



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE, 35th SESSION
PLENARY MINISTERIAL FORUM
8 October 2009**

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT PREPARED BY THE SECRETARIAT

PART I: FIRST SESSION

**Investing out of the crisis and maintaining progress towards
internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – through action in education,
the sciences, culture and communication and information**

I. The global setting: perspectives of the financial and economic crisis

1. Born in the most advanced economies, the current financial and economic crisis has acquired a global dynamic. It is affecting all economies, albeit to a varying degree. In Asia, many economies are suffering from trade contraction. In Africa, most countries are experiencing significant economic slowdowns. Industrialized countries experience recessions. The impact of the crisis is expected to propagate through various channels. The crisis has been particularly severe for countries that are highly dependent on natural resources. Economies in sub-Saharan Africa, which depend on commodity exports as a main source of income and growth, are experiencing a drop in export receipts. Beyond weak international demand for commodity exports, the second round effects of the crisis may include slowdowns in production, decrease in tourism and decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA).

2. The impact of the current crisis on economic growth is still a matter of uncertainty. In June 2009 the IMF projected world GDP will contract this year for the first time since the Second World War by 1.3%. Industrialized countries are expected to fare much worse than developing countries, as a contraction of GDP of about 3.8% is now expected. However, some developing countries, heavily dependent on exports of raw material, aid or remittances may also be severely affected.

3. This crisis must be prevented from turning into a full-fledged development crisis, rolling back years of investment, commitment and leadership of governments in social sectors, especially in education, science, culture, communication and information. De-investing in these sectors may be a short-term recipe for the sake of balancing national budgets. But the long-term costs of restoring services in social sectors after downsizing them is a costly and time-consuming exercise. Protecting social investments therefore constitutes a top priority in times of crisis, which must also be integrated into the stimulus packages by many countries. However, care should be taken that such packages do not perpetuate gender inequalities.

4. In Africa, a global priority for UNESCO, the significant danger is that the continent will suffer disproportionately, considering the high number of countries in vulnerable economic situations. The consequences may be rather grave, especially in social terms, leading to exclusion and marginalization of the most vulnerable and poorest segments of society. The efforts undertaken by African countries themselves to cope with these challenges many not suffice.

5. Attaining gender equality, the other global priority for UNESCO, has been a persistent challenge in the Organization's fields of competence for decades. Here too, the crisis threatens to wreck havoc on women, who are the first to lose opportunities and access for education, jobs, credit and social protection. How can Governments provide adequate resources in a crisis environment to check the negative trends afflicting women?

6. At present, the prospects for ODA flows are mixed. On the multilateral front, the resources of the IMF have been considerably enlarged in the wake of the London G-20 summit. The announced change in its "doctrine" may pave the way for more spending on infrastructure and social sectors, including education, and thus help offset the damaging impact of the crisis.

7. The prospects for bilateral ODA are less encouraging, as it is likely to be affected by donors' budgetary situations. Overall, donors will be less likely to meet their aid commitments. Some countries have declared that they will maintain or even increase aid levels, but others have already taken steps in the opposite direction.

8. So far, a consensus is emerging at the international level that restoring aggregate demand through a mix of budget deficits and increased ODA may be an appropriate way to restore confidence and ride out the crisis. In recent months, developed countries, and several middle-income, emerging countries have been leading the way by taking countercyclical social protection initiatives, while low-income economies lack the necessary fiscal space to do so, unless receiving external support.

9. At this stage, it seems that measures taken in both industrialized and developing countries have been predominantly directed to financial and economic aspects. This focus tends to overshadow the unattended needs of the social sectors with its positive leverage and impact for development. In all regions a host of ministerial meetings – finance ministers and central bank governors as well as planning and social affairs ministers – have been held, in consultation with regional organizations, development banks and United Nations organizations, in order to identify possible measures to overcome the negative fallout of the crisis. For its part, the United Nations General Assembly held in June 2009 a High-level Meeting at which it adopted a detailed resolution on the "Outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development" (A/RES/63/303). There is a widespread determination to avoid the pitfalls of the 1980s recession, which hit the social sectors as a result of a reduction in investment. Its impact had a disproportionate negative effect on women and girls. Yet, the capacity of Nation States to invest in critical areas such as education, science, technology, culture and information which are all drivers of development, is under stress unless governments continue to invest in these areas.

10. While the financial crisis continues to take its toll, climate change poses a new set of challenges. Policy-makers face the task of stimulating growth without using carbon-intensive practices and stabilizing the climate without dampening economic recovery. Hence the increasing emphasis on moving towards a *green economy* and a *green society* based on a low-carbon development path. Hitherto national and international efforts were guided by the quest to reconcile economic growth – measured as GNP growth – with the exigencies of climate change action. In light of the recent Report of the Commission of Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress (the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report), commissioned by the President of the French Republic, the proposed methodological adjustments may soon be part of the international agenda and influence policy-making, entailing a greater emphasis on the social dimensions of development and their contribution to the progress and prosperity of a country. Ministers may wish to exchange their views in this regard.

11. The Chief Executives Board (CEB) of the United Nations, chaired by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and meeting at UNESCO in April 2009, has launched nine crisis initiatives to support developing countries in order to weather the impact of the crisis and to invest out of it. The CEB expressed its determination to assist countries and the global community to confront the crisis, accelerate recovery and build a fair and inclusive globalization, allowing for sustainable economic, social and environmental development for all. The nine initiatives, for which detailed strategies and policy advice have been developed – with UNESCO's contribution – and provided to United Nations country teams for the support of governments, are:

- **Additional financing for the most vulnerable:** advocating and devising a joint World Bank-United Nations system mechanism for the common articulation and implementation of additional financing;
- **Food security:** strengthening programmes to feed the hungry and expanding support to farmers in developing countries;
- **Trade:** fighting protectionism, including through the conclusion of the Doha round and strengthening aid for trade initiatives and finance for trade;
- **Green Economy Initiative:** promoting investment in long-term environmental sustainability and putting the world on a climate-friendly path;
- **Global jobs pact:** boosting employment, production, investment and aggregate demand, and promoting decent work for all;
- **Social protection floor:** ensuring access to basic social services, shelter, and empowerment and protection of the poor and vulnerable;
- **Humanitarian, security and social stability:** emergency action to protect lives and livelihoods, meeting hunger and humanitarian needs, protecting displaced people and shoring up security and social stability;
- **Technology and innovation:** developing technological infrastructure to facilitate the promotion and access to innovation;
- **Monitoring and analysis:**
 - strengthening macro-economic and financial surveillance and implementing an effective economic early warning system;
 - establishing a United Nations system-wide vulnerability monitoring and alert mechanism to track developments, and report on the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions of the crisis.

II. The focus of the Plenary Ministerial Forum

12. Ministers participating in the Plenary Ministerial Forum may wish to share with other participants their assessment, strategies and action taken or foreseen by their governments, individually, in concert with other governments and with support of multilateral organizations, in particular UNESCO, to counter the impact of the crisis on the social sectors. The G-20 London Leader's Communiqué of 2 April 2009 and the CEB Communiqué of 5 April 2009 recognized that continued investment is needed in the various social sectors. They are important drivers for development and equally crucial for recovery and overcoming the negative fallout of retrenchment resulting from the present recession.

13. The debate is proposed to focus on concrete action that can be taken by Governments and supported by UNESCO in the Organization's fields:

- globally in terms of monitoring and advocacy for “investing out of the crisis”, i.e. in favour of honouring the commitments made by the international community and individual States in favour of the social sectors, like Education for All (EFA), and of reinforcing funding for these sectors; and
- at regional and country levels in terms of concrete policy advice and capacity-building support.

14. Five years are left to ensure that countries will be able to attain the entire range of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The impact of UNESCO's action in support of the central goal, halving the world's poverty by 2015, as part of the global United Nations effort, may merit particular attention during the Forum discussions as will the attainment of the two education-related MDGs (i.e. MDG 2 on basic education and MDG 3 on gender equality in education) and the six Dakar Goals of EFA. Other important international goals relate to the provision of freshwater and sanitation, as well as the protection of the environmental and sustainable development. The discussion at the Forum may further focus on how far UNESCO has been able to assist Member States in moving towards the realization of all IADGs, including the MDGs, and what orientations and efforts may be needed in the coming five years.

15. The outcome of these deliberations may inform the discussions of the Programme Commissions of the General Conference, which will determine priorities for the Programme and Budget for 2010-2011. These discussions may also lead to adjustments in the Medium-term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4), conceived as a rolling strategy.

16. The following chapters review the current situation as it may affect the five fields of competence of UNESCO – education, natural sciences, human and social sciences, culture, communication and information.

III. The impact of the crisis on education and education budgets

17. The global financial and economic crisis may have a negative impact on educational development and provision in many countries, particularly in the poorest among them, and with disproportionate consequences for women, the poor and marginalized populations.

18. Lessons from the past showed that the impact of crises differed depending on the development context. Negative effects included:

- (i) reduced spending on education, resulting in worsening learning and teaching conditions in public schools;
- (ii) reduced ability of households to meet formal and informal school fees and related costs;
- (iii) poorer households forced to remove children from school, with girls especially disadvantaged;
- (iv) increase in child labour;
- (v) in middle- and high-income countries, an increase in secondary and tertiary enrolments due to a lack of job opportunities;
- (vi) reduced political support for aid in donor countries and hence reduced aid flows: a 1% drop in donor-country GDP is associated with a 1% drop in aid flows; and

(vii) a decline in the social demand for education, in particular for vulnerable groups.

19. UNESCO's Education Sector is monitoring the effects of the current crisis on education provision, as well as on the demand for education in Member States. There are two objectives: to strengthen advocacy so as to ensure that the crisis will not erode the commitments of the international community towards achieving EFA goals; and to provide policy and capacity development support to Member States to mitigate the effects of the crisis and design appropriate sector responses.

20. It is too early to judge the impact of the crisis on 2009 education expenditures. Some governments have been amending their budgets and/or expenditures in light of the new economic and financial situation and prospects. Others are still considering the levels of any such amendments. In yet other countries, substantial infrastructure programmes, with provisions for the education sector, are envisaged, often also benefiting from donor support.

21. There is no clear sign that education budgets are being cut more than other sectors. This is demonstrated by the share of education expenditure in government finance that is being kept constant or even increased in many countries. Stimulus packages are being announced in many middle-income countries. In some, education is considered as part of long-term investment designed to sustain labour demand and to restart economic growth. However, low-income economies lack the necessary fiscal capacity to afford social protection programmes. Therefore, support by the international community is urgently needed. As UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura stated: "The global crisis demands global solidarity."

22. Particular attention to sub-Saharan Africa is warranted on three grounds: (i) most countries in the region are dependent on ODA for investment in infrastructure; (ii) despite progress made, many countries in the region are still far away from achieving the EFA goals by 2015; and (iii) in many countries efforts towards achieving EFA goals by 2015 are put at risk by adverse effects of the crisis.

23. Crises affect girls' education opportunities. School-going girls are often forced to drop out, and those excluded in pre-crisis times may have even less chance of access. In times of crisis, when resources are scarce and families are intent on survival, education discrimination in favour of boys can be even stronger. Girls who are marginalized by factors such as disability, ethnicity, and location are even more likely to miss out on education. New and improved learning opportunities for girls may be created in crisis or post-crisis situations, also due to the involvement of new actors (NGOs and community-based organizations) or additional funding.

24. A survey was launched by the Education Sector in March 2009 to collect initial information on the possible impact of the crisis on public spending on education. This exercise is now involving also the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). A few preliminary elements transpire:

- Overall, support for protecting the education budget seems to be strong in many countries. This might suggest that the global, regional and national advocacy for EFA among policy-makers is yielding tangible effects.
- Some governments, especially in middle- to high-income economies, are protecting education budgets from cuts by maintaining the level of capital investments stimulating future economic growth or investing in labour-intensive infrastructure. Weaker economies do not have sufficient fiscal space to do so: hence the need for support by the international community. For countries heavily dependent on aid for education development, any cut in external financing will have a direct impact on education provision.
- In some countries, unemployment is likely to increase, encouraging school graduates to continue with post-basic and higher education for want of income-earning opportunities. In low-income countries, the deterioration of labour market conditions may also induce

parents from vulnerable segments to withdraw their children, especially girls, from basic education. With more families being thrown into poverty, the achievement of EFA and other international development goals may be increasingly at risk.

25. UNESCO will continue to monitor the effects of the financial and economic crisis on education provision and social demand for education in Member States, including how education expenditures are being reallocated across education levels, and whether enrolment in and quality of education are being impacted. Ongoing dialogue with Ministries of Education, through field offices, will contribute to build the knowledge base for assessing and reacting to the impact of the crisis.

IV. The effects of the crisis on the natural sciences

26. The crisis may also affect budgetary allocations and support for the natural sciences, which are critical both for the attainment of relevant international development goals and for laying the foundations for future competitiveness of national economies. Countries have already been grappling with a widespread shortage in financial resources for scientific research and science education. As few data exist, it would therefore be welcome if participating Ministers could share their countries' experience and approaches.

27. One priority area will be the pursuit and implementation of global, regional and national commitments to science, technology and innovation (STI), especially those in line with the outcomes of the Budapest World Conference, the Forum on Science, the African Union Summit Declaration on Science and Technology and the World Summit on the Information Society. Scientific responses to many challenges require substantial funding, including how to sustain food production, provide and manage fresh water resources, minimize the impact of natural disasters like tsunamis and address environmental concerns, including degraded ecosystems, and mitigate, adapt to and cope with climate change. At the country level, pro-poor STI policies and support for institutional capacities are in particular demand. In the spirit of building inclusive knowledge societies, the roll-out of information and communication technology (ICT) networks promises broader access to information and the sharing and creation of knowledge, including for marginalized populations.

28. The development of education, research and innovation in science and technology is critical for the sustainability of economic policies and investments, especially for low-carbon solutions. Water management, renewable energies, biospheres, biotechnologies, oceanography and scientific capacities have acquired a strategic importance. Likewise, there is an urgent need to develop the basic sciences and geosciences, which are crucial for the management of natural resources. Science education at all educational levels is a prerequisite for building the foundations for a science-based development and should be part of any science policy initiative. Special efforts will be required to engage youth, and in particular girls, to careers in science, promoting young researchers and empowering women through access to science and technology. Given the historical imbalance in the participation of men and women in science-related activities, science education must as a matter of priority help to redress this situation.

29. The building of the scientific and knowledge base in developing countries will be a particularly crucial task, not least for the purpose of monitoring and assessing climate change and its implications. A solid scientific understanding and evidence are at the core of developing evidence-based policies and action. To build expertise and capacities, developing countries may need substantial and sustained assistance. Especially through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrology Programme and the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, UNESCO is well placed to assist in this field as in the provision of a wide range of ocean services.

30. There is concern that the science engagement of least developed countries (LDCs) – most of which are in Africa – may stagnate or shrink in times of fiscal pressures. UNESCO must thus be

equipped to assist in the formulation of science, technology and innovation policies and the mobilization of external resources.

31. Overall, the development of holistic science and technology policies is a prime objective for the natural sciences. This holds particularly true for Africa, with action to be designed in line with the African Union's Consolidated Plan of Science and Technology. All these initiatives will require substantial and sustained funding, which will contribute to a recovery and ultimately bolster a country's economic and social development. Cuts would be counterproductive in the short and in the long term.

32. Greening the economy is necessary to address both climate change and the economic crisis. The effective use of science, technology and innovation will be crucial for the realization of a Green Economy and the building of a Green Society. It will require low cost, low carbon, sustainable, and efficient energy technologies, energy research and improved eco-efficiency in industry, transport, housing and new consumption patterns. In this regard, support must be mobilized for technology and skills transfer, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. Changing personal consumption habits will play a significant role as it is largely through non-economic factors – cultural, societal and behavioural – that the desired changes can be brought about. Education for sustainable development will play a strategic role in that regard.

V. The effects of the crisis on social and human sciences

33. The current recessionary environment risks to cause a rise in poverty and to have negative consequences both on individual living conditions and overall social development and transformations. This situation threatens to reverse progress towards the IADGs, in particular those adopted at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the United Nations Millennium Summit (2000) and other declarations adopted at United Nations world conferences.

34. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009 states that the number of people living with less than US \$1.25 a day decreased from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion in the period from 1990 to 2005. But in 2009, an estimated 55 million to 90 million more people will be living in extreme poverty than anticipated before the crisis. About 60% of the gains in global poverty reduction are likely to be wiped out between 2008 and 2009. The report shows that the picture is mixed. Many global gains were due to a dramatic fall in poverty rates in East Asia. Elsewhere, progress has been slower. Sub-Saharan Africa counted 100 million more extremely poor people in 2005 than in 1990, and its poverty rate remained above 50%.

35. The World Bank estimates that more than 50 million people have already been driven into extreme poverty because of the crisis, particularly women and children, while an additional 53 million people would see their incomes drop below the US \$2 a day poverty line. ILO predicts that 50 million people risk losing their jobs in 2008-2009.

36. The crisis situation is also affecting the observance of a number of human rights as spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on the Right to Development, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

37. The promotion and awareness of human rights and rights-based approaches are particularly pertinent in the context of the current crisis. In February 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted resolution S-10/1 on "The impact of the global economic and financial crisis on the universal realization and effective enjoyment of human rights". Its first and fifth operative paragraphs read as follows:

- "Expresses deep concern that the universal realization and effective enjoyment of human rights are challenged due to multiple and interrelated global economic and financial crisis;"

- “Calls upon States to note that the global economic and financial crisis do not diminish the responsibility of national authorities and the international community in the realization of human rights and calls upon them to assist, in particular, the most vulnerable in this regard, and in this context urges the international community to support national efforts to, *inter alia*, establish and preserve social safety nets for the protection of the most vulnerable segments of their societies.”

38. The hardship triggered by the crisis, combined with increasing inequalities and social injustice, has negative implications for living conditions, well-being, and human dignity of millions of people as well as social development as a whole. The social transformations under way call for strong public policies and investment programmes, drawing on knowledge, research results and ethical values based on human rights, solidarity and social justice. UNESCO’s MOST Programme offers space for policy dialogue among Ministers of Social Development and researchers aimed at inducing evidence-based policy-making. Investment in social protection, social safety nets and cash transfers will be particularly important to solidify social development in a crisis period, as was underlined by the 2009 World Social Science Forum held in Bergen, Norway. If no effective action is taken, countries may experience social unrest, rising criminality and radicalization, including among youth, and domestic violence. It may ultimately lead to socio-political instability. “Social recovery will take much longer than economic recovery” (Ban Ki-moon).

39. Women are disproportionately affected by the crisis. Often being the first to be laid off and denied lending, they are also facing increased violence by men who have lost their jobs. In developing countries the female children are the first to be taken out of school and receive insufficient nutrition.

40. Youth will also be severely affected if public expenditure for education and training were to be reduced. Investing in the future generation today is necessary in order to equip young people with appropriate skills to enable them to compete in tomorrow’s job market while enabling them to positively contribute to their own communities.

41. Likewise, the needs and well-being of the ageing segments of society are coming under threat as a result of the crisis. In a situation where more and more people need social protection and security, Governments may feel compelled to pare these budget items.

42. The crisis has particularly dire consequences for international migration and migrants. Migrant workers are often the first to be affected by retrenchment measures. Xenophobic and racist attitudes towards foreign workers are on the rise. In 2009, the World Bank estimated that remittances from migrant workers may drop by 9%. Bearing in mind that migrants’ remittances totalled more than US \$300 billion in 2008, almost three times the amount of annual ODA to developing countries, such a development would be rather alarming.

VI. The impact of the crisis on culture

43. Culture constitutes a tremendous capital in its own right and in this sense an important factor for the elimination of poverty. Culture has been recognized as a distinct sector of economic and societal activity, owing largely to the expansion of cultural and creative industries. Development strategies have increasingly taken note of the fact that creativity constitutes a source of competitive advantage and hence offers new perspectives. A key notion is that the uniqueness of the culture sector lies in the fact that it embodies – at one and the same time – cultural and identity-based values *and* economic aspects and dimensions.

44. The current crisis threatens to curb governmental and private sector funding of cultural and artistic activities and thus put a brake on the progress achieved in highlighting the centrality of culture in all aspects of human development.

45. Although culture is not explicitly mentioned among the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is now widely recognized that these will not be attained in a sustainable manner without addressing the cultural dimension that underpins each and every society in the world.

46. A clear case in point is to be found in the cultural and creative industries, which are powerful engines of economic growth, generating income and employment. Indeed, they have become strategic outlets for innovation, production and job creation (reaching a global value close to US \$1.3 trillion). Creative industries and the related promotion of cultural expressions offer also new avenues to enhance dialogue between peoples and social cohesion.

47. Culturally-sensitive approaches are pivotal in addressing societal issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Reductions in funding would affect efforts to check prevalence rates. This is partly due to the fact that interventions are as yet insufficiently adjusted to local conditions. It requires a socio-political approach cognizant of the extent to which ways of life, traditions and beliefs, representations of health and disease, perceptions of life and death, sexual and reproductive norms and practices, power relations and family structures influence and form perceptions and guide behaviours. Gender inequality is another core factor underlying the AIDS pandemic. Thus, it is crucial to provide funding for the development of culturally appropriate and gender-responsive policies and actions.

48. More generally, culture, in its various components, contributes significantly to the goal of redressing gender inequalities. For instance, the mainstreaming of gender equality considerations in heritage policies will contribute to women's economic, political and social empowerment. Women are also crucial actors in the transmission of intangible heritage, including languages. Without sufficient and stable funding the long-term impact of such activities cannot be ensured.

49. Cultural diversity has a crucial role to play in ensuring environmental sustainability. As stated in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), "...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (Article 1). Not only are biological and cultural diversity linked to a wide range of human-nature interactions, but they also evolve together, are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It is clear that culture and nature can no longer be considered as two separate issues – nor can funding for one occur at the exclusion of the other.

50. The environmental dimension is not confined to the natural world (natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems), but also includes the built environment (the tangible cultural heritage, including cities, monuments and buildings) together with "the combined works of nature and man" in the form of cultural landscapes, as stated in Article 1 of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). Increasingly, natural and built heritage management embrace these interrelationships by involving local communities in conservation initiatives, as envisaged in the 1972 Convention and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) and Biosphere Reserves programmes.

51. Solidarity is one of the central values of sustainable development. It must be exercised both among living generations and the successor generation so as to bring about "intergenerational equity" referred to in UNESCO's cultural conventions. Intercultural dialogue will be exceedingly relevant for the pursuit of the nine CEB crisis initiatives. In concrete terms, the dialogue among cultures and civilizations will need to include both policy dialogue and concrete and practical applications for real-life situations. These efforts require strengthening – including through interreligious and interfaith dialogue – as mutual understanding, tolerance and exchange will be valuable contributing factors to help mitigate the impact of the current crisis.

VII. The impact of the crisis on ICTs and the media

52. In times of crisis, ICTs can be strategically leveraged to provide low-cost platforms for access to information and knowledge thereby helping to overcome resource constraints. As traditional

infrastructure and delivery platforms require significant investments, ICTs can constitute effective alternative information and knowledge delivery mechanisms.

53. The developmental impact of ICTs occurs in three ways. Firstly, ICTs are a distinct and fast growing sector of the economy. Secondly, ICTs is an enabler or input for enhancing human productivity. The widespread use of ICTs across all the sectors highlights the productivity gains due to the use of ICTs. Thirdly, ICTs directly influence human development and citizen's participation through access to information, knowledge and enlarging choices.

54. In times of economic slowdown, these attributes of ICTs, their low investment costs and their ability to provide access to development-relevant information and services make them extremely important tools. Investment in ICTs during economic crises may thus potentially yield great dividends. ICTs have been harnessed in a variety of ways to broaden access to education, exchange scientific information, provide information to local communities as well as disadvantaged groups. The positive impact of ICTs could be brought to bear also in community libraries and specifically designed community access points, where they could help to meet a range of local needs. Indeed, investing in high-quality and affordable information infrastructure, education and knowledge, including research in eco-ICT solutions, may be a smart way to innovate out of the crisis, especially for developing countries.

55. Building knowledge societies – with effective access to knowledge and information via ICTs and the provision of local multilingual content – is an area that calls for continued investment and support. There is a real opportunity for the ICT sector to be a driver of new jobs and recovery in all regions.

56. It is also important to invest in education and capacity-building of journalists and media professionals, so that they are able to report on contemporary challenges and crises in an in-depth manner. UNESCO's initiative to enhance journalism education through new model curricula serves this purpose.

57. The financial crisis has also exacerbated the media crisis by shrinking advertising that impinges on the sustainability of media which depend largely on the advertising income model. Alternatively, this emphasizes the role of public service media with their editorial independence, as shrinking advertising income tends to discourage commercial media to invest in quality content.

58. In the context of climate change, the media can assume a valuable role raising awareness about climate change and its causes, mitigation and adaptation. It is of high importance that the complex issues and their consequences be presented to the general public in an easily understood manner. Conveying the sense of urgency and effective audience engagement within the context of education for sustainable development is an important mission of communication for development.

VIII. Suggestions for possible issues to be addressed during the Forum

59. There follows a set of indicative lead questions, which Ministers may wish to raise during the discussions of the first meeting of the Plenary Ministerial Forum:

- Maintaining the gains achieved in the past ten years in education, the sciences, culture and communication and information/media: what can be done concretely at global, regional and national levels? What concretely is expected from UNESCO?
- Are we on track to achieve the EFA goals and the MDGs? How can these goals be better localized?
- Funding the MDG and EFA gaps: is ODA on track? How about funding for science, culture and communication and information?

- Monitoring the crisis and evaluating its impact: what are the early findings and possible trends?
- How can UNESCO's global priorities – Africa and gender equality – receive enhanced attention and generate strategic impact?
- Is UNESCO doing enough for Africa and are the results of its interventions of sufficient impact?
- What are the concrete and effective steps UNESCO could take to address issues related to women's empowerment and gender equality? What could UNESCO do differently in order to help bring about real and effective change?
- Pro-poor policies and the bottom 20% of the population: is UNESCO paying enough attention to the bottom 20% and to the most vulnerable? What priorities should be set for policy response and action where it matters most, including in particular for women;
- Decent work and the crisis: what perspectives for the professions in education, the sciences, culture and communication and information? What can education contribute to a decent work agenda?
- Which areas should be targeted for counter-cyclical investment by governments with UNESCO's support?
- How can human and other rights be preserved in a global crisis?
- How can social development and social transformations be supported under conditions of a crisis?
- What could be done to support youth and integrate them better into developmental and societal processes?
- What are the consequences of inaction for peace, social cohesion and stability, sustainable development, climate change and intercultural dialogue?
- Is UNESCO sufficiently drawing on and mobilizing the potential of South-South and North-South-South cooperation?
- Could UNESCO's goals be achieved without dedicated policies/strategies and related capacity-building?
- Do we know enough? How can we address the statistical and analytical gaps to pursue effective evidence-based action?

PART II: SECOND SESSION

**Shaping UNESCO for the next decade as an effective multilateral actor,
including in pursuit of international goals and United Nations reform**

60. This section addresses issues that may be addressed during the Ministerial debate on the second theme of the Plenary Ministerial Forum. It sets out some key issues and challenges for the future, without a sectoral structure, that Ministers may wish to address in their interventions.

61. **UNESCO in a reforming United Nations system:** The debate may focus on an assessment of the overall role of UNESCO in the framework of a reforming United Nations system and equally review the Organization's contribution to the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the MDGs. The United Nations reform agenda around the "Delivering as One" approach aims at enhancing the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and quality of delivery of the United Nations system, in particular at the country level. It has since shaped UNESCO's action at the global, regional and country levels. In turn, the Organization has contributed to the inter-agency debates driving United Nations reform, in the process advancing its perspectives and interests as a specialized agency of the United Nations system. Ministers may wish to comment on the contribution of UNESCO to United Nations reform and in turn its impact on UNESCO's activities and operations – and on its future directions. Overall, interventions may articulate how UNESCO should organize and position itself programmatically with respect to future United Nations reform initiatives and to the achievement of the IADGs, including the MDGs. What strategic, policy, organizational and internal adaptations and changes may be required? Ministers may also wish to identify expectations, opportunities as well as challenges for UNESCO in this context.

62. As UNESCO's action has to be seen increasingly in the context of joint and coordinated United Nations system-wide action, based on a strategic assessment of its expertise, comparative advantage and added value, deliberations of Ministers may also be directed to the future technical lead and coordinating roles performed by UNESCO in its various fields, their impact and visibility. This includes:

- the role and impact of UNESCO in EFA, literacy, education for sustainable development (ESD) and TVET;
- the impact of UNESCO's action in science, technology and innovation policies and the pursuit of sustainable development;
- the UN-system-wide lead roles in freshwater management and the oceans;
- the role in the ethics of science and technology, including in particular bioethics;
- UNESCO's unique role in protecting and promoting cultural diversity, including cultural heritage in all its aspects, culture and development as well as intercultural dialogue;
- UNESCO's role in promoting a culture of peace;
- UNESCO's role in languages and multilingualism;
- UNESCO's role in promoting freedom of expression and the media;
- UNESCO's role in building the foundations and structures of knowledge societies, not least through effective use of information and communications technologies (ICTs); and

- UNESCO's commitment to and strong focus on its two global priorities, Africa and gender equality.

63. The United Nations system is currently engaged in a collective reflection on its future role, including its role at the country level where a host of diverse actors operate. Ministers may thus wish to discuss the future range of UNESCO's contributions, hitherto comprising policy advice, related capacity-building, normative and standard setting action, benchmarking and monitoring as well as the role as forum for ideas and innovation.

64. At the country level, the United Nations system is preparing to roll out some 90 UNDAF documents between 2009-2012, representing a "new generation" of more coherent, results-based and strategic UNDAFs with clear deliverables – informed by the lessons of the "Delivering as One" experience. An ongoing challenge for UNESCO will be the integration of all its competences in UNDAF documents corresponding to national development priorities. Ministers may wish to discuss how UNESCO could best respond to national priorities in its fields through common country programming tools, and how – at the national level – national ownership of education, sciences, culture, communication and information could best be exercised, including by assigning a stronger role to line ministries.

65. United Nations coherence efforts will also be increasingly relevant at the regional level. UNESCO is starting to be fully engaged in the Regional Directors Teams (RDTs), which has been entrusted with important system-wide management and oversight functions. Ministers may wish to address in their discussions the added value of regional programming and cooperation approaches and how UNESCO could best realize its potential and comparative advantages in this regard.

66. International development goals will be profoundly affected by climate change, which will drive the choice of future low-carbon strategies and approaches. Therefore UNESCO through all its fields will need to contribute to action helping to attenuate climate change and the building of green societies. What priority action would Ministers expect UNESCO to undertake?

67. In general, Ministers may wish to reflect and debate on the right balance between UNESCO's role as an intellectual organization and an operational development actor. Likewise, Ministers may wish to discuss how UNESCO should in future distribute its strategic orientation and activities among its three layers of responsibility: global, regional and country level.

68. Ministers may also wish to discuss how the United Nations system, and in particular UNESCO, should respond to the different needs of LDCs and middle-income countries. Moreover, Ministers may also wish to deliberate how best major intersectoral and interdisciplinary issues should be addressed by UNESCO – through the traditional structure of five sectors pursuing sectoral and intersectoral work or the creation of dedicated task teams for specific high-priority intersectoral themes.

69. In the context of United Nations reform more may need to be done in terms of harmonization of business practices, including employment contracts (more flexibility and performance-based emphasis); administration (removal of inflexible bureaucratic structures and rules); informatics and other fields. UNESCO is actively engaged in the inter-agency mechanisms and groups working on those topics. What would be the guidance from Ministers in this regard?

70. **Accelerating progress towards achieving quality Education for All by 2015:** In its 2002 edition, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) warned that unless a strong concerted effort is made "*almost one-third of the world's population live in countries where achieving the Education for All goals will remain a dream*". Despite remarkable gains registered since then, progress has been too slow and too uneven towards universal primary education and gender parity in many of the world's poorest countries. Seven years later, the 2009 EFA GMR reiterated the warning to governments, donors and the international community: "*There is now a clear and present danger that some key goals will not be achieved*".

71. This “sense of urgency” was again stressed at the eighth meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All (Oslo, 16-17 December 2008). At this meeting all five EFA convening agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and World Bank) pledged to *“press governments and donors to stay committed to the promise of education for the 75 million boys and girls worldwide who today do not cross the threshold into school and a better life beyond”*. In their L’Aquila Declaration of 10 July 2009, the G-8 leaders reaffirmed the right to EFA and stated that *“investing in education and skills development is crucial for a sustainable recovery from the current economic crisis and for long-term development”*.

72. The urgency to invest in EFA has become more pressing in the aftermath of the global economic crisis. In order to help translate the various high-level commitments into concrete and effective plans at the country level, UNESCO will need to intensify its collaboration and work more proactively with its partners (United Nations agencies, bi- and multilateral development agencies, government official and civil society networks). In doing so, the Organization will need to build on its position as the global coordinator of EFA and leader of two United Nations Decades: the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003- 2012) (UNLD) and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) (UNDESD). What specific direction and initiatives would Ministers like UNESCO to take?

73. ESD is an opportunity to bring to the fore new education solutions in relation to the emerging social, economic and environmental challenges. *“ESD is underpinned by principles that support sustainable living, democracy and human well-being. Environmental protection and restoration, natural resource conservation and sustainable use, addressing unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and the creation of just and peaceful societies are also important principles underpinning ESD”* (Bonn Declaration, April 2009). ESD is a life-long learning process that can take place in formal, non-formal as well as the informal settings and cuts across all of UNESCO’s fields of competence, realizing a One UNESCO approach – UNESCO is also taking on a stronger role related to the world of work through its new Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) strategy. What do Ministers expect UNESCO to focus on and deliver with respect to these two areas?

74. One particular challenge will be to link UNESCO’s expertise in research, capacity development and norm-setting in the reform of education systems, educational planning and policy analysis, literacy, non-formal education and adult education, curriculum development, teacher development, and education-related ICTs with competences in the fields of culture, social, human and natural sciences as well as communication and information.

75. UNESCO will also have to tackle the challenge of devising innovative, multidisciplinary approaches at global, regional and national levels. They would be expected to ensure an efficient use of resources, be it international financial aid or knowledge and good practices, in support of more effective education systems.

76. **Promoting and leveraging scientific knowledge for the management of natural resources:** UNESCO has acquired within the United Nations system a recognized competency and role in building the requisite science and knowledge base, most recently in the context of climate change action. In this regard, UNESCO will need to consider how it could reinforce in the future its engagement for the oceans and freshwater.

77. Regarding the oceans, UNESCO provides a range of ocean services. It promotes international cooperation in researching and protecting the marine environment, including institutional capacity-building for improved management and governance, the training of operational personnel and research scientists, and the dissemination and use of research outputs. UNESCO/IOC is instrumental in monitoring the oceans through the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and developing tsunami warning systems in vulnerable regions. Through GOOS – the ocean component of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) – UNESCO contributes to the monitoring, collection, processing and distribution of scientific data and products for operational

and research activities in the marine sciences with a view to improving operational oceanography including climate forecasts and monitoring. Thus, it supports the sustained observing needs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). UNESCO is also currently working with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) towards establishing a process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment.

78. Due to scarcity in a number of countries, freshwater is rapidly becoming an issue of high strategic importance. The demand for freshwater will continue to increase in the foreseeable future as will the number of countries with inadequate supplies of fresh water. UNESCO's IHP is working with other United Nations organizations to develop strategies for the reliable assessment of water resources and for optimizing their rational use. To support this process, progress in hydrological sciences, geophysical sciences and satellite technologies is being used to improve the knowledge base and to support research and operational activities through initiatives such as the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), which produces every 3 years an authoritative picture of the state of the world's freshwater resources. The last was launched earlier this year at the Fifth World Water Forum in Istanbul. Emphasis may need to be given in future to adaptation measures for coping with the impacts of global changes on the hydrological cycle, the critical linkages between sustainable water resources and environmental management, and the development of integrated approaches to sustainable urban water management.

79. Ministers may wish to discuss how UNESCO's already strong and established role in the areas of freshwater and oceans could be further reinforced and how its lead role could be made more visible.

80. **Pursuing a development paradigm integrating cultural diversity:** The international community has defined cultural diversity as the "common heritage of humankind" (UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001, Article 1). The World Summit Outcome document equally acknowledged the importance of respect and understanding for cultural diversity as a contribution to the enrichment of humankind. Cultural diversity is a driving force of development, not only with respect to economic growth, but also with regard to the fulfilment of intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual aspirations. This view is embodied in UNESCO's seven culture conventions, which together picture cultural diversity as an asset which is indispensable for poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable development.

81. Ministers may wish to discuss how UNESCO could best pursue its efforts involving the protection and/or conservation of heritage in all its forms – tangible and intangible, cultural and natural, movable and immovable. The operationalization of UNESCO's Conventions tends to be weakened by insufficient funding for their implementation and the effective functioning at the grass-roots level. How can this trend be checked and how can policy development, capacity-building and benchmarking be maintained and intensified?

82. Cultural heritage and cultural expression are at the heart of many cultural industries, which are powerful engines of economic growth, generating considerable income and employment. There can be no sustainable development in economic, political, social or human terms without a full recognition of the equality and rights of all cultures. Culture and cultural diversity must be incorporated in development strategies and country programming documents *from the outset* and become an integral part of programmes in order to ensure their effectiveness, impact and relevance. An overarching standard-setting framework is provided through the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) together with the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural heritage and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. One challenge for "culture in development" lies in the collection of cultural statistics, inventories and national and regional "mapping" of cultural resources.

83. The dialogue among cultures and civilizations is instrumental for the achievement of peace, mutual understanding and social cohesion – and this has acquired top-level attention over the past years among policy-makers in all parts of the world. UNESCO has sharpened its approach and

intensified its action in this domain when the lead role was conferred to the Organization in the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001. Since then the creation of the Alliance of Civilizations has introduced a new dynamic element and approach in this field, which challenges UNESCO to further define and develop its own action, justifying its continued international leadership in this field. UNESCO is building upon the outcomes of past activities, which include initiatives at the regional and subregional levels, the articulation of a set of commonly shared values and principles, focus on top priority themes in its five fields of competence, and dialogue as a vehicle for advancing women's rights. The approach also includes a special focus on indigenous peoples and interreligious/interfaith dialogue as well as the establishment of a series of new partnerships. In the light of the new international efforts, the Executive Board at its 181st session strongly underlined the need to reassert UNESCO's leadership role and constitutional responsibilities with respect to intercultural dialogue by reorienting and strengthening all existing efforts and capacities in UNESCO pertaining to intercultural dialogue, including in cooperation with the Alliance of Civilizations.

84. The fostering of cultural diversity and dialogue constitutes one of the most pressing contemporary issues; the present crisis merely reinforces the need to protect and promote these "soft powers", as purely economic investment alone will not be able to release and mobilize its potential. UNESCO has been given the lead role for the 2010 International Year of for the Rapprochement of Cultures designed to strengthen mutual understanding and appreciation worldwide. This initiative can provide a meaningful platform for the broad-based commitment and sharing which must underpin the efforts to invest out of the global financial crisis. Ministers may wish to comment on the future direction and content of UNESCO's activities in this field as a whole.

85. **Building an enabling environment for freedom of expression and increasing the benefits of ICTs for development:** Promoting free, pluralistic and independent media and infostructures is essential for ensuring transparency, accountability and participation – all fundamental elements of good governance. It will be thus important for UNESCO, with its unique mandate in the United Nations system in this area, to continue supporting Member States in their efforts to elaborate and implement national policies and frameworks focusing on freedom of expression and freedom of information.

86. MDG 8, target 5 states: "In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication". For its part, UNESCO has consistently emphasized that it is crucial to build infrastructures, acquire technology and enhance connectivity. It has also stressed that this will not be sufficient to address the inequalities in access to digital technologies and to narrow the "digital divide" between and within countries, which is also a symptom of other deeper divides: of income, development, literacy and knowledge. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has validated this approach.

87. Apart from access to technology and connectivity, there are a number of other factors that are crucial in order to meet the 2015 target of harnessing the benefits of ICT for development. These ought to be addressed by UNESCO over the next decade. The main challenge will be to determine how best to use technology so as to increase access to information and knowledge in general and to foster education for all, scientific research and innovation and cultural and linguistic diversity. Ministers may wish to share their views on desirable courses of action by UNESCO.

88. Many countries implement national e-strategies. High priority is given to the establishment of sustainable multi-purpose community public access points, providing affordable or free-of-charge access to various information and knowledge sources. UNESCO, together with donor countries and other partners, has been supporting Member States' efforts in strengthening capacities of local communities to access, produce, manage and share information for development especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America through Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs).

89. As the level of investment in ICTs is generally very high, increased attention may need to be given to open technologies with their potential to contribute to social, educational and economic growth and greater digital inclusion. Today, a number of governments are using open standards and open source technology solutions to reduce costs, lower barriers of entry, improve security and narrow the digital divide. Ministers may suggest how UNESCO should continue to promote a diversity of choices in the use of software, including free and open source software to improve education, disseminate knowledge and foster community approaches to software development, involving also partnerships with the private sector.

90. Governments and the private sector should be encouraged to cooperate in the development of policies and solutions towards the reinforcement of quality education and training for all and lifelong learning. This could involve the innovative integration of locally relevant applications of ICTs in teaching and learning processes, as well as institutional administration and management. In this context, more cooperation with the private sector could be sought to promote ICTs skills training, including at the community level, develop users' skills and potential, for example, through information literacy initiatives as initiated by UNESCO. Digital libraries are a viable approach to share knowledge and information with a large audience globally, creating a level-playing field across national frontiers.

91. As gaps in connectivity are narrowing and, in particular mobile telephone usage is increasing, more emphasis should be given to the provision of relevant content in support of development, including content based on indigenous knowledge, in local languages. This includes the establishment of new strategies related to intellectual property rights.

92. Building on the results of already established multi-stakeholder approaches, notably within the framework of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), cooperation between the public and the private sector should be enhanced to develop mechanisms, technologies and applications in support of cultural and linguistic diversity, including in the area of the internationalization of domain names that will result in a greater accessibility of the benefits of technologies by hitherto excluded language communities. Ministers may wish to share their views and experiences in this field.

93. **The future of knowledge acquisition and sharing:** New forms of knowledge acquisition and sharing will be a strategic feature of knowledge societies in the future, cutting across all of UNESCO's fields. The dramatic advances in ICTs over the last 20 years, particularly the rapid emergence of the Internet and the web as a global public network, have provided conditions for widening the global public arena for knowledge. Never before in human history has so much information been so readily available to so many. In an increasingly connected global community, the ability to access information and transform it into meaningful and useful knowledge is a key driver of sustainable social and economic development.

94. Narrowing the digital divide is essential, but equally critical is the need to narrow the knowledge divide which cumulates differences in knowledge creation, preservation, acquisition and sharing. In the next decade, knowledge acquisition and sharing may be increasingly technology-mediated, and traditional educational processes may be further revolutionized. Another revolution relates to the social dimension: the growing use of technology for social networking enabling each person to become content creators.

95. Traditional scientific processes are likely to change significantly through the creation of new knowledge communities. New business models are emerging to support the sustained creation and dissemination of high-quality scientific digital content. An increased focus on education and research may also impact the pace and content of knowledge acquisition and sharing in the sciences.

96. Special attention must be paid to the long-term availability of digital content and interoperability at the global level. Likewise, new networking tools and the ability to showcase one's

culture on the web may have an increasing impact on promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

97. UNESCO is well placed to develop long-term strategies and policies to raise awareness about the role and impact of ICTs in the knowledge process and to develop strategies for harnessing ICTs to develop new approaches in education, the sciences and culture. Ministers may wish to discuss how the Organization can best respond to this range of challenges. In particular, Ministers may wish to discuss how knowledge acquisition and sharing could be made more equitable with UNESCO's assistance.

*

* *

98. More general, keeping an eye on the future and exploring new paths of action in all its fields of competence will be an abiding task for the Organization. Ministers may wish to identify possible new directions that may merit the Organization's attention and that could be taken up in the years to come as part of the Organization's strategic positioning.

99. Some indicative lead questions for the interventions and discussion by Ministers at the second session of the Plenary Ministerial Forum could be:

- UNESCO's role as a specialized agency of the United Nations system: what perspectives, challenges and opportunities? What adaptations would be desirable, if any?
- How can national ownership and support for national responses in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information be ensured?
- How to better "Deliver as One" with other organizations of the United Nations system at country and regional levels? What should UNESCO do to ensure that culture, science and communication components are integrated into UNDAFs? How should it improve its administrative, financial and structural approaches?
- What role for UNESCO in the quest for peace, human rights sustainable development, climate change, humanitarian action and intercultural dialogue?
- How can gender equality be promoted and supported – in Member States and in the Secretariat? As a United Nations agency with multiple mandates, how could UNESCO help bring about meaningful and sustainable change towards gender equality?
- UNESCO's performance as lead agency of the United Nations – in EFA, literacy, ESD, culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations and rapprochement of cultures: sufficient strategic orientation, creativity in the design of programme action, effectiveness, quality of delivery and impact and visibility?
- Is UNESCO doing enough to assist countries in building knowledge societies and is it doing the right thing?
- Is UNESCO doing enough for youth and young people?
- How could the impact of upstream policy-advice, standard-setting, monitoring, reporting, benchmarking, and related capacity development be enhanced?
- Managing for results: how to ensure efficiency, coherence and effectiveness?

- How to ensuring programmatic coherence and strategic convergence of UNESCO's programme sectors, institutes, field offices and programme partners?
- How can intersectorality be realized and bring about concrete results?
- What shall be the future role of civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in UNESCO's activities?
- Telling the UNESCO story: How can visibility and public relations be strengthened?