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Organización  
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para la Educación,  
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**ORAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE SCIENCE COMMISSION**

**Mr Simeon Anguelov (Bulgaria)**

**16th Plenary meeting, Thursday 22 October 2009**

Mr President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to present the conclusions of the Science Commission's work to this honourable assembly.

First of all, allow me to thank the members of the Bureau of the SC Commission: Ms R. Ladenheim, (Argentina), Mr E. Ehile (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr J. Gaardhoje (Denmark), Mr K. Luis (Malaysia) and, especially, Mr Mohamed El-Zahaby (Egypt), our Rapporteur, since my report is largely based on his work.

I also wish to pay tribute to the Secretary of the SC Commission, Ms Meriem Bouamrane and to her excellent team because without them the work of this Commission would have been impossible.

I should also like to thank the representatives of the Director-General, Mr Walter Erdelen, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences and Mr Patricio Bernal, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) for their helpful cooperation with the Commission and with whom we had a productive exchange.

The Commission for Natural Sciences started on Wednesday, 14 October, and met four times, and had a joint session with the Social and Human Sciences Commission on 16 October.

### **Organization and methods of work of the Commission**

The work of the SC Commission was organized around five agenda items. I intend to present the results of our work according to the timetable adopted which is also reflected in the written report.

Prior to examination of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011 concerning the Natural Sciences, the chairperson of the International Hydrological Programme delivered the Joint Statement of the Chairpersons of UNESCO's six scientific programmes: the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP), the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP), the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), and the Programme on Management of Social Transformations (MOST).

On behalf of the chairpersons of all Intergovernmental/International Scientific Programmes (ISPs), the chairperson of IHP noted that UNESCO's programmes in the natural and social sciences should be strengthened to enable the Organization to make significant contributions to necessary global actions in the various domains of its mandate. The ISPs are cognizant of the important role of science in the pursuit of knowledge and sustainable development and in promoting a constructive dialogue amongst civilizations. New knowledge is required to address such major challenges as poverty, biodiversity, environmental degradation, climate change, natural disasters and energy needs.

He said that science education and capacity-building in all specific domains are prerequisites to developing new and future technologies, and therefore, for the innovation and growth necessary for development. As the only United Nations agency with a mandate in science, UNESCO and its sciences sectors is the most appropriate vehicle for global cooperation, for trust and tolerance building, and a unique tool to achieve peace and development under most turbulent conditions.

He further said that the five UNESCO International Science Programmes and the IOC provide direct links to the global scientific community and each has had important achievements in each field of activities. He added that the ISPs address the recommendations of the Review Committee of Major Programmes II and III. Finally, he stated that these achievements could be enhanced

significantly with the necessary financial and political support provided by the new Director-General and the Member States.

## **I. The Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011, Major Programme II**

The Commission started its work with agenda item 4.2, Consideration and adoption of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011, Major Programme II – Natural Sciences.

The representatives of the Director-General, namely the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, the Assistant Director-General for the Natural Sciences, and the IOC Executive Secretary, introduced the item.

The ADG for Strategic Planning started by referring to the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) with its five overarching objectives and 14 strategic programme objectives. He stressed the importance of accomplishing a seamless passage from the C/4 document to the C/5 document. He highlighted the global priorities for Africa and gender equality, orientation of main lines of action with the Millennium Development Goals, rigorous application of management approach, United Nations reform, internal UNESCO reform and enhancing relevance and visibility.

The ADG for Natural Sciences noted the events that shaped the Draft Programme for the biennium. He forwarded that S in UNESCO stands not merely for SCIENCE, but for SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. He pointed out that the next biennium corresponds to the second biennium within the Medium-Term Strategy.

He mentioned that with reference to the 2006-2007 Review of Major Programmes II (Natural Sciences) and III (Social and Human Sciences), the full implementation of the recommendations of this review was foreseen during the Medium-Term Strategy period. Building upon the achievements of the previous two years, he added that the implementation of these recommendations had already commenced in 2008-2009 and would continue.

He cited the high priority given to science policy in the Natural Sciences Sector through the reinforced programme in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy. A budgetary increase of 37.5% for the STI policy programme in 2010-2011 has been proposed. However, due to a budget that is virtually static, reinforcing science policy has meant taking resources away from other programmes in the Sector.

The IOC Executive Secretary introduced the fourth main line of action and expressed satisfaction with the budget of IOC for the present biennium as this has provided a stable platform to work on. He appreciated the active support by Member States in the drafting of the IOC Programme for the next biennium. The focus of IOC's work during this biennium will be on improving governance and fostering intergovernmental cooperation through ocean sciences and services. Finally, he introduced the five actions around which the IOC Programme is organized.

The floor was briefly given to the delegate of India who reported on behalf of 32 ministers and 60 delegations the conclusions and recommendations of the Ministerial Roundtable on Oceans, entitled "Building stewardship for the Ocean: The contribution of UNESCO to responsible ocean governance". Member States are invited to consult document 35C/INF.29 for more detailed information.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the debate that followed, 52 speakers and two observers took the floor. The majority of Member States expressed their support for main line of action two on science education and capacity-building in the sciences and engineering, highlighting the importance of the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP), and confirmed support for the global priorities Africa and gender equality. The priority for science, technology and innovation policies was appreciated, but in spite of this, several delegations regretted the limited budget for the other programmes.

However, some delegates insisted that UNESCO should and I quote:

1. focus on real priorities and avoid duplication of programmes;
2. act as policy advisor and not finance research itself;
3. help Member States in establishing and developing their research policies;
4. enhance capacity-building, international cooperation, particularly on the regional scale, in the fields of science, technology and innovation.

The Experts' report (176 EX/7) on the review of two of UNESCO's Major Programmes, II and III, was mentioned, with some Member States questioning the implementation of the recommendations of the report. That issue had also been raised during the Executive Board's debates. Several delegates pointed out that the ISPs could greatly optimize actions with intersectoral participation, greater focus and better coordination among themselves and with the category 1 and 2 centres and institutes.

Numerous delegates expressed their wish for reinforcement of South-South cooperation in both quality science education and research. They also stressed the need for the enhancement of synergies between the Science and Education Sectors, focusing on importance of the interdisciplinary approach.

The important work in capacity-building by the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and the International Centre for Pure and Applied Mathematics (ICPAM-CIMPA) was cited.

Many countries mentioned the significance and relevance of the ISPs to the work of the Natural Sciences Sector. Many delegations appreciated the achievements of IHP, MAB, IGCP, IBSP and IOC, as they offer opportunities for expertise and information on issues of sustainable development, capacity-building, climate change, water management, disaster preparedness and mitigation, biodiversity, geoscience and international cooperation.

Member States deplored the cuts in budgetary support for the ISPs as it is not acceptable that they be endangered in order to provide more funds to a priority programme. The underfunding of Major Programme II as a whole was referred to several times.

Certain representatives of Member States expressed their interest in addressing issues of sustainable development, climate change, natural disaster mitigation, water resource management, marine environment and water desalination. Other delegates spoke about the particular vulnerability of Small Island Developing States to the impacts of climate change and the need for concrete actions. A couple of countries also pointed out the vulnerability of the Arctic zones. Moreover, a few countries underlined the continuing importance of local and indigenous knowledge systems in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Mr President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Numerous countries underlined their support for the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves which are widely recognized as "learning sites for sustainable development". Several countries noted the strength of the world network of sites, making particular mention of transboundary biosphere reserves, and the use of these sites as demonstration sites for sustainable development. Some delegations acknowledged the need to include geoscience in climate change research through the International Geological Sciences Programme (IGCP). Three delegates highlighted the importance of geopark activities as an

excellent vehicle that brings together science and culture and stimulates local sustainable development.

In dealing with the challenges pertaining to water resources, ecohydrology, transboundary waters, water management and water education, the work of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education were appreciated by some countries that called for continued support to both.

Many delegations recognized the effectiveness of International Years in attracting public attention to science and increasing UNESCO visibility. Some of them noted the success of the International Year of Planet Earth 2008 and the International Year of Astronomy 2009 and looked forward to the launching and celebration of the International Years of Biodiversity 2010 and of Chemistry 2011.

In his reply to the debate, the ADG for Natural Sciences expressed gratitude to the Member States for their strong support to the work on document 35 C/5 and appreciation for their constructive criticisms and suggestions. The IOC Executive Secretary acknowledged and thanked the positive comments made by the delegates for IOC. Following that, two delegates raised the issue of the necessity for precise and detailed budgeting with regard to the programme execution.

At the end of the debate, the Commission examined the Recommendations by the Executive Board on the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010-2011, and a total of 13 draft resolutions submitted by Member States. The results of our work are presented for your examination and approval in the Commission's written report.

A Special Session on the International Basic Sciences Programme, "The Basic Sciences, Lever for Development: The Role of UNESCO Partners", was held prior to the afternoon session of Wednesday, 14 October. The session featured the Portuguese Minister of Science, Mr Gago, who highlighted the utility of an independent evaluation of basic science programmes at national level and that would take into account economic and social aspects. He also focused on the importance of technology in solving problems of developing countries. The Director-General of CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) in Geneva, Mr Rolf Hever, emphasized the strengthening of CERN-UNESCO partnership in driving scientific and technological education forward.

## **II. Establishment of category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO**

I turn now to item II, which corresponds to the third session of the Commission's work, which was devoted to category 2 centres.

The Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences introduced the new proposed UNESCO category 2 centres and their aims. Altogether, forty-seven speakers took the floor to give their unanimous support to and endorsement of the establishment of the new category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO.

Member States expressed their interest to collaborate with the centres and their hope that the work of the centres will benefit all. Once again, certain delegates raised the concern for the limited budget of Major Programme II, mentioning the issue of imbalance between staff costs and programme activities. On the other hand, a few countries emphasized the importance of the staff to implement the UNESCO mandate.

One delegation mentioned UNESCO's role in optimizing benefits from category 2 centres from Member States even in the case of lack of diplomatic relationships. For the proposed category 2 centres related to water issues, many delegations appreciated the benefits of cooperation and suggested that synergies among the centres be explored with joint activities.

In his reply, the Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences acknowledged the support of Member States and confirmed the availability of opportunities for cooperation and interaction. For

category 2 centres related to water issues, a strategy for networking among the twenty centres already exists with category I centres and other institutions.

The Commission then recommended to the General Conference that it adopt all the resolutions for the establishment of nine proposed category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO.

I turn now to debate III, devoted exclusively to the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, and proposed by Germany.

### **III. UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves' contribution to sustainable development**

Item 5.15 emphasized the significance of biosphere reserves as learning sites for sustainable development. This item aimed at greater use to be made within UNESCO of the options and services of the MAB programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Introducing the item, the delegate from Germany welcomed the Madrid Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves until 2013 and emphasized how the draft resolution supported by other countries will aid the progress of the implementation of this Plan. He cited that UNESCO must make better use of the options and services of the MAB programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves especially at an intersectoral level involving all sectors. In the resolution, the Director-General was called upon to seek extrabudgetary funds and requested the Director-General to present a progress report on the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan. Thereafter 33 Member States took the floor, welcomed the initiative of Germany and gave their support to the resolution, raising among others the importance of:

- Functionality of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves,
- Transboundary biosphere reserves,
- Climate change and the coastal zones,
- Increase of synergies between MAB and other programmes (ASPnet) and convention especially the World Heritage.

The ADG then welcomed the general positive support for the MAB programme. He stressed that the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of Biosphere Reserves will continue. He added that the Mediterranean region needs to be studied with site-specific approaches.

The DR was adopted with three amendments.

### **IV. Conduct by UNESCO of a feasibility study for the establishment of an international engineering programme**

Item 5.24 called for an examination of the feasibility for the establishment of an international engineering programme. The Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences introduced the item by noting the role and importance of engineering in social and economic development, concern regarding capacity shortages in engineering around the world and the consequent need for human and institutional capacity building in this field. In the debate that followed, 29 speakers took the floor. In her intervention as proponent, the delegate from South Africa referred to the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action and its emphasis on capacity-building, in particular, improving the quality of engineering training and increasing the number of engineers. Furthermore, she highlighted the lack of engineering potential in eight countries of the Southern African Development Community. Therefore, the proposed feasibility study would be a targeted and timely response to the Consolidated Plan of Action. Member States were unanimous in acknowledging the importance of engineering for sustainable development, with many of them endorsing the proposal. Other delegations hesitated to support the proposal due to the already

scarce budget situation in the Sector and the need for further focus. After some discussion, an amendment was proposed to indicate use of extrabudgetary funds for the feasibility study and focus on strengthening the engineering programme. You will find the proposed draft resolution with the preamble in the written report which was examined in our Commission and which is at your disposal.

## **V. UNESCO and the Global Action on Climate Change**

Item 5.12 “UNESCO and the Global Action on Climate Change” and two draft resolutions were examined at the joint session with SHS.

Introducing the item and the first draft resolution, the Chairperson of the Danish National Commission for UNESCO called for urgent action on climate change. She underlined the significance of this opportunity to discuss the specific challenge of climate change. She emphasized that the Intersectoral Platform on Climate Change has a role to play in making targeted impact for global action on this phenomenon in the light of COP15 (United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen 2009) and wondered how UNESCO can contribute to global action on climate change.

The IOC Executive Secretary reiterated the work being done by the Intersectoral Platform on Climate Change and UNESCO. UNESCO manages climate change scientific research in conjunction with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, sponsors the World Climate Research Programme and coordinates all ocean observations. It also participates in the United Nations-wide climate change adaptation activities and has a role to play in climate change education in the framework of education for sustainable development.

Thirty-five speakers and two observers took the floor. Member States unanimously endorsed the resolution. Concerning methods of UNESCO work, they underscored that global action on climate change offers an excellent opportunity for Sectors to work together in the framework of the ISPs and come up with concrete and decisive outcomes. In close coordination with other United Nations agencies, UNESCO should focus and use its strengths in order to address the devastating impact of climate change on the Small Island Developing States, the vulnerability of indigenous peoples and the poorest sectors of society. Many delegations emphasized the need for UNESCO to employ interdisciplinary approaches and stressed the role of the intersectoral platform as an essential tool for action.

Some countries that recently suffered immense destruction from tsunamis, floods and other natural disasters, highlighted their urgent need for timely action, relying on the Natural Sciences Sector to provide understanding of climate patterns and climate change. Many delegates reiterated the need for awareness-raising, policy advice and capacity-building on climate change, and the assistance for disaster mitigation, taking into account the social impacts.

While a delegate articulated his doubt about the current projections of climate change, he also advised more attention to research. Another country representative emphasized the urgent need for better organized interdisciplinary research. Another delegation suggested the creation of a UNESCO prize awarded for best projects reducing the impacts of climate change.

In their replies, the representatives of the Director-General mentioned that UNESCO has an existing strong base to address the many facets of the challenges of climate change: education for sustainable development, raising public awareness through broadcast media, values education and ethics, public policies to govern social impacts, the Man and the Biosphere programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and other ISPs. In particular, the IOC Executive Secretary assured Member States of the intense effort to implement and coordinate United Nations actions.

Mr President,  
Dear Colleagues,

For the second draft resolution, the delegate from St. Kitts-Nevis gave the introduction, emphasizing the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States, the enormous hardships they suffer and their urgent need for immediate action and UNESCO assistance. The representatives of the Director-General reiterated their recognition of the impacts of climate change on the Small Island Developing States and the necessity to advance UNESCO work through intersectoral approaches.

The Member States unanimously endorsed the second resolution. In particular, a delegation called for specific actions:

- That climate change become part of the One-UN programme;
- That each country set up a national task force for climate change mitigation; and
- That priority action from UNESCO be requested, to make the Intersectoral Platform on Climate Change a priority activity and provide it with budgetary resources.

The Commission then recommended to the General Conference that it adopt the two resolutions on UNESCO and the Global Action on Climate Change.

Mr President,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

This brings me to the conclusion of my oral report. I hope I have succeeded in capturing most of our rich debates over the past week and in highlighting the orientations provided by this Commission for the programmes on the natural sciences.

I should like to reiterate my thanks to my colleagues on the Bureau, to the Rapporteur, and to our secretary, Ms Meriem Bouamrane and her team.

Thank you for your attention.