



General Conference
35th session, Paris 2009

35 C

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

Item 5.20 of the agenda

35 C/55
12 October 2009
Original: French

**ACTION PLAN FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
YEAR FOR THE RAPPROCHEMENT OF CULTURES IN 2010**

OUTLINE

Source: 181 EX/Decision 52 and 182 EX/Decision 16.

Background: In accordance with 181 EX/Decision 52 and 182 EX/Decision 16, the Executive Board submits to the General Conference at its 35th session a preliminary action plan for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010), drawn up following consultations by the Director-General of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations maintaining relations with UNESCO and other partners of the Organization (circular letter of 15 May 2009). This preliminary plan is a general framework which includes suggested activities for the celebration of the Year.

Purpose: The General Conference is invited to approve the preliminary action plan, together with the comments and recommendations made by the Executive Board on this matter at its 182nd session.

Decision required: Paragraph 5.

1. Pursuant to 181 EX/Decision 52 and 182 EX/Decision 16, adopted by the Executive Board at its 181st and 182nd sessions (Annex I), the Director-General submits to the General Conference a preliminary action plan for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010), contained in 182 EX/16 (Annex II).

2. It should be noted that since the publication of document 182 EX/16 on 19 August 2009, seven Member States (Belgium, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kuwait, Madagascar, Norway, Romania and Tunisia), two partners (the Fermata Arts Foundation and Respect Magazine), seven UNESCO Chairs and two category 2 institutes have been added to the list of those having already replied to the Director-General's circular letter concerning the celebration of the 2010 Year. Others have stated their intention to do so. Further information on some 300 proposed projects and activities appears on the website, which will be updated regularly as information about the Year 2010 is made available (www.unesco.org/culture, Dialogue section).

3. Discussions held during the 182nd session of the Executive Board highlighted the unique opportunity offered to UNESCO to reaffirm its commitment to dialogue during this international year, including in the framework of its cooperation with the Alliance of Civilizations. The Board also recalled the importance of interreligious dialogue as one of the aspects of the Year, and the need to develop specific activities for young people during the celebration.

4. With regard to financing for relevant projects, which must come from extrabudgetary resources, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/22 and 181 EX/Decision 52 and 182 EX/Decision 16 of the Executive Board, no Member State or partner has responded to the appeal for financial support as yet. The Secretariat will continue its efforts to secure funding following approval of the action plan.

5. The General Conference may wish to adopt the following resolution:

The General Conference,

1. Recalling 34 C/Resolution 46 and United Nations General Assembly resolutions 62/90 and 63/22,
2. Further recalling 181 EX/Decision 52 and 182 EX/Decision 16,
3. Having examined document 35 C/55 and its Annexes,
4. Recognizing the imperative need to consolidate and intensify dialogue among cultures in order to create, at the global level, an environment conducive to respect and mutual understanding, at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO,
5. Recalling UNESCO's long and rich experience in developing and increasing the means of communication between peoples, cultures and civilizations in order to build peace in the minds of men,
6. Welcomes the fact that several Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, category 2 institutes and centres, UNESCO Chairs and other partners have already submitted proposals for activities to be carried out in the framework of the celebration;
7. Encourages all Member States and all organizations and institutions working to promote the rapprochement of cultures to join in the celebration of the Year 2010, the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, in order to demonstrate their firm commitment to intercultural dialogue;
8. Approves the preliminary action plan submitted to it by the Director-General and invites him to finalize the plan in the light of the comments of the Executive Board and the General Conference;
9. Urges the Director-General to pursue his efforts to build awareness among all partners and to mobilize extrabudgetary funding in order to reach the goals of the Year 2010.

ANNEX I

181 EX/Decision 52 Preparation of an action plan to prepare the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010)

The Executive Board,

1. Bearing in mind United Nations General Assembly resolutions 62/90 of 17 December 2007 and 63/22 of 13 November 2008,
2. Recalling 34 C/Resolution 46,
3. Having examined document 181 EX/52 Rev.,
4. Emphasizing that the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures should contribute to practical actions in all sectors and at all levels of society with a view to promoting tolerance, understanding, cooperation, and interreligious and intercultural exchanges,
5. Invites the Director-General to elaborate the draft of an action plan to prepare the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010, and to submit it to the General Conference at its 35th session;
6. Also invites the Director-General to ensure funding for the celebration of the International Year through cooperation with extrabudgetary sources of funding within the framework of the Programme and Budget for 2010-2011;
7. Calls upon all Member States to contribute extrabudgetary resources to fund the action plan for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures;
8. Further invites the Director-General to submit to it at its 182nd session a report and a draft of the above-mentioned action plan, and to do his utmost to seek extrabudgetary funds to support UNESCO's celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

182 EX/Decision 16 Report by the Director-General on the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010, including a draft of an action plan for its preparation

The Executive Board,

1. Taking note of the appeal launched on 11 August 2008 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on the item "Interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace" (A/63/262) to develop all initiatives taken at the international level to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the context of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2010,
2. Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/22 which invited UNESCO in consultation with Member States, and through extrabudgetary resources, to play a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, in 2010, and 181 EX/Decision 18 (para. 67) relating to the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011 (35 C/5), which underlined the importance of UNESCO playing the leading role in the activities of the Year and of strengthening its capacities to that end,
3. Also recalling 181 EX/Decision 52 on the drafting of an action plan to prepare for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010),

4. Having examined document 182 EX/16, which contains a preliminary UNESCO action plan for the celebration of 2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures,
5. Welcomes with appreciation the commitment of the Member States that have responded to the appeal by the Director-General so that a draft action plan could be drawn up;
6. Urges the international organizations working in areas of competence pertinent to the objectives of the International Year, all public and private institutions in Member States, civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations, National Commissions for UNESCO and institutions that promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue, to contribute to activities aimed at effective rapprochement of cultures,
7. Invites the Director-General to enhance the preliminary action plan and to seek extrabudgetary resources to ensure the implementation of the action plan and further invites Member States and other funding bodies to make extrabudgetary contributions to that end,
8. Recommends that the General Conference approve, at its 35th session, the preliminary action plan, together with the comments and recommendations made at this session of the Executive Board;
9. Further invites the Director-General to report to it at its 186th session on activities carried out to celebrate 2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

ANNEX II



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board
Hundred and eighty-second session

182 EX/16

PARIS, 19 August 2009
Original: French/English

Item 16 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE RAPPROCHEMENT OF CULTURES IN 2010,
INCLUDING A DRAFT OF AN ACTION PLAN FOR ITS PREPARATION**

SUMMARY

This document is submitted in accordance with 181 EX/Decision 52, which invites the Director-General to submit to the Executive Board at its 182nd session a report and a draft of an action plan to prepare the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010 with a view to its examination by the General Conference at its 35th session.

There are no financial and administrative implications, as funds are to be raised by mobilizing extrabudgetary resources, as specified in paragraph 21.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 18.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The inclusion of the item “Proclamation of the international year for the rapprochement of cultures” in the provisional agenda of the 34th session of the General Conference was proposed by Kazakhstan. Document 34 C/53, which dealt with the item, was submitted by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, and 34 C/Resolution 46, adopted on 2 November 2007, recommended *inter alia* that the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaim 2010 “International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures”.

2. The General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted two resolutions relating to the year 2010, both entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”. The General Assembly decided in the first (A/RES/62/90 of 17 December 2007) to declare 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and, in the second (A/RES/63/22 of 13 November 2008), it invited UNESCO, in consultation with Member States, and through extrabudgetary resources, to play a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the Year, taking into account General Assembly resolution 61/185 (“Proclamation of international years”) and the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 62/90.

3. Drawing on these two resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Executive Board invited the Director-General, in 181 EX/Decision 52, to elaborate the draft of an action plan to prepare for the celebration of the Year and to submit it to the General Conference at its 35th session, to ensure funding for the celebration of the Year through cooperation with extrabudgetary sources of funding and to submit a report and the text of a draft action plan *inter alia* to it at its 182nd session. It also called on all Member States to contribute extrabudgetary resources to fund the action plan.

II. UNESCO’S LEAD ROLE AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR

4. The quest for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples is deeply entrenched in UNESCO’s Constitution (1946) as one of the best guarantees of peace in our world. UNESCO is entrusted with the mandate to contribute to build “the defences of peace in the minds of men”, thanks to international cooperation in the fields of its competence, namely through education, sciences, culture and communication. The UNESCO Constitution affirms that various factors such as “ignorance”, “suspicion”, “mistrust”, “denial” of human dignity, may transform differences into wars. The task assigned to UNESCO is to turn the process around. Teaching peoples how to know each other and respect each other reduces mistrust: thus incomprehension can be overcome by means other than armed conflict.

5. The Organization’s action in fostering intercultural dialogue has evolved alongside changes in the international agenda, while always working steadily towards making sure that respect for cultural diversity and for the attendant intercultural dialogue, is firmly on the world’s political agenda. Accordingly, the Medium-Term Strategy of the Organization for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) defines the Organization’s mission statement as follows:

“As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information”.

6. Strategic programme objective 10 of document 34 C/4 further specifies this mission as:

“Demonstrating the importance of exchange and dialogue among cultures to social cohesion and reconciliation in order to develop a culture of peace”.

It then details:

- “UNESCO will pursue its concrete and practical action in the area of the dialogue among civilizations and cultures, including a specific focus on indigenous peoples and interfaith dialogue, initiatives at the regional and subregional levels, the articulation of a set of commonly shared values and principles, thematic focus building on its five fields of competence, and dialogue as a vehicle for advancing women’s human rights.”
- “UNESCO will also promote the potential of dialogue based on music and the arts as a vector for the strengthening of mutual understanding and interaction as well as for building a culture of peace and respect for cultural diversity.”
- “Interfaith dialogue will be strengthened with a view to ensuring that (i) shared values for respect of religious beliefs and tolerance are reflected in curricula and textbooks, and (ii) faith issues are addressed in a secular framework contributing to the objectives of dialogue.”

7. Furthermore, document 34 C/4 continues:

- “UNESCO will continue to monitor two fronts: (i) gaining a better understanding of and strengthening the factors and processes that foster peaceful coexistence and mutual enrichment; (ii) highlighting the role that can be played by culture in situations of conflict or post-conflict as a “vehicle” for reconciliation through cultural heritage.”
- “In order to build sustainable bridges for dialogue, the Organization will promote the creation, dissemination, preservation and utilization of information and knowledge in all its fields of competence. It will address the sharing of common values pertaining to specific scientific disciplines in different cultural settings. Efforts will be undertaken to assist free, independent and pluralistic media by working with professional journalist associations to prevent conflict and promote mutual understanding, notably through the creation of cross-cultural networks, the development of ethical and professional approaches to reporting, as well as training and awareness-raising of media professionals so as to promote an enabling environment for free self-expression.”
- “UNESCO will contribute to enhancing the vitality of various forms of cultural expression and educational content by creating opportunities for media and information networks to engage in an informed dialogue within and between societies thereby contributing to the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance.”

8. Finally, document 34 C/4 expresses that “Quality education is a central vehicle for preparing and instilling values for dialogue, in line with the human rights perspective contained in the Dakar EFA Goals. In that regard, UNESCO will support Member States in the revision of the content of textbooks, learning materials and curricula, taking into account formal and non-formal education, and in teacher training. UNESCO will also provide a platform for intellectual leadership aimed at promoting dialogue and exchange of information among all educational stakeholders on issues, themes and factors that have an impact on the quality of education”.

9. The observance of the International Year is therefore a special period during which the entire range of the Organization’s action in this field can be brought to bear in support of the objectives of the International Year. Particular initiatives and action, already inscribed in UNESCO’s agenda and strategies, can thus be highlighted, implemented and practiced with a view to achieving particular impact.

10. The goal of the International Year consists in making the rapprochement of cultures the hallmark of all policy-making by having recourse to dialogue, the principle underpinning this initiative. Advancement of “the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples” is one of the

Organization's primary tasks, as expressed in its Constitution. Over the years, and indeed in the past decade, UNESCO has gained special experience and has won recognition in this field.

11. Today's contemporary challenges are multiple, posed by globalization to pluralistic societies, and characterized by the tension between varieties of conflicting loyalties, in particular, that between cultural identity and political identity. Here the International year can contribute to creating an enabling environment in order to ensure harmonious interaction and social inclusiveness.

12. The aim is to bring to the fore the rich diversity of culture, a source of individual and collective fulfilment if it is well understood, but also a source of incomprehension, and even conflicts when it is used as an instrument. As the latter negative approach often predominates in a world tempted by the "clash of civilizations" ideology, the goal is to reverse that negative approach by promoting and by illustrating through real-life examples the positive contributions of cultural diversity which thrives only through dialogue, the driving force of its perpetual change and guarantor of its longevity.

13. In 2001, UNESCO adopted the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* and was given the lead by the United Nations General Assembly to implement the Global Agenda for Dialogue in close collaboration with Member States. In that context, UNESCO has implemented a series of programmes to promote mutual respect and understanding, focusing its strategy and approach on:

- (a) the articulation of a set of commonly shared values (tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for the other, learning to live together, cultural diversity, human rights, democratic governance, and peaceful settlement of conflicts);
- (b) initiatives at the regional and subregional levels;
- (c) multi-stakeholder involvement beyond governmental representation and deliberate engagement of youth and women as well as mobilization of all existing UNESCO networks;
- (d) a renewed exploration of the ways in which religions can contribute to dialogue-related activities; and
- (e) a reflection on how dialogue can serve as an opportunity to advance women's rights.

14. All this is relevant as a basis for action to be developed for the new International Year 2010, as it has been for past initiatives. The modalities initially used included studies as well as a series of international regional and national conferences seeking to:

- (i) raise awareness among decision-makers and civil society as to the value and potential inherent in dialogue and its underlying principles;
- (ii) reinforce and solidify stated commitments relative to commonly shared values by debunking the myths that arise as a result of ignorance and prejudice;
- (iii) formulate concrete action-oriented policies aimed at consolidating the positive spill-overs of dialogue and at deepening and consolidating mutual knowledge and appreciation across cultural, civilizational, geographic and political borders; and
- (iv) translate such action-oriented policies into sustained programmes and activities, involving a range of partners.

III. THE WAY FORWARD: SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ACTION PLAN TO PROMOTE THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE RAPPROCHEMENT OF CULTURES

15. With a view to drawing up a draft action plan, the Director-General consulted Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations maintaining relations with UNESCO and other partners of the Organization (Circular Letter of 15 May 2009) to gather their comments and proposals for activities to celebrate the Year.

16. Around 30 Member States and a number of IGOs and NGOs, some maintaining official relations with the Organization, some not, replied to the consultation (see Annex I). The replies received, from every region of the world, are a representative sample, illustrating a common vision and shared strategies. They are thus useful indicators for Member States which may draw on them in order to revisit their local, national, regional and international policies in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.

17. It should be noted that one Member State considers that although the concept of “rapprochement of cultures” has appeared recently in such terms at UNESCO (34 C/Resolution 36, adopted by the General Conference in 2007), the theme covered is that of intercultural dialogue, which is one of the foundation stones of the Organization. In addition, according to one Member State, it would be useful for each country to map all of its projects that make a direct or indirect contribution to the rapprochement of cultures.

18. A significant number of specific activities are already being considered by Member States and by various partners, including the Alliance of Civilizations. All replies received and the new proposals submitted throughout the Year will be available for viewing on a special page dedicated to the Year linked to the home page of the Culture Sector’s website.

19. The types of activities emerging are as follows:

- (a) greater opportunities for research, meetings and public debates and broadening of the spaces for intercultural mediation in the form of exhibitions illustrating exchanges and transfers of cultures, and fairs and festivals devoted to books, films, music, the theatre, dance, gastronomy, and so on, using in particular places that convey messages such as museums, art galleries and foundations, and making use of new technologies, in particular to foster linguistic diversity and translation;
- (b) promotion of the role of creativity, illustrating the rich cultural diversity of each country and of the world as a whole, by stressing both individual features and similarities that unify societies and, in that regard, promotion of an integrated vision of all aspects of cultural heritage as a bearer of history and identity that must be preserved, a resource and engine of sustainable development and an instrument of intercultural dialogue and of the rapprochement of cultures.

20. Having analysed the responses, Annex II sets out suggestions for an action plan for the International Year along four major themes, which have also informed UNESCO’s action and comparative advantage in the past. These themes are:

- (i) promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity;
- (ii) building a framework for commonly shared values;
- (iii) strengthening quality education; intercultural competences;
- (iv) fostering dialogue for sustainable development.

IV. FUNDING

21. Pursuant to 181 EX/Decision 52, the Secretariat will begin to seek extrabudgetary funds from early 2010 and hopes that Member States will respond favourably.

V. ACTION EXPECTED OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

22. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Taking note of the appeal launched on 11 August 2008 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on the item “Interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace” (A/RES/63/262) to develop all initiatives taken at the international level to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the context of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2010,
2. Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/22 which invited UNESCO in consultation with Member States, and through extrabudgetary resources, to play a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, in 2010, and 181 EX/Decision 18 (para. 67) relating to the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011 (35 C/5), which underlined the importance of UNESCO playing the leading role in the activities of the Year and of strengthening its capacities to that end,
3. Also recalling 181 EX/Decision 52 on the drafting of an action plan to prepare for the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010),
4. Having examined document 182 EX/16, which contains a preliminary UNESCO action plan for the celebration of 2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures,
5. Welcomes the commitment of the Member States that have responded to the appeal by the Director-General so that a draft action plan could be drawn up;
6. Urges all public and private institutions in Member States, civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations, National Commissions for UNESCO and institutions that promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue, to contribute to activities aimed at effective rapprochement of cultures,
7. Invites the Director-General to seek extrabudgetary resources to ensure the implementation of the action plan and invites Member States and other funding bodies to make extrabudgetary contributions to that end,
8. Recommends that the General Conference approve, at its 35th session, the preliminary action plan, together with the comments and recommendations made at this session of the Executive Board;
9. Further invites the Director-General to report to it at its 186th session on activities carried out to celebrate 2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

ANNEX I

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED IN REPLY TO THE CIRCULAR LETTER SENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON 15 MAY 2009

MEMBER STATES

Armenia, Belgium, Burundi, Chile, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Oman, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Tajikistan and the Consultative Committee of the "ARABIA PLAN".

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (IGOs)

Council of Europe, Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and Conférence des Ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports des Etats et Gouvernements ayant le Français en Partage (CONFEJES, Sénégal).

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS), Conseil International du Cinéma et de la Télévision (CICT), Conseil de la jeunesse pluriculturelle internationale (COJEP), Conférence Mondiale des Religions pour la Paix, NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee "Dialogue among cultures for peace", Pax Romana and Universal Esperanto Association.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Alliance of Civilizations (AoC), Cinquième Etage Productions, Managing and Implementing Euro-Latin American exchanges, Music Theatre International (MTI Italia), New Humanity (Rome, Italy).

ANNEX II

TOWARDS A PLAN OF ACTION: THEMATIC AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The proposals made by the respondents (see <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/> – dialogue) have been analysed and can be grouped around the following general considerations and thematic areas of intervention along four generic action lines:

General considerations:

1. The United Nations General Assembly has defined for the International Year three overarching dimensions: dialogue, entente and cooperation. Hence, it will involve different types of efforts, which are all captured under Strategic Programme Objective 10 for a six-year period running until 2013. The challenge will be to make a specific difference and show impact during the particular year 2010. One of the major aims will be to demonstrate the beneficial effects of cultural diversity recognizing the importance of borrowings, transfers and exchanges between cultures, thanks to an implicit or explicit dialogue. This requires an identification of the knowledge, the skills and the values which are necessary to engage in real dialogue, a process which can give people, groups and societies a chance to develop fully and get enriched in the globalized and globalizing world.
2. Intercultural dialogue has to mobilize not only States but civil society as a whole in an effort to influence not only those who already believe in intercultural dialogue but also those who do not feel concerned. Intellectuals, religious leaders and artists, have a major role to play in promoting dialogue. Indeed, during the International Year the entire UNESCO family will need to be mobilized for the implementation of their own dedicated action, including intergovernmental programmes, the National Commissions, the UNESCO Chairs, category 1 and 2 institutes and centres, public-private partnerships and the numerous networks created and coordinated by the Organization, including in particular the ASPnet and the Coalition of Cities against Racism, the UNESCO Clubs, and NGO's through their NGO Liaison Committee. Furthermore, UNESCO will advocate action in furtherance of the objectives of the International Year in inter-agency fora, in particular the CEB and two of its subsidiary bodies, namely UNDG and HLCP. In this context, Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) – especially in post-conflict countries – will be invited to develop pertinent proposals, projects and initiatives with their host governments and with the support of UNESCO National Commissions. Consideration could also be given to designate a Goodwill Ambassador and UNESCO Artists for Peace to carry the message of the International Year to a larger audience in all the regions. UNESCO also foresees rapprochement activities to be carried out in Africa and benefiting gender equality, which are the two global priorities of the Organization.
3. Dialogue can play a constructive role to promote a rapprochement of cultures and to engage in peace-building. In this regard, challenges faced by all regions, particularly those marked by inter-community conflicts, shall be addressed in consultation and cooperation with the United Nations Peace-Building Commission and the United Nations Secretariat's Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA). The ultimate objective will be to create spaces for openness towards others and for deeper understanding of the human family in its diversity. In these conditions, dialogue can be efficient only if basic prerequisites are ensured: equality, justice, poverty alleviation, respect for dignity and human rights, awareness of the need to fight against all kinds of discrimination and to build an inclusive society.
4. Interfaith dialogue is an essential component of a broader intercultural dialogue: faith and creeds are examined as a cultural and social phenomenon and as such, deserve to be better known and understood in order to avoid stereotypes. The recently created Advisory Group to the Director-General on interreligious issues is expected to play a constructive and proactive role in this regard.

I. Promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity

5. Any dialogue requires basic knowledge about the “other”, reducing ignorances and their potential negative impact. The focus must be on combating ignorances of other’s history, languages, heritage and religions. The International Year can focus on promoting awareness of the history of civilizations and emphasizing role models and pioneers in the advancement of intercultural dialogue and rapprochement of cultures. It can further promote youth exchanges to create awareness and mutual understanding to fight racism, prejudices and to foster a culture of peace is particularly effective and appropriate in that regard.

6. Protecting linguistic diversity and promoting multilingualism serves a particularly important objective, as the use of several languages is a bridge between cultures and civilizations and their visions. This also requires promoting public awareness and building local capacity for the promotion of language policies and safeguarding of endangered languages. Safeguarding and promotion of endangered languages enhances their role as vehicles of oral traditions and expressions, transmitted from one generation to the other. Action during the International Year can concentrate on an acknowledgment of the role of languages, linguistic diversity, multilingualism and translation as an important component in the advancement of intercultural dialogue and access to knowledge and information.

7. Cultural heritage is a common good of humankind, which deserves to be preserved for future generations. Heritage is nevertheless becoming a prime conflict target, especially in intra-State conflicts, for reasons of symbolism, identity, aggressiveness, misunderstanding and rejection. Yet it can become a rallying point for former adversaries, enabling them to rebuild ties and to redesign a common identity and future together. Building on the 1972, 2003 and 2005 Conventions, the International Year can promote the importance of a shared heritage by enhancing mutual knowledge of traditional cultural expressions within the framework of tangible and intangible cultural heritage building on national, regional and global exchanges. It can further stimulate awareness-raising of cultural expressions and incentives for peace and reconciliation through media, ICTs and new technologies as well as museums and foundations.

8. The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage can strengthen dialogue and mutual understanding, as intangible cultural heritage directly calls for the involvement and empowerment of traditional communities side by side with national stakeholders in the preservation of the most vulnerable forms of heritage, namely oral traditions. The International Year can thus foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding for the rapprochement of cultures through creativity and arts (music, expositions, gastronomy, theatre, festivals, dance, cinema, handicrafts, etc.).

9. A major aim of interreligious dialogue, which forms part of intercultural dialogue, is to promote dialogue between individuals and leaders of different religions, faiths and convictions, with a view to increasing mutual knowledge about spiritual traditions and their underlying values, thus enhancing the understanding among the wider cultural communities. This has expanded to raising awareness among educators and civil society representatives about the role and value of interreligious dialogue for the support of secular initiatives and agendas.

II. Building a framework for commonly shared values

10. Intercultural dialogue is a process which also requires the recognition of commonly shared values which can be fortified through action taken during the International Year. A broad international sense of commonality has emerged with respect to such an overarching framework for the dialogue. It consists of values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility – which the Millennium Declaration has reaffirmed as “timeless and universal”. These fundamental values are anchored in tolerance that incorporates respect for others, regardless of diversity of belief, cultural background, and language. Other globally relevant values are: respect for and the upholding of cultural diversity, commitment to peace, non-violence

and peaceful practices, respect for human dignity, and observance of human rights. In other contexts, a focus on transversal values – those shared by two or several cultures – may lead to mutual learning and understanding rather than a focus on universal values.

12. The challenge at present is to consolidate these values and to translate them into reality through concrete action – something which the International Year is well set to focus on. Empowerment of women through international exchanges among women to promote awareness of their role in the advancement of intercultural dialogue and the rapprochement of cultures is another important field to be strengthened during the International Year.

13. The media do play an important role in linking together countries in regions torn by civil strife. Cross-fertilization of journalistic practices and concepts is a very powerful tool for enhancing mutual understanding and respect.

III. Strengthening quality education and the building of intercultural competences

14. Quality education should be primarily grounded on the respect for human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration and should equip the learner not only with knowledge and values to understand the other, but also competences which are specific to openness and appreciation of diversity. This includes the revision of the content of national textbooks, learning materials and curricula, taking into account diverse learning styles, and life experiences, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Likewise, the role of the teacher in interpreting textbooks and developing learning materials that induce and prepare learners for dialogue, and teach them to think critically, must receive high attention. During the International Year, tolerance and intercultural understanding can be promoted through formal and non-formal education, particularly through the UNESCO Chairs and the UNESCO Associated Schools Project network (ASPnet).

15. A multi-level dialogue must be initiated and fostered both among and within cultures with a view to developing the foundations for a peaceful and prosperous life of future generations. One important entry point in this regard is the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014), for which UNESCO has been designated lead agency of the United Nations system. ESD aims at the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values needed for a sustainable future.

16. The importance of public and semi-public places and special occasions such as religious gatherings, cultural festivals or sports events should be emphasized during the International Year as they offer privileged venues for cultural interaction.

IV. Fostering dialogue for sustainable development

17. New spaces of dialogue are also offered today by sciences. This includes modern science as well as traditional science, exploring ways to ensure that indigenous knowledge systems are recognized and respected in their contribution to sustainable development. Building on global environmental issues during the International Year will allow to foster dialogue about sustainable development and measures to address the consequences of climate changes and shared water resources.

18. Against a changing international landscape, the need to organize and manage cultural pluralism at all levels and in a democratic manner remains a vital and indispensable landmark towards achieving lasting peace. Hence, there is a need to multiply the platforms of exchange and to collect innovative practices that are conducive to cultural pluralism at local, national and regional levels. Sensibilization and awareness-raising of cultural expressions of minorities, migrants and other disadvantaged and excluded groups to foster respect and mutual understanding for social inclusion and integration will thus be an important feature of the International Year.