



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
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by

**Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,**

on the occasion of the Information Meeting with the Executive Board

Paris, 29 January 2013

Madam Chair of the Executive Board,
Madam President of the General Conference,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

Good morning everyone.

Before starting, I should like to touch briefly on the latest developments of the situation in Mali.

We have had a working meeting on this issue and we are working on the action plan that will be finalized with the delegations of Mali and France and shared with you in good time, in order to begin strong and relevant action on the ground as soon as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every year, around this time, the Member States of the Executive Board meet to discuss and share information that charts the course for UNESCO.

This morning's meeting is of particular importance at the beginning of this new year, which everybody knows will be decisive for our Organization.

It will be decisive in terms of the budget; decisive because we are going to lay down our new medium-term strategy, and decisive because the world is undergoing profound changes.

We must address these challenges with lucidity and confidence.

Let us recall what our situation was just one year ago.

Everyone here remembers: we were in the same room, facing an unprecedented financial situation.

Twelve months later, at the cost of great sacrifices, the situation is under control – it is a difficult situation, which holds many challenges, but it is under control.

Together, we have taken drastic steps to reduce our expenses and to generate new revenue.

We have discussed the Roadmap, which we are implementing. It is our common agenda and we are following the guidelines that you have clearly set.

Together, we have found new extrabudgetary resources, totalling US \$364 million, of which \$141 million for the Education Sector alone.

We have also established an emergency fund, to which many countries have already contributed. I am thinking too of all those who have rallied to help the work of the Organization through in-kind contributions – the use of conference rooms, experts and resources, free of charge – and I thank them all.

We have had to make difficult choices.

And most importantly, throughout this period we have remained ambitious and focused on our work at the service of the Member States and the people: organizing, together with the Government of Pakistan, a world conference on girls' and women's right to education and launching a plan of action on the safety of journalists.

In reply to a question submitted by Romania, UNESCO has taken action in many countries, including Mali, Syria and Tunisia to protect the heritage.

We are working closely with the United Nations. We have contacted governments, alerted armed forces, distributed maps, printed 8,000 "heritage passports" and

published images of a number of destroyed heritage sites. A regional workshop on the fight against trafficking in cultural property will take place in February in Amman, Jordan.

The information that we are receiving from Timbuktu, Gao and Aleppo is still fragmented. Further destruction may occur. We are ready to intervene on the ground as soon as the situation permits.

The ways in which UNESCO has taken action, remaining united, says a great deal about our real strength. From the outset, I said that 2012 would be a test of nerve. And UNESCO has passed this test.

We are centre stage, at the heart of the United Nations Secretary-General's initiatives, such as Education First and the creation of a Scientific Advisory Board.

A few days ago, I was in Davos for the World Economic Forum on the theme of "Resilient Dynamism".

For UNESCO, 2012 was a year of resilience.

I hope and undertake to make 2013 a year of renewal.

Part 1. Financial situation, report on the programmes

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to begin by answering questions on our financial situation, which will also allow me to report on progress with the Roadmap and the reform.

The United Kingdom has requested the status of our finances, and this is indeed a crucial issue.

On this point, our situation is very clear.

The General Conference adopted a budget of \$653 million.

Faced with the suspension of 22% of our contributions and the deficit attributable to 2011, I set a ceiling of \$465 million.

This represents a target reduction of \$188 million.

To date, we have managed to reduce our expenditure by \$136 million.

This has meant – and I do not say this lightly – an immense effort made under exceptional circumstances that, I hope, will not recur.

We have exceeded the ceiling that I set by some \$44 million, including the \$30 million from the Working Capital Fund, and we will continue our efforts.

At present, we have sufficient resources available in the emergency fund to meet our commitments and we should therefore balance the budget at the end of 2013.

We have managed to achieve this at the cost of extraordinary efforts, which we have made because it was the only responsible choice.

However, everybody here understands that this situation is untenable in the long term: it affects our capacity to implement programmes and makes us dependent on external funding, which puts us in a precarious and I would even say dangerous situation.

Concerning our cash position, in reply to another question put by the United Kingdom, here, too, the situation is quite clear.

Many Member States have rallied to pay their contributions in advance, and I thank them for this.

Thanks to the \$10 million received from the end of 2012 and \$41 million received by mid-January, in addition to the emergency fund resources, we should be able to complete the biennium without recourse to borrowing.

Obviously, this means that we must continue with our efforts to reduce costs.

- That is why I have authorized the expenditure of funds for only the first six months of the year.
- I have also given instructions to further reduce expenses and the number of consultants.
- I have maintained the freezing of 100% of vacant posts, save exception, and I have asked for a further review of all “critical” posts proposed for recruitment.

In parallel, we are continuing to implement the Roadmap that you have adopted and I would like to reply to the question submitted by Austria in this connection, regarding the amount of savings made.

I have already mentioned the \$136 million reduction in our overall expenditure.

Staff costs have already decreased by 23% (\$76 million), temporary assistance and consultancy costs by 40% (\$27 million) and mission costs by 40% (more than \$7 million).

This has demanded a considerable effort.

We also set a target to reduce administrative costs by 15%.

We have managed to reduce administrative costs by 14% (that is to say, \$17 million below the approved budget) and we expect an 18% decrease over the biennium.

It is not always easy to break down precisely the figures for these reductions, however, they mainly concern:

- the suspension of posts – 135 posts suspended at Headquarters and 78 in the field.
- the revision of contracts with our suppliers and service providers, such as the renegotiation of the contract with the telephone service provider, for example;
- the revision of costs relating to statutory meetings.

I would add that the 10% reduction in administrative posts, which was target 13 of the Roadmap, is under way.

We now have a common administrative platform for all central services, which corresponds to savings of \$2 million per biennium.

We will also conduct an evaluation on the situation of Administrative Officer posts in the programme sectors.

I must add that this is not just about saving money; by saving time, the Organization is also gaining efficiency.

We are continuing to optimize all these costs on the basis of recommendations made by the working group on the Administrative Reform Initiative for “Transforming Administration and Strengthening Client Orientation” (TASCO) that I launched in 2012 – which has also incorporated some ideas from staff members.

There was also a question from Italy and China concerning the ratio of field to Headquarters staff.

This was the subject of target 6 of the Roadmap: to improve the ratio from 35/65 to 40/60.

In terms of posts, the ratio is now 37 field posts to 63 Headquarters posts, particularly owing to the substantial abolition of 59 posts at Headquarters.

The abolition of posts planned for 2013 should bring this ratio to 38/62.

In terms of staff, as 70% of posts open for recruitment are in the field, and in view of the transfers planned for the coming months, we will come close to meeting this target.

I would add, in reply to China’s question, that in terms of geographical distribution of staff, the situation at the end of 2012 was 81% of countries represented, for a target of 85% in 2016.

I frankly admit that there is still progress to be made on this point and it is a priority of the human resources strategy for the period 2011-2016.

Italy wished to know about the increase in the number of public-private partnerships.

Target 9 of the Roadmap was to increase the number of public-private partnerships by 10%. This target has been met: their number has increased by 25%. Since October, some 25 new agreements have been signed for a total of \$29 million.

In addition, some 61 new bilateral agreements were signed in the second half of 2012 for a total of \$98 million.

We are continuing to work towards the other Roadmap targets, some of which I shall cite, even if there were no specific questions submitted about them.

Target 1 was to focus and reduce by 20% the number of work plans.

We have reduced work plans by 15% overall and by 21% for the major programmes.

Target 2 was to reduce by 30% the number of work plans with minimal operational costs.

They have been reduced by 54% overall and by 59% for the major programmes.

We are moving towards the target of implementing the field reform and I shall return to this point in a moment.

We are finding some targets difficult to meet, such as balancing vacant posts between posts in programmes and in administration. Indeed, the near total freeze of all posts limits our leeway.

We will continue with our ongoing effort here, which builds on the reform process that began three years ago, in line with the recommendations of the independent external evaluation.

This evaluation is the basis of my reform, and in reply to the question put by the United States of America, our main targets in this area are detailed in the 86 points of our action plan, the success of which depends on the support of the Member States.

Another key to the reform and to savings is to give a more accurate and transparent picture of our cost structure, which relates to the question submitted by Oman concerning a results-based budget.

That is why, in the next C/5 document, for each expected result, the corresponding “programme costs” and “management and administration costs” will be itemized.

The programme costs will encompass direct operating and staff costs contributing to achieving the results, so as to clarify a number of discussions.

This will be a decisive step towards providing a more accurate picture of our costs and we can build precise work plans on that basis for 2016-2017.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In addition to these answers, I would like to provide further information on the results achieved in recent months, as they also reflect the progress of the reform.

Indeed, our efforts are not only measured in terms of savings and cost reductions, but in the light of results obtained in the implementation of programmes.

The first recommendation of the external evaluation was to focus UNESCO’s action on its priority areas.

- In this regard, the Global Education for All Meeting held in November 2012 was a major event, calling for renewed political commitment in the final stretch to 2015, on a small number of strategic priority actions.
- Almost 300 participants, including 20 ministers, emphasized the importance of including education in the post-2015 agenda, and we are working diligently towards this globally and regionally – by holding an

online thematic consultation with UNICEF and organizing several regional meetings – in South Africa, Egypt and Mexico, and soon in Bangkok.

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, on the link between school and the world of work, has been launched in 65 countries, with three times more press coverage than in 2011, which was already a success.

The event in support of girls' and women's education and in solidarity with the brave young girl Malala Yousafzai, organized with the Government of Pakistan and the participation of 20 very high-level personalities, was another highlight that was reported in the media of more than 35 countries. The United States of America and the United Kingdom asked what next steps would be taken. Pakistan has pledged \$10 million and we have engaged in talks to determine the specific projects with the donor.

- I would like to take another example, in the field of culture. As you know, we are coming to the end of 18 “culture and development” projects financed by the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund.

UNESCO is preparing to publish the final results and they are, in many ways, exceptional. They show, with supporting figures, the power of culture and UNESCO's role in sustainable development through the implementation of our cultural conventions: the creation of 600 jobs for women in cultural tourism in Senegal, 1,500 jobs in Costa Rica in the cultural sectors and the training of 300 craftspeople in Cambodia, to cite just a few examples.

For the first time in Mozambique, a national department for the promotion of cultural industries has been created and elsewhere in the world, 11 new laws and many cultural strategies have emerged, thanks to UNESCO, in Honduras, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Ecuador.

UNESCO has set up an Internet tool to highlight these projects and share the experience, with a dedicated search engine allowing the cross-referencing of data by project and by country. This is one way to reconcile know-how and the transmission of knowledge, which has not always been UNESCO's strong point.

These documents will be an indispensable calling card for the post-2015 period, providing concrete examples of the implementation of our conventions in the field.

I know that this approach will both meet the expectations of transparency expressed by the Executive Board and serve the international community in its future joint programming action.

Above all, this work can closely link the two levels of our strategy:

1. the global level, with culture and development resolutions adopted, in particular, by the United Nations General Assembly;
2. the operational level, showing how the implementation of the conventions supports development and fits into joint programming. Today, culture is included in more than 70% of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), which is more than double that of ten years ago. This is a dramatic increase and very soon we will distribute a detailed analysis that we have just completed on this subject, which provides a great deal of very interesting information on this matter.

UNESCO is at the cutting edge of all these issues. This is the direct result of a concentration policy. We will build on this foundation, in preparation for the conference on culture and development in Hangzhou, organized in conjunction with the Chinese Government and the authorities of Hangzhou, the President of the United Nations General Assembly's thematic debate on 12 June and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) review in 2013, on two themes within the mandate of UNESCO: science and culture for development, which we

are working on with the ECOSOC secretariat. All of these initiatives will enable us to better focus the debate concerning the post-2015 period.

The second recommendation of the external evaluation was to position UNESCO closer to the field.

- In reply to the question put by Djibouti, the field reform is taking place as planned and should be completed on time. All the multisectoral regional offices will hopefully be operational by the end of the year and some national offices are already in place (Juba, Abidjan).
- In reply to the well-founded question submitted by Ghana, I would like to assure you that we will continue to support fully the development of the country, which is one of the fastest developing countries in the world, through the new national office in Accra. Our cooperation there is very strong in the fields of culture and heritage and education, and UNESCO will continue its commitment there with all the strength of our mandate.
- We are also positioning UNESCO closer to the field in middle-income countries such as Malaysia, which has just launched a new education strategy for 2013-2025, following an assessment of their educational policy conducted with UNESCO.
- Furthermore, our action in Myanmar, where we are working together with the authorities to strengthen the education system, is a task that had not been undertaken for 20 years.
- In South Sudan, we are laying the foundations for the country's future education system – which is UNESCO's *raison d'être*.
- In Chad, for the first time, UNESCO has been designated as "Managing Entity" by the Global Partnership for Education for the execution of projects on teacher training and non-formal literacy programmes, using \$7 million of the total \$47 million allocated. From 4 to 9 February, a team is scheduled to meet the new Chadian authorities in order to step up the process.

- I would like to reply to the question put by Ethiopia on our action in Somalia. A strategic assessment of the United Nations' presence there has just been completed and UNESCO is poised to support the country. In early 2012, we were members of the sectoral group on education. We are currently chairing the youth group, co-chairing the assistance to media group (with the United States of America), and providing the secretariat for the environment group. I have allocated \$300,000 from the emergency fund to strengthen the education system in Somalia, and a conference on this issue will be held in Mogadishu in 2013. I would like to add that we will extend our project on the mapping of water resources already implemented in Kenya and Ethiopia, whose preliminary results are positive.

- Positioning UNESCO closer to the field also includes the establishment of the IOC Sub-Commission for Africa and the Adjacent Island States, which has developed a strategic plan for the region that will be discussed in April 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa.

The third recommendation of the external evaluation was to strengthen UNESCO's participation in the United Nations.

- UNESCO is taking its rightful place in the system at the institutional level in the Chief Executives Board and the High Level Committee on Programmes. In reply to the distinguished representative of Germany, UNESCO has been strongly engaged in the preparation of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), whose implications are important for us. In December, the United Nations General Assembly adopted guidelines for development activities and UNESCO will actively participate in their implementation for the second generation of the "Delivering as One" reform.

- UNESCO is at the forefront of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's initiatives such as Education First and the creation of a Scientific Advisory Board. We are actively consulting with the other agencies for the Advisory Board. We are finalizing the terms of reference and list of members in a very constructive climate.

- In a few days' time, on 11 February, in the presence of Michel Jarraud, UN-Water Chair and Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, I will launch the International Year of Water Cooperation. The choice of UNESCO to ensure the coordination of the Year provides strong leverage, following on from the United Nations World Water Development Report. I take this opportunity to thank all Member States that will take action throughout the year – in March in the Netherlands and New York, in August in Tajikistan and in September in Stockholm – for World Water Week, which I will attend, and the Budapest Water Summit in Hungary this October.
- In the same vein, I would like to mention the inter-agency meeting in Vienna, on 22 November 2012, where more than 120 participants from 15 United Nations system agencies and 40 NGOs came together to launch the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity in five countries: South Sudan, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, and a country in Latin America.
- Another example is our three-year project for sex education in 20 Southern African countries adopted in November and funded by a \$7 million contribution from Sweden, as part of our work with UNAIDS. This year, UNESCO is chairing the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations. This is a very important responsibility that will enable us to better promote the importance of education in the fight against the disease.

Concerning progress in the development of our partnership strategy, which is the fifth recommendation of the independent external evaluation, I would like to reply the question put by Ghana.

- UNESCO has a comprehensive partnership strategy, in which we are going to include three additional types of actors: Goodwill Ambassadors, the UNEVOC network and the category 2 institutes. We will submit these changes to the Executive Board at the next session and the objectives and expected results will be specified for each category in the C/4 and C/5 documents. One-stop access to this information has been set up and will soon be available.

- Meanwhile, our cooperation with the European Union has taken on a new dimension, with the launch of a project on access to education for Syrian refugees in Jordan, for a total amount of \$5.6 million over three years, with Queen Rania of Jordan's Teacher Academy.
- I also note that we are raising our partnership with Procter and Gamble to a more strategic level, on the basis of our first agreement signed in 2011 for the education of girls and women in Senegal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am providing you with this information so that you have a true picture of UNESCO's current situation.

And here I would like to address the questions raised by Slovakia and Saudi Arabia on the comparison with and the lessons learned from the Organization's situation in the 1980s.

These are legitimate questions. Strictly on the basis of figures we can see that at the time, the withdrawal of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Singapore resulted in a 19% reduction in posts, and that today, some 17% of posts are vacant, of which nearly 100% are frozen.

There is no truth, however, in comparison, and I believe that the situations are different.

First, it is not a withdrawal, but a suspension.

Second, it seems to me that in the 1980s, some members wished to demonstrate disagreement over UNESCO's role. Today, UNESCO's importance is widely recognized and this is one of the most important lessons learned: UNESCO must remain a universal organization.

The main lesson that I draw, however, is that each era has its specific challenges: they must be recognized as such and the appropriate decisions must be made, without repeating history.

And here I would like to address the very important question submitted by the United Arab Emirates.

Yes, the situation is difficult and yes, it involves sacrifices. We have managed to cope for the moment – and I must emphasize, *for the moment* – as it is clear that the situation remains uncertain. Our future depends on our efforts and the commitment of Member States.

The reform is not, however, driven only by the financial situation and our efforts are not only a response to the current problems.

The current difficulties encourage us to step up our efforts, but we would have had to make those efforts anyway: the reforms began before the difficulties and will continue afterwards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are driven by the reform and we must be guided by dialogue.

Nigeria, Namibia, Gambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Burkina Faso, Egypt and the United Kingdom submitted questions on the strengthening of Priority Africa.

In this regard, let me emphasize that I asked to meet the Africa group, we shared our visions and I will take every available opportunity to do so again.

These consultations are essential, in my view, for the development of the new operational strategy for Priority Africa, which should guide UNESCO's action, supported by a limited number of flagship programmes.

The meetings held in Addis Ababa in December 2012 and the seminar organized by the Africa Department (10-11 January 2013) helped to identify some flagship programmes. And I have taken good note of those mentioned by the distinguished representative of Nigeria, on behalf of 16 African countries, and I find that these programmes converge and that we will progress on this basis.

Our new strategy will also build on the priorities identified at the regional consultation meeting in Abidjan and we will continue our consultations in order to

fine-tune this strategy, here at Headquarters and with the African Union Commission, bilateral partners and multilateral partners.

Our operational strategy will work in synergy with the African Union's four-year plan, in three priority areas:

1. strengthening of human capacities
2. promotion of peace and democracy
3. participation of women and youth

In reply to the question from Kenya, I would like to emphasize the importance of the action for and the role of youth in this operational strategy – in accordance with the African Union Commission's guidelines – and this priority will be included in the expected results of all the flagship programmes.

This is an ongoing process.

We must build together a common agenda for the continent, and I have spoken of this with Ms Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who was here at UNESCO on 15 November 2012.

We will share our proposals during February, to enable everyone to contribute before submitting them to the Executive Board at the forthcoming session.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In reply to the question of the distinguished delegate of the Congo, let me update you on the Emergency Fund.

By 31 December 2012, the Emergency Fund had received \$68 million, with a further \$0.4 million pledged.

A total of \$24 million has been allocated for expenditure.

The top recipients for 2012 are – Education (\$4.58 million); Science (\$4.2 million); Field and Reform (\$3 million); Intersectoral projects on the field (\$3 million); and Culture (\$2.7 million); Communication and Information (\$1.1 million).

Above all, let me mention that about 50% of all Emergency Fund allocations have been directed to Africa – for specific activities in different countries, for strengthening the field network, for contributions by the Africa Department.

The Executive Board established clear criteria guiding decisions to use the Emergency Fund – to support the implementation of documents 35 C/5 and 36 C/5, to advance UNESCO Global Priorities, to respond to the needs of least developed countries and Small Island Developing States, and to push reform forward.

Let me take a few examples to illustrate.

The work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission is being supported to the amount of \$1.1 million, including specifically \$130,000 for the Caribbean Tsunami Information Centre.

Some \$630,000 has been allocated to support policy development for youth engagement and participation in Africa, Asia and the Pacific (Indonesia, Myanmar, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea), and in the Arab region (Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco), as well as for engaging youth in violence prevention in Latin America and the Caribbean.

\$415,000 has been allocated to ensuring statutory meetings of the 2003 and 1970 Conventions in 2012, whose regular programme funds had been reduced by the overall budget reduction imposed on the 36 C/5.

In Africa, some \$490,000 has been allocated to building capacities on World Heritage and in the cultural industries in support of the implementation of the 2005 Convention.

Funding for cultural heritage preservation focused on the support of an ambitious capacity-building programme in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and South East Europe to bolster the fight against the illicit traffic in cultural objects of experts from 62 countries in total.

When I speak of the Emergency Fund, I also wish to mention all the support in kind provided by Member States, especially to hold statutory meetings – I underline here the Russian Federation for the World Heritage Committee in St Petersburg, Kenya, Namibia and Angola, and there are many more. This support is essential to our work, for which I am deeply grateful.

\$500,500 has been allocated to support the Pedagogical Utilization of the *General History of Africa*. Let me once again thank Angola for its pledge to ensure the continuation of this important extrabudgetary project.

The Emergency Fund is supporting the upcoming World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) 2013+10 Review Meeting, hosted by UNESCO from 25 to 27 February 2013 (\$302,000).

I have allocated \$220,000 to support Member States' capacities in media literacy, digital heritage and open access to information in Africa and the Caribbean, relating to the priorities of the IFAP programme.

This is the current situation, and we are actively reviewing further projects – a programme specialist very soon will be sent to Congo to review potential projects to receive support by the Emergency Fund in education and teacher training, as I promised during my visit, to bolster our work in the Congo.

I take this opportunity to thank once again all Member States for their generous commitment to UNESCO, including also through support-in-kind and extrabudgetary funding, and I appeal to all Member States for their support in replenishing the Emergency Fund and also in kind.

Thank you very much

Part 2. Global Education First Initiative led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Ladies and gentlemen,

I now turn to questions on Education First, the global initiative led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The questions covered several points:

- UNESCO's role in the initiative;
- the allocation of resources; and
- means of implementation in connection with education for all (EFA).

To begin with our role. As you know, I have been appointed Executive Secretary of the initiative, and UNESCO has been officially in charge of providing the secretariat since December.

It is a great responsibility and, above all, a means for us to ensure perfect synergy between the initiative and the education for all movement.

In reply to the question raised by Japan, by providing the secretariat, we can ensure perfect consistency with EFA and we shall see to it that the EFA Steering Committee is involved.

At the request of several members of the EFA Steering Committee, the secretariat will be located in the UNESCO Liaison Office in New York, in order to facilitate daily exchanges with the United Nations Secretariat. One of our directors will be transferred there.

The answer to the questions raised by Austria, Italy, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Gambia, Oman and the United States of America about the resources that will be allocated to the initiative is twofold:

- firstly, as the goals of the initiative are aligned with the EFA goals set in the current C/4 and C/5 documents, our resources requirement will be unchanged;
- secondly, to meet the secretariat's additional coordination and communication needs, several States, in particular Australia and Denmark, have already expressed their intention to support us by seconding staff; and I discussed the development of the initiative with the Prime Minister while in Davos.

France has rightly turned the spotlight on advocacy, which is an important part of the initiative. UNESCO has long-standing experience of and acknowledged skill in advocacy, whether it be through the yearly *EFA Global Monitoring Report* or conferences such as the one on girls' and women's education dedicated to Malala.

The initiative's contribution is dual:

- firstly, it enables us to speak with a louder and more powerful voice and will be a springboard for us, while our resources remain constant;
- secondly, it enables us to reach new partners – UNESCO thus gains from being ideally placed as the secretariat, for it will liaise with Member State Champions – and others, of course, as many other countries have shown keen interest – and a whole range of new partners, in health and the media, through the Steering Committee's networks.

It is mainly by that means that it will help to strengthen and boost the EFA movement – this in reply to a question raised by Norway in particular.

Less than four months after being launched, the initiative has already created new dynamics.

1. I have just launched at Davos, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and in partnership with the World Food Programme and UNICEF, a programme for improved access to health care, nutrition and education for the most underserved children, which will be implemented first in four pilot countries, namely Haiti, Mozambique, Niger and Pakistan.
2. A conference on the development of private-public partnerships in the field of education will be held in March in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates.
3. UNESCO is deeply involved in preparations for the Learning for All ministerial meeting in April 2013, in Washington, which will be attended by the Secretary-General, Mr Gordon Brown and representatives of the World Bank, and will consider countries with the highest number of out-of-school children. I have discussed this matter with the President of the

World Bank and with Mr Gordon Brown, and the idea is to convene a panel composed of education and finance ministers. It is perfectly clear that the idea is to support the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2, boost the EFA movement and make the connection with the post-2015 agenda.

4. Furthermore, UNESCO will be in Doha in April alongside Her Highness Sheikha Moza for the “Educate a child” conference, which pursues goals that converge with ours. Moreover, we are a strategic partner of that initiative, which was launched at the World Innovation Summit on Education (WISE) last November; the first project is to be implemented in Iraq and the next one in Yemen.

These priorities are the same as those set for EFA and are consistent with action taken by UNESCO's to achieve the MDGs and set the post-2015 agenda. As we are providing the secretariat, we shall avoid duplication of effort.

In reply to Gambia's question on the actual implementation of the initiative, I should like to make several points.

Firstly, we shall continue to work with Member State Champions to adapt the initiative to each country's and each region's needs by consulting each regional group in Paris and in New York and – here, in reply to the delegation of the Congo – all Member States are, naturally, invited to participate in the dialogue.

One of the most important questions concerned the role of Member State Champions, which I again discussed recently with Mr Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General, for I considered that it should be clarified further.

Further, we shall finalize the roadmap for the consistency and monitoring of the initiative:

- (1) to bring stakeholders together for a “final push” to meet targets by 2015;
- (2) to make education the main plank of the post-2015 world agenda – and, on that score, we are holding talks with a number of States such as the Russian Federation for the next G20;

- (3) to raise fresh funds for education – which is the purpose of the conference at the World Bank.

To reply to the question raised by Burkina Faso, we are conceptually and operationally involved as much as possible in the conduct of the initiative, both upstream, as we have determined its main thrust and strategic content, and downstream.

In reply to the question raised by Burkina Faso on Africa's place in the initiative, this is clearly most important because Education First is above all designed for marginalized groups and States that are farthest from achieving the goals.

UNESCO will consult the Africa Group on the means of conducting the initiative in the region, and here, I think in particular of Tunisia and South Africa, which are State Champions. Furthermore, we shall integrate this subject into our new operational strategy, for it is important to link the two.

The challenge, as suggested by Oman, will be to ensure that commitments are met. Furthermore, the key to success, as in all voluntary initiatives, lies in transparent and scrupulous monitoring of results; UNESCO will develop an evaluation tool in order to assist the countries involved in reporting results obtained and the impact of the initiative.

Teachers, as Saudi Arabia has stressed, constitute one of the keys to success.

In regard to this particular point, we are faced with the issue of the attractiveness of the teaching profession, which raises questions about teachers' pay, status, social acknowledgment and training.

It is a complex matter, on which we are working with Education International in particular, and I agree with the Oman's comment that teacher training is not merely a matter of mastery of a subject, for it must include a vision of teachers' role and of their profession.

For that reason, in 2012, UNESCO launched a new teacher strategy that clearly includes the issue of teachers' status.

UNESCO has several tools available to support efforts by Member States:

- assistance in designing and conducting teacher-training policies;
- implementation of quality and accreditation standards in respect of institutions and qualifications;
- assistance in using new technology;
- monitoring of recommendations by UNESCO and the International Labour Organization on the status of teachers.

Those tools are naturally being integrated into the Secretary-General's initiative.

While on this subject, let me reply to the question raised by the delegation of Djibouti concerning the progress achieved in our teacher-training efforts in Africa.

UNESCO is working with Uganda, Mali, Guinea (Conakry), Mauritania, Mozambique, Congo and Niger to assess the situation of teachers.

Benin, Burundi and Lesotho have completed their assessment and, with UNESCO's support, they are including the results when formulating new policies.

Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone have adopted their policies and UNESCO is providing implementation support.

I can report that very good results have been obtained from several ICT capacity-building activities, in Namibia for example, and many States have expressed an interest in adopting our ICT Teacher Competency Framework, in particular Angola, which has just adopted a policy in that field.

I can also report that a national qualification framework is being developed in States Members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the East African Community (EAC).

In reply to the delegation of Japan, which stressed the importance of education for sustainable development, I should like to point out that education for sustainable

development has pride of place in the framework document that is being compiled on the promotion of world citizenship for implementation as part and parcel of the Education First initiative.

I should like to reassure the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela about the importance ascribed to higher education, which was mentioned explicitly in the declaration adopted at the Global EFA Meeting in November and which will, I assure you, support the objectives of the initiative.

The United Arab Emirates stressed the lack of instruments and of sufficient expertise to boost educational progress in the Arab States region and suggested that a centre be established.

In that connection, I should like to remind you that a category II meeting of the eight education centres will be held at the Regional Centre for Educational Planning and Training in Sharjah, from 5 to 7 March 2013. A representative of the future category 2 centre, whose establishment I hope will be approved by the Executive Board and which will be situated in Saudi Arabia, is to attend together with representatives of UNESCO and of category 1 institutes.

It will be an opportunity to give the Sharjah centre a fresh start. The Government's support is an asset and the UNESCO Offices in Beirut and Doha are involved in this endeavour.

Thank you. I now await your comments.

Part 3. Update on draft C/4 and C/5 documents

Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is a crucial moment in the preparation of draft documents 37 C/4 and 37 C/5.

We must look beyond short-term difficulties, to the long-term, to craft a strategic vision of UNESCO at a time of change and challenge – in this respect, I wish to commend you, Madam Chair, for your introductory statement this morning.

We must strengthen our work to lay the foundations for lasting peace and sustainable development on the basis of human rights, dignity and justice.

We must accelerate reform, to build a sharper and more effective UNESCO.

For this, we need a process that is inclusive and transparent, and this has been my guiding principle.

I refer here to the questions of the Delegations of the United Kingdom, Congo, Venezuela, Egypt and China on the process of consultations.

Let me thank Member States once again for the constructive discussions held at the 190th session of the Executive Board on my Preliminary Proposals.

These discussions drew on the guidelines of the General Conference, the discussions of the Leaders' Forum and the report of the Youth Forum.

They built on our Thematic Debates on Global Priority Africa, Global Priority Gender Equality, small island developing States, Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development.

They reflected the consultations held through two online questionnaires with Member States and Associate Members, intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations, and five regional consultations with Member States and National Commissions.

An unprecedented number of NGOs have participated (93). The Preliminary Proposals were also discussed at the International Conference of NGOs in December, after an earlier discussion last July.

As requested by the Executive Board at the last session, I am engaged in a new series of consultations in the run-up to the next session.

These consultations follow two tracks.

They focus on UNESCO's role in key, cross-cutting programmatic areas – such as “empowering youth for peace and sustainable development,” “social inclusion,

social transformations and social innovation”, “science and technologies for knowledge societies” and, most recently, on “water”.

I am meeting also with all Regional Groups, including political groupings.

I have held already nine such consultations – these will continue, as the preparation of the C/4 and C/5 documents is ongoing and dynamic.

At this stage, I will answer your questions as fully as possible, with a view to presenting full draft C/4 and C/5 documents by mid-March.

Let me say that I agree with the delegation of Canada that more can be done to bring in partner networks, especially cities.

This is why we are looking to reinvigorate the Creative Cities Network – this requires the support of Member States, as the General Conference agreed in 2011 that funding should come from extrabudgetary resources.

A Funds-in-Trust project of the United States, established in 2011, is enhancing the Network’s outreach by developing capacities in underrepresented regions, especially Africa and the Arab States.

The Municipality of Beijing (UNESCO Creative City for Design) and the Wanda Group have pledged to support the revitalization and strengthening of the Creative Cities Network.

I am grateful for this and count on all States and private partners to help us make the most of the Network’s potential.

190 EX/Decision 19 provides strong guidance to prepare the draft C/4 and C/5 documents.

As the Chair of the Executive Board said in closing the 190th session:

“The opportunity for reform is now before us [...] the status quo is not acceptable.”

I fully agree with you.

As you said then, Madam Chair,

This is our opportunity “to put forth new, bold and innovative ideas to help transform the Organization for the future”.

This process must reflect the imperatives of reform. It must be consistent with the follow-up of the Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO. And it should concentrate on four major orientations for the Organization:

- Increasing focus;
- Positioning closer to the field;
- Strengthening participation in the United Nations system;
- Developing and strengthening partnerships.

The 190th session of the Executive Board reaffirmed UNESCO’s mission statement:

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

Member States agreed also on the proposed five functions, articulated at the global, regional and national levels.

There is consensus to focus UNESCO’s action on two overarching objectives (which were reduced from five) – to contribute to lasting peace and to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

These objectives must guide our work with respect to the two Global Priorities, Africa and Gender Equality, and our activities for youth, least developed countries, small island developing States and countries in transition.

A number of Delegations (China, the United States of America, Venezuela, Japan and the United Arab Emirates) raised questions relating to paragraph 9 of 190 EX/Decision 19.

This paragraph affirms “the relevance of UNESCO’s five major programmes or fields of competence,” and requests this to be taken into account, including through “clear proposals for innovative, holistic and effective structures and programme delivery as well as enhanced interdisciplinarity”.

I have listened with care to the views of Member States during the last Board session and in consultations.

Let me say again I am determined for document 37 C/4 to strengthen UNESCO.

There will be no reduction of our ambitions.

There will be no dilution of our mandate.

There will be sharper focus, there will be stronger relevance, and there will be greater innovation.

We will strengthen our work across all our fields of competence, on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of priorities, guided by the need for concentration.

Whatever strategic priorities or thematic focus areas we choose, they will address all of UNESCO’s five main areas of competence. I trust this reassures the delegation of Japan on this point.

We must refocus and reposition, in order to renew and revitalize UNESCO.

For this, in my view, document 37 C/4 must concentrate on seven strategic objectives, which, I believe, reflect the concerns of Member States.

In addition to these, I propose that “social transformation and intercultural dialogue” be a cross-cutting strategic priority and thematic focus area – I will dwell on this in a moment.

Our first strategic objective is to shape the global education agenda.

This requires vision, foresight, analysis of trends, and understanding where and why we are falling short.

This is why we advocated for a comprehensive vision to guide the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative. This is why we are gathering experts to revisit the 1996 Delors Report commissioned by UNESCO, after the 1972 Faure Report. This also guides our leadership of the education for all review process and to shape the post-2015 agenda.

Our second objective is to foster inclusive, quality and lifelong learning opportunities for all and to promote a sense of global citizenship.

There is wide consensus that the next global education agenda must promote equity and quality content – including to help learners gain solidarity, respect and responsibility for shaping the future.

It must also harness the full potential of the ongoing ICT revolution – from mobile learning to open educational resources – to increase access to knowledge and to bridge divides within and between countries.

The third objective is to strengthen international cooperation in the sciences, for peace, sustainability and social inclusion by mobilizing international scientific collaboration.

We will seek to reinforce the sustainability of terrestrial, freshwater and ocean resources and to reduce disaster vulnerabilities and risks, by building on our leading international and intergovernmental programmes in the field of the sciences.

The fourth objective is to bolster the interface between the sciences, policy and society – by assisting Member States in developing capacities, including through online resources and improved access to information, by supporting the development of STI policies for more inclusive and sustainable development and by taking into account also the ethical and social dimensions of sustainable development.

A fifth objective is to foster peace, dialogue and reconciliation through heritage and cultural expressions, drawing notably on UNESCO's normative framework, which provides a unique platform for international cooperation and dialogue to safeguard, protect and preserve cultural heritage in all forms – be it monumental heritage, intangible cultural heritage, digital heritage, or cultural objects.

The sixth objective is to contribute to peace and sustainable development through capacity-building to safeguard and promote the diversity of cultural expressions and to harness the power of creativity and innovation to drive sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The seventh objective is to promote freedom of expression and media development, by building capacities and an enabling environment conducive to press freedom and freedom of information, which are essential for democracy, development and peace, and by promoting the safety of journalists, especially in countries in transition and post-conflict situations.

This is related to the question raised by the distinguished delegate of the United States.

UNESCO will remain firmly committed to promoting the free flow of information, freedom of expression and freedom of press.

This is mandated in our Constitution, and it is central to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Freedom of expression must be respected in both the “real” and the “digital” worlds.

UNESCO will take these issues forward in a multi-stakeholder setting, including professional organizations and civil society.

We will support governments in sharing experience about policies that comply with international standards on freedom of expression and freedom of press.

We will engage also with the private sector to improve universal access to new information and communication technologies, especially the Internet.

In these ways, UNESCO's action to promote freedom of expression and media development will receive new focus, as a stand-alone, strategic objective guiding all our work, with appropriate structural arrangements in place to this end.

In sum, never will our activities to support freedom of expression have had such prominence.

The distinguished delegate of Kenya asked about the place of youth in the C/4 document.

The needs and aspirations of youth are central concerns to UNESCO. This is why our first thematic consultation addressed the theme of "Empowering Youth for Peace and Sustainable Development".

Young people carry the greatest burden of change across the world, especially young women.

They are also setting the pace for key social transformations.

UNESCO has a powerful contribution to make, and we will ensure the mainstreaming of youth concerns throughout draft documents 37 C/4 and 37 C/5, which will also be based on a comprehensive operational strategy on youth to be submitted to the next Board.

This work will build also on the achievements and lessons from the implementation of the African Youth Strategy, which closes in 2013.

UNESCO will pursue three overall goals:

1. policy formulation and review with the participation of youth;
2. capacity development for the transition to adulthood;
3. civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation.

The distinguished delegate of Japan asked about the place of "sustainability science".

At a time when the planet's boundaries are being crossed, we need to mobilize all scientific knowledge to support effective and inclusive policies for sustainable development.

"Sustainability science" will feature clearly in draft documents 37 C/4 and 37 C/5, and I believe the closer integration of the natural and the social and human sciences will strengthen this approach and UNESCO's action.

This is also part of UNESCO's support through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to the Oceans Compact, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General, to promote the sustainable use, management and conservation of the ocean and coasts.

Let me thank the Government of Japan for its vision and its support in organizing a regional scientific workshop on "sustainability science" in the Asia-Pacific Region later this year, where UNESCO will participate.

As raised by the distinguished delegate of Venezuela, paragraph 7 of 190 EX/Decision 19 requests me to reflect "social inclusion, ethical and social challenges and communication and information" into UNESCO's two overarching objectives.

I have heard the determination of Member States to strengthen UNESCO's action to accompany societies facing the pressures of globalisation.

I couldn't agree more.

All societies are transforming today.

All societies face new questions about social justice and cohesion, about cultural diversity, about the role of young people, about new forms of communication.

All societies must address new demands arising from social transformations and the need for mutual understanding – especially countries in transition and in post-conflict situations.

These points emerged clearly from the Third Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit, held in Riyadh on 21 and 22 January, which I attended and which explored all aspects of the changes under way across the region.

These were the conclusions of Rio+20, which underlined the “social dimension” as one of the three pillars for sustainable development.

This was also the message from the Davos Economic Forum, where rising social inequalities were defined as the greatest risk facing countries today, higher even than economic crisis in some countries.

UNESCO has a unique mandate to help States respond to new needs – an essentially humanist mandate – and we have unparalleled experience to build on.

But we must consolidate our action, we must join all our tools, we must create powerful new synergies.

This is my determination, and this is why I will propose the creation of a Centre for Social Transformations and Intercultural Dialogue, within the Secretariat, based at Headquarters.

The distinguished delegate of Venezuela on behalf of GRULAC and the Russian Federation asked for details on the Centre as did other Delegations during consultations.

These are still early days and I will circulate a concept note in due course, but let me take this opportunity to flesh out a bit this idea, which is still in the making.

The mission of the Centre for Social Transformations and Intercultural Dialogue will be to strengthen UNESCO as a global laboratory of ideas and foresight on key questions facing societies and to support Member States in developing innovative policies in response to social transformations and new needs for intercultural dialogue.

UNESCO action must be more integrated, coherent and focused.

We can build on the MOST Programme, and let me say, in reply to the distinguished delegate of Venezuela, that this programme will not be eliminated and that is not my intention or within my prerogative. We will strengthen the programme – to tighten links between research, practice and policy-making, to support States in developing and implementing policies to accompany social transformations, namely through human and institutional capacity-building.

We must also address the rise of new information and communication technologies, their impact on societal transformations and the emergence of digital and knowledge divides.

Drawing on the experience of the IFAP programme, UNESCO must help States develop strategies for access to information, as a condition for mutual understanding, social justice and social inclusion.

We must take forward a renewed commitment to intercultural dialogue, in response to rising diversity among and within societies, to promote respect and mutual understanding on the basis of equality, human rights, social justice and dignity.

This includes the rich partnership we have developed with the Alliance of Civilizations initiative and also the proclamation of an International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) – I wish to thank Kazakhstan for its leadership and vision and underline that UNESCO will play a leading role in taking this forward.

The Centre could provide higher visibility to our action.

It will create stronger synergy and ensure more effective delivery.

Accompanying social transformations and promoting intercultural dialogue are inscribed in the DNA of UNESCO.

We need now a single, strong, strategic mechanism to take forward this mandate.

Member States have requested focus and innovation – the Centre will embody these features.

This must be the spirit of the next Medium-Term Strategy.

Focus.

Synergy.

Innovation.

In reply to the question of China, the C/4 document must express UNESCO's reply to global trends as they are emerging – to retain flexibility over eight years, we should see document 37 C/4 as a rolling strategy, monitored and adjusted as necessary by the General Conference upon proposals of the Executive Board.

Document 37 C/4 is our starting point.

The Programme and Budget Document will flow naturally from this – to ensure programme focus and concentration, and to design the right structures to pursue the proposed strategic objectives.

This is my answer at this stage to the question about structural changes, raised by a number of delegations (Venezuela, China, Japan and United Arab Emirates). It is premature to explore these issues in detail, as we are still in the process of analysing, listening and consulting.

We must get document 37 C/4 right and craft a vision that responds to the strategic concerns of Member States – we can then build on this to define in detail document 37 C/5.

In this respect, we will take fully into account paragraphs 15 and 16 of 190 EX/Decision 19 on review and assessment of programmes, to evaluate relevance and reduce overlap.

In this context, let me reply to the question of the distinguished delegate of France on UNESCO's contribution to the post-2015 process.

To build a more equitable and sustainable world, the post-2015 development agenda must be bold.

We must harness the full power of education, the sciences, culture and communication to steer the transformational changes necessary for poverty reduction and the preservation of the planet.

These are UNESCO's messages as we work to shape the post-2015 agenda, and they must be at the heart of the next Medium-Term Strategy.

UNESCO is an active member of all important mechanisms and groups created on the post-2015 process – at the global, regional and national levels.

We are engaged also through our leadership of the two new initiatives of the Secretary-General – Global Education First and the Scientific Advisory Board.

This is a vital year, and we will work on all fronts – by leading consultations on education at all levels, as a contributing agency for the global thematic consultation on water and through the International Year of Water Cooperation, through the Creative Economy Report, the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review on “The Role of Science, Technology and Innovation as well as Culture for Sustainable Development” the Hangzhou International Congress on Culture and Sustainable Development, as well as the Thematic Debate on Culture for Sustainable Development organized by the President of the 67th United Nations General Assembly this June.

UNESCO is deeply engaged in shaping both the *contours* and *content* of the post-2015 global development agenda.

All of this requires from us strong leadership and strong partnerships across the United Nations system. Getting the post-2015 agenda right is a key goal of the next Medium-Term Strategy.

Part 4. Outstanding questions

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me now to address outstanding questions from Member States.

The distinguished delegate of Saudi Arabia raised a question about the use of languages in the secretariat and in the field.

If I understand correctly, let me reassure him that the Organization is and will remain fully committed to the use of all six official languages. We are exploring how best to use all our resources and skills to raise visibility and improve content – including through the use of field offices. This is one of the goals of a draft communication strategy we are currently discussing.

The distinguished delegate of China asked about the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Following the Executive Board decision, I can announce here that an Extraordinary Meeting of States Parts will take place on 1 and 2 July 2013 at Headquarters.

The invitation letters and provisional agenda will be sent by the end of February.

The goal of the Extraordinary Meeting will be to elect the 18 members of the Subsidiary Committee that will meet on 3 and 4 July 2013 at Headquarters and discuss future operational guidelines for the effective implementation of the Convention.

Working documents on election to the Subsidiary Committee and draft operational guidelines will be communicated by late March.

We are on track, but I take this opportunity to appeal to Member States for greater support to follow-up on the Executive Board decision.

The distinguished delegate of Argentina asked about UNESCO's work to safeguard endangered languages.

As you know, the last General Conference decided that a number of activities would be undertaken through extrabudgetary funding – including activities for language diversity and endangered languages.

We are seeking to identify funds, and proposals have been submitted to governments and foundations, especially for the *Atlas of Endangered Languages*.

Relevant activities are under way – for instance, the project led by the UNESCO Office in Brasilia to document Amazonian languages.

But let me appeal here for further support by Member States to underpin UNESCO's work in safeguarding endangered languages as essential factors for cultural diversity.

The distinguished delegate of the Russian Federation asked about enhancing the role of IFAP and ensuring adequate funding.

Funds are provided under the Regular Programme to cover statutory obligations (IFAP Intergovernmental Council meetings), and the Secretariat is actively supporting Member States to achieve IFAP goals.

As you know, IFAP was established in 2001 to provide a platform for international policy discussion and developing guidelines of action for access to information and knowledge.

The focus falls on five priority areas – “Information for Development”, highlighting the value of information for development, “Information Literacy”, essential for people to use and produce information effectively to achieve personal, social, occupational and educational goals, “Information Preservation”, building on the principles of the Memory of the World Programme, “Information Ethics”, addressing the ethical, legal, and societal dimensions of the application of ICT, and “Information Accessibility”, also paying attention to the special needs of people with disabilities.

The mobilization of extrabudgetary resources is crucial to take these forward.

I mentioned earlier the resources allocated under the Emergency Fund to support Member States' capacities in Africa and the Caribbean, in IFAP priority areas.

Let me take this opportunity to urge Member States to contribute to the IFAP Special Account.

The results of the current review of the implementation of the IFAP Strategic Plan (2008-2013) will be presented to the September session of the Executive Board and guide future orientations of the programme.

With reference to the question from the distinguished delegate of the United Kingdom about an article posted online on the UNESCO-IHE proposal for a global campus -- the concern is this may have been perceived as prejudging the conclusions of the Board's review.

Let me say that, acting in its own capacity, the Governing Board of IHE did give a green light to the preparatory work of the proposed network.

At the same time, the necessary actions have been taken to correct the information on the websites, and I would like to reassure the delegate that I have abided to the decision of the Executive Board.

The distinguished delegate of Egypt posed a question relating to the situation of the cultural heritage sites and educational institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – this is related to a question posed by the delegate of Saudi Arabia.

The last Executive Board decided to adjourn the five related agenda items to the 191st session – so, there was no decision requesting me to take specific action on the situation of the cultural heritage sites and educational institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on which I should report at the next Board session.

However, several interventions during the last Executive Board highlighted the wish – (i) to see UNESCO fulfil its technical mandate on the ground and pursue its work, especially in education and culture, and (ii) in line with Decisions taken by the Executive Board in previous sessions, to implement the Decisions of the World Heritage Committee concerning the preservation of the cultural heritage sites.

As you know, the UNESCO Ramallah Office is responsible for implementing activities related to the preservation of Palestinian cultural heritage.

As presented in document 190 EX/38, UNESCO continues to provide technical assistance and to build the capacities of relevant Palestinian institutions.

I refer here to the completion of the Charter on the conservation of sites of cultural significance, the finalization of the Palestinian Heritage Law and the development of the Riwaya Museum in Bethlehem.

Last July, we launched a three-year programme for local development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of the historic built environment, funded by the Government of Sweden through SIDA.

Let me turn to the reference made by Egypt to “steps taken towards convening a meeting on this matter at UNESCO and/or dispatching a team of experts to assess the situation and report to the upcoming 191st session of the Executive Board.”

As I said, the last Executive Board did not request me to take action in this regard and report to the next Board session.

I have been informed about informal consultations under way among Member States on a way forward, and I hope these are constructive and progress in a spirit of openness and good will – bearing in mind past decisions of the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee for UNESCO to discharge its technical mandate with the full cooperation of all concerned parts.

I am in your hands and will continue listening to your concerns and proposals on moving forward.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This has been a very important meeting – important for clarifying the stakes and also our ambitions, important for me as Director-General.

We have achieved a lot in 2012. We must now maintain our course and steer forward – to define a new Medium-Term Strategy, to craft a stronger and more innovative Organization guided by a fresh reading of our mandate.

A Latin adage expresses well the spirit of these times:

Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis

Times are changing and we change with them.

We are guided by this idea. Change is all around us, in our societies, in our lives, in our relations.

UNESCO provides key help to States seeking to answer the difficult question posed by globalization – we must rise to meet new expectations, to address new demands, to help States tackle the core issues today for lasting peace and sustainable development.

This is my determination, and this spirit is one we share as we move forward together.

Thank you for your attention.