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**RABINDRANATH TAGORE, PABLO NERUDA AND
AIMÉ CÉSAIRE FOR A RECONCILED UNIVERSAL**

OUTLINE

Source: 180 EX/Decision 58 and 180 EX/58 Rev.2, 181 EX/5 Add 3, 182 EX/Decision 36 (I).

Background: 180 EX/Decision 58 proposes renewed reflection and action on the theme of a "reconciled universal", more essential than ever in renewing the intellectual and moral solidarity required to meet the challenges faced by humanity today. This decision is in line with UNESCO's intellectual watch function, since the adoption of its Constitution (1945) and updated by the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, and various other instruments and agreements drawn up under the auspices of the Organization, particularly in the field of bioethics.

The Executive Board, in 180 EX/Decision 58, invited the Director-General to present to it, at its 181st session, proposals for the implementation of programmes based on the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Pablo Neruda and Aimé Césaire, drawing on all of UNESCO's fields of competence (education, sciences, culture and communication). An informal meeting was held on 16 March 2009 to explore the contemporary relevance of the themes of convergence between these three authors and outline potential lines of action for such a programme, the interdisciplinary nature of which requires that an appropriate operational framework be defined. Concrete proposals have accordingly been made in document 181 EX/5 Add.3 in order to build upon the contribution of these three authors towards a reconciled universal.

Purpose: The Director-General submits to the General Conference the present document which outlines the preparatory activities to be implemented as part of the follow-up to document 180 EX/Decision 58.

Decision required: Paragraph 23.

1. Our world is subject to accelerated change, brought about by developments in science and technology and by dangers affecting the environment and life itself; the current global crisis refocuses debate around values, solidarity and humanism. Humanity aspires to peace and sustainable development, but is also witness to identity-based conflict, the recurrence of intolerance and economic inequalities, and to tension and conflict at the national and international levels. It faces critical challenges which call for a new solidarity pact between human beings and our planet, and the formulation of new paradigms based on humanism and a re-evaluation of the relationship between culture and development.
2. The Executive Board, in 180 EX/Decision 58, proposed to take the pioneering and ever-pertinent message of Tagore, Neruda and Césaire as the starting point for engaging the Organization in substantial reflection and renewed action on a universal reconciled with diversity in keeping with UNESCO's intellectual watch mandate within the United Nations system since the adoption of the Organization's Constitution in 1945.
3. The goal of the "Rabindranath Tagore, Pablo Neruda and Aimé Césaire for a reconciled universal" programme is to encourage what could become the refounding of the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. It is intended to bring together countries and generations, creative workers and intellectuals, by rallying resources and partners in a careful examination of the critical issues that must be dealt with as quickly as possible.
4. Rabindranath Tagore, Aimé Césaire and Pablo Neruda – poet activists and historic figures from different geo-cultural spheres (Asia, Africa/Caribbean, Europe and Latin America) who wore their affiliations on their sleeves, were able to respond to the burdens of history in their time, from the second half of the nineteenth century (Tagore was born in 1861) to the early twenty-first century (with the death of Césaire in 2008). Their activism and literary work challenged the contradictions of an unequal and unfair world system and developed a new understanding of their society and the world in order to establish a concrete and universal humanism. The work and paths of these three major writers are a reflection at the highest level of the interrelationship between the universal and the particular in understanding the complex processes of modernity.
5. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), poet, teacher and humanist, to whom the Organization devoted, on his centenary, a special edition of the *UNESCO Courier* in December 1961, said that "the man whose inner vision is bathed in consciousness at once realizes the spiritual union which reigns over all racial differences, and his mind no longer stumbles over individual facts, accepting them as final. He realizes that peace is an inner harmony and not an outer adjustment".
6. Similarly, Pablo Neruda, poet, diplomat and Member of the Executive Board from 1971 until his death in 1973, committed to eliminating scourges such as "ignorance and prejudice, ... the doctrine of the inequality of men and races,"¹ left a profound mark on the Organization, writing in the last verses of "Residence on Earth": "I wanted to sing for you all, for the whole of the earth, this song of obscure words to make us worthy of the light that is coming".
7. Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), poet, playwright and politician, left a legacy devoted exclusively to fighting the drift towards a hegemony of "fleshless universalism", pointing out that "there are two ways to lose oneself: through segregation, being immured in the particular, or through dilution in the universal", and adding that "I have a different idea of a universal. It is of a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all".²
8. These illustrious figures, committed to sharing, dignity, respect for nature, solidarity and peace, left behind a message conducive to assembling large constellations of ideas and action.

¹ Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO.

² Aimé Césaire in *Lettre à Maurice Thorez* (Paris, 1956).

This message connects the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, uniting culture, science and technology.

9. Their humanism and philosophy laid the foundation for inseparable links between education, science, culture and communication. Their battle against exploitation and discrimination, and their efforts to humanize the world, can unite memories, identities and generations in the North and South in order to transcend historical, geopolitical, economic, generational and ideological divides. Their exemplary heritage is among those which inspired the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the various instruments and agreements developed under the auspices of the Organization, particularly in the field of bioethics. This heritage can also serve as an important source of inspiration for UNESCO's work towards tolerance, cultural dialogue, diversity and peace.

10. To implement 180 EX/Decision 58, UNESCO's Executive Board invited the Director-General to present it with proposals to carry out interdisciplinary programmes based on the work of Tagore, Neruda and Césaire, drawing on all of UNESCO's fields of competence.

11. An informal meeting held on 16 March 2009 brought together experts on Tagore, Neruda and Césaire with the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO of Benin, Chile, France and India, to explore the themes of convergence between these three authors and to outline potential thematic lines of action for the programme.

Proposed programme

12. Following the informal meeting, several options were outlined for the formulation of a programme of activities that UNESCO could carry out.

13. In that respect, it was planned to launch several preparatory activities as from the current biennium, given that the proposed programme should cover the two coming biennia (from 2011 to 2013) for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Tagore (2011) and of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Césaire (2013).

14. The requirement to focus the programme on the quest for a universal that transcends particularism emerged from the deliberations of the informal meeting. This would therefore entail highlighting the way in which each of the authors had reached universality by calling into question, each as far as he was concerned, relations between the dominant and the dominated, whether regarding colonialism, fascism, imperialism or racism. That approach would make it possible to compare writers who, over and beyond their differing historical, geographical, social and cultural contexts, shared the common feature of being authors of the South or identifying with and speaking from the "South".

15. Five major themes of convergence between these three authors were identified during that first informal reflection process: (i) the place of pedagogy in their work, especially through education, experimentation and learning; (ii) nature, in the form of the desire for the search for a new covenant of solidarity between humanity and its environment; (iii) scientific and technological progress, enriched by dialogue with all forms of knowledge; (iv) human rights and democracy in response to colonialism, discrimination and political, economic, social and cultural exclusion; and, lastly (v) art and, in particular, poetry as a form of unique mediation between people and nature, and between individuals and their fellows.

16. To ensure the launching of the project, an awareness-raising campaign will be carried out for all UNESCO field offices, and all the National Commissions for UNESCO, IGOs and international NGOs concerned, so that they could serve as intermediaries nationally, regionally and internationally, thereby enriching through their proposals the programme of activities defined by UNESCO. A call for projects might lead to the identification of original operations that could be

labelled or promoted. Furthermore, specific agreements could be established with public and private donors in order to gather the resources that are vital to ensuring the activities' success.

Financial implications

17. The costs arising from the implementation of this programme could be covered within the budget requested in document 35 C/5, if it were to be approved, within the framework of the activities carried out under main line of action 5.

18. The following preparatory activities have been initiated with a view to permitting the implementation of the programme in the course of the next biennium (2010-2011).

Preparatory activities

Production of a brochure by UNESCO

19. With the assistance of specialists, the proposed brochure would make it possible to explore further the areas of convergence between the three authors, demonstrating, on the basis of the quotations chosen from the three bodies of work, the contribution of each of them to universality and the construction of the foundations of a practical humanism. The brochure will be circulated widely, in particular to those taking part in processes of reconciliation in order to stimulate further debate and generate reflection on the present era.

Establishment of a sponsoring committee

20. A network of institutional support, intellectuals, media and financial institutions would be set up and encouraged by the establishment of a high-level sponsoring committee. The committee is currently being identified, and its first meeting is due to be held in the first quarter of 2010. It will be composed of eminent individuals and will foster the implementation and global impact of the project.

Partner mobilization

21. Furthermore, consultation with Member States is envisaged with a view to implementing a national and international celebration framework that will be structured by respective "Years" – celebrating Rabindranath Tagore in 2011, Pablo Neruda in 2012 and Aimé Césaire in 2013 – particularly with regard to the events devoted to them.

Development of a communication plan and dedicated website hosted by UNESCO

22. The establishment of a database on the three authors has been envisaged, which will result in the development of a media plan that includes, for instance, the creation of a website and of partnerships with the media.

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

The General Conference,

1. *Having examined* documents 181 EX/5 Add.3, 180 EX/58 Rev.2 and 35 C/53,
2. *Recalling* the importance of the works of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) and Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), which highlight their contribution to the building of a reconciled universal, beyond the originality of each work and each context,
3. *Emphasizing* the relevance of UNESCO's action to promote dialogue among cultures and peace-building, and the desirability of promoting the message of the three authors

in order to enhance the Organization's reflection and action in this context,

4. *Taking into consideration* the celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010, which provides a favourable context for the development of a programme of activities focused on the works of Tagore, Neruda and Césaire, with a view to celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Tagore (2011) and the 100th anniversary of the birth of Césaire (2013),
5. *Encourages* Member States and public and private institutions to implement 180 EX/Decision 58 and, in particular, to initiate translation, publication and research programmes in national languages, in order to further exploit the heritage of these works and to act as national, regional and international intermediaries able to give effect to the UNESCO programme "for a reconciled universal", with special emphasis on youth;
6. *Recommends* that favourable consideration be given to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore (2011) and of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Aimé Césaire (2013), *endorses* 180 EX/Decision 58 of the Executive Board and *approves*, "for a reconciled universal", the implementation of an intersectoral programme in the 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 biennia;
7. *Invites* the Director-General to submit to the Executive Board at its 184th session, a progress report on the implementation of interdisciplinary and intersectoral programmes in connection with the work of these three authors, financed through appropriate resources, from both the regular programme and extrabudgetary funds raised for that purpose.

ANNEX

Brief biography of the authors

Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), poet, playwright, essayist and politician, set his work in the context of the risks inherent in history and laid siege to the citadels of power and exclusion in order to achieve the emancipation of humanity. In 1937, he coined the word “Négritude”, also used by Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Gontran Damas, and later adopted by Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon and Wole Soyinka, which was a source of inspiration for many others, constituting a Copernican revolution. Aimé Césaire defined this conceptual, historicized neologism as being applicable to any colour, since it emerged from the awareness of a denied identity, in this instance Black identity, which, in taking on a human dimension, is reconciled with the universal. This vision was shared by André Breton, Pablo Picasso, Michel Leiris, Wifredo Lam, Pablo Neruda, Edgar Morin, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and Jean-Paul Sartre. Deeply aware of belonging to Earth and the realm of the living, Aimé Césaire made his life as a politician and poet one long struggle for the political, cultural and responsible liberation of colonized peoples. This struggle was marked by the publication of major works against ideological abuse, oppression of peoples by colonialism, imperialism, slavery, mistakes made in the exercise of power and cultural alienation. He has handed down to us a philosophy of history, rooted in his own identity, marked by loyalty to Africa, but which meets the aspirations of peoples to “anchor the humanist issue in the context of the universal”.

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), eulogist of Latin America and of socialist ideals, Pablo Neruda was a Chilean poet, diplomat, politician, playwright, essayist and professor, fully committed to the defence and recognition of Amerindian civilizations, with a profoundly unique vision of humankind’s place in nature, of democracy and of the dialogue among civilizations – all of them equal. Both in Civil War Spain, alongside Federico García Lorca, and in Salvador Allende’s Chile, he fought dictatorship and oppression, social and racial exclusion, injustice and economic exploitation, and the destruction of the heritage of civilizations and identity by the hegemonic imperialists of yesterday and today, notably the bitter legacy of the genocides perpetrated during the European conquest in the fifteenth century, and exploitation and colonialism in the twentieth century. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971, and his work is on a par with that of great intellectuals from the Americas such as Rubén Darío, Gabriel García Márquez, Octavio Paz, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Jorge Amado, Jorge Luis Borges, Alejo Carpentier and Julio Cortázar. As a citizen of the world, from the Americas to the Pacific, he met Césaire, Nehru and Picasso, but did not survive the military *coup d’état* that plunged Chile into mourning in 1973.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Brahman aristocrat born in Calcutta, poet, music teacher, playwright, visual artist, expert on the rural world and founder of microcredit, was one of the major witnesses and protagonists of the beginning of the industrial era and the first half of the twentieth century. He revealed India to itself by reviving neglected sources in areas that include and extend beyond the scope of politics. From India, whose social, ethnic and cultural divisions he overcame, he brought us his reflections on education, science and the relationship to the Other, in particular the West. His significant work, a cornerstone of pan-Asianism, provides us with a philosophical system emblematic of Asian civilizations since it addresses all the issues and social contradictions underlying the struggle for political independence and respect for cultural and linguistic identity, while offering ideals and practices based on tolerance and dialogue with the West, which have earned him universal respect and admiration. A contemporary of Gandhi and Nehru, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, friend of Einstein and of many artists – such as the Argentine Victoria Ocampo – and scientists, the works of this humanist in search of the universal are at the core of a galaxy of intellectuals and creators from Asia and elsewhere and continue, moreover, to have an impact on the international community as a whole.