration with the UNAIDS Co-sponsors, the UNAIDS Secretariat and UNIFEM, in the elaboration of the "UNAIDS Action Framework: Addressing Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV", to more effectively and sustainably empower women and girls and to promote gender equality as part of their collective response to AIDS. The Action Framework builds on past actions and accomplishments, but adopts a more strategic and prioritized approach, with greater coordination of policies and programmes and an emphasis on focused and context-specific guidance to help accelerate and expand successful action at the country level.
- Within the framework of the Fifty-Third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UNESCO co-organized a side-event entitled "Action Agenda on Caregiving in the Context of HIV/AIDS" together with the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations and UNIFEM (Organizers); and CIRDDOC (Nigeria), CORDAID (Netherlands), Gender Links/GEMSA, GROOTS International, HelpAge International, Huairou Commission, ILO, International Women's Health Coalition, Sonke Gender Justice, UNAIDS/Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, VSO International and the World YWCA (Co-organizers).

- In November 2008, a special round of funding was made available at the country level under the UNAIDS PAF framework to accelerate efforts for mitigating the impact of HIV on women and girls and reducing gender inequalities in the context of national AIDS responses. An inter-agency coordination team, led by UNDP in collaboration with the UNAIDS Secretariat, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNIFEM and WHO, has engaged in a similar process, focusing more specifically on strengthening capacity at subregional and regional levels. In order to accelerate progress for gender equality and to achieve universal access by 2010, the inter-agency coordination team has launched, in February 2009, a Request for Proposal for projects to strengthen the capacity of regional/multi-country technical support providers. The initiative intends to support capacity-building efforts targeting regional/multi-country technical support providers with a view to enhancing the quality of support provided to beneficiary countries. This inter-agency effort is expected to support 5-7 subregional/regional projects in total, for a maximum of US \$50,000-100,000 each (including 30% of the proposal budget to be earmarked for direct support at country level) and for a duration of about 18 months (i.e. until December 2010).
- After the Director-General signed the Inter-Agency Statement on “Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation (January 2008), UNESCO has also joined a select group of donors in the “Donors Working Group on FGM/C”.

21. Finally, under the Participation Programme, UNESCO has provided funding to 52 projects focusing either exclusively on women’s empowerment/gender equality issues or having a component addressing gender equality issues for a total amount of US \$1,031,270 (**Full list available on-line:** http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=46287&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

V. ACTIONS AND PROGRESS – JOINT PROGRAMMING

22. UNESCO has participated in several United Nations joint programming initiatives in the area of women’s empowerment and gender equality. Most notable among those initiatives are four initiatives funded under the gender thematic window of the Spain/UNDP MDG-Fund (Namibia, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Viet Nam) and joint programming under the “Delivering as One” approach (Namibia, Mozambique, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Viet Nam, China).

VI. ACTIONS AND PROGRESS BY THE PROGRAMME SECTORS

23. A table providing detailed information on specific actions by each Programme Sector at Headquarters and at the country level and the progress achieved towards outcomes in GEAP is available online: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=46287&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

24. **Lessons learned:** In this first biennium for the implementation of the Priority Gender Equality Action Plan for 2008-2013, several key lessons have emerged which will help focus efforts in the coming two biennia for more effective implementation of the Action Plan and for enhanced impact at the country level. Among the key lessons learned are the following:

- (i) gender equality considerations need to be integrated into policy and project development processes at the outset through a systematic and comprehensive gender analysis and ideally, the participation of gender equality specialists in critical meetings. Retro-fitting gender equality concerns into policy-making and projects after expected results have been articulated yields ineffective mainstreaming;

- (ii) there is a need for further capacity-building of UNESCO and counterpart staff on the collection of sex-disaggregated data, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming methodologies in order to ensure gender-responsive and gender-transformative programme/project development;
- (iii) initiatives that demonstrate concrete and positive gender equality results are those that have identified gender-specific results at the outset of planning along with performance indicators to track progress (or lack thereof) and that have allocated the requisite human and financial resources for the achievement of the specific result(s);
- (iv) there is a need for systematic and regular high-level advocacy on gender equality considerations with national, regional and global partners.

25. **Challenges:** The most often cited challenges identified by UNESCO staff, especially at the country level, include the following:

- in some cases, lack of ongoing high-level support for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality by national partners;
- lack of capacity and skills for gender mainstreaming both for UNESCO and counterpart staff;
- difficulties in accessing relevant sex-disaggregated data and information;
- lack of close monitoring of progress and achievement of results;
- lack of rewards for compliance and lack of consequences for non-compliance in relation to implementing the priority gender equality;
- limited resources, both human and financial, and especially lack of specific budget allocations for implementing gender equality specific components;
- insufficient collaboration with other concerned agencies and national partners.

VIII. ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

26. In addition to the challenges listed above, the most important issue to be resolved in documenting UNESCO efforts to promote women's empowerment and gender equality is to introduce reporting that would allow the tracking of expenditures in this area and which may lead to gender-related budgeting. Currently, it is not possible to provide specific budget figures for UNESCO's work in the area of women's empowerment and gender equality except for a very limited number of cases which focus specifically and exclusively on actions targeting girls/women or boys/men. Work will continue towards developing a system of "gender budgeting" that would allow for the allocation and tracking of expenditures in this area.

IX. MOVING FORWARD

27. Although there has been noticeable progress made in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality through UNESCO's programming at all levels, the Organization's efforts are more easily documented at the policy level for the 2008-2009 biennium. While this emphasis is also translated into action at the country level, concentrated efforts will need to be made over the next two biennia to raise the degree of gender analysis in programming by all sectors and intersectoral platforms. This can be done by exploring more opportunities to conduct gender analysis and use gender mainstreaming and gender-specific programming methodologies as part

of the policy and planning processes. There is also a need for wider dissemination of capacity-building tools such as Gender Equality e-Learning and gender lenses for work processes.

28. Addressing gender equality in work planning is improving in most programme sectors. However, there is no established system for monitoring the integration of gender equality into work plans by the sectors themselves. There are no effective provisions for assessment and monitoring. Bridging the gap in attention to priority gender equality in work plan design and supervision by the programme sectors themselves will be important in the coming biennia. As noted in the GEAP, paragraph 51, “The primary responsibility for monitoring progress in achieving results in both gender specific programming and gender mainstreaming lies with sectors and field offices and, on a global and organization-wide level with BSP. The evaluation responsibility rests with the Internal Oversight Service which needs to integrate gender equality considerations into its evaluations”.

29. While efforts to align GEAP outcomes with 34 C/5 results focusing on gender equality have been made retroactively, it is critical that documents 35 C/5 and 36 C/5 show gender equality results that are fully aligned with GEAP outcomes in each Programme Sector. As GEAP outcomes were formulated primarily by the programme sectors themselves, the 35 C/5 formulation process should also be used as an opportunity to re-visit GEAP outcomes in order to update this latter document.

30. With a unique mandate that encompasses both education and culture, the nexus at which gender equality could be promoted most effectively, UNESCO should continue its efforts to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality at national, regional and international levels through concrete actions and allocation of sufficient resources.