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**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON FEASIBILITY STUDIES
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CATEGORY 2 INSTITUTES AND CENTRES
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO**

PART V

**PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC OF A
REGIONAL CENTRE CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, AS A
CATEGORY 2 CENTRE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO**

SUMMARY

In response to a request by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the establishment of a Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO, a technical mission was undertaken in April 2009. This mission sought to evaluate the feasibility of establishing the proposed Centre.

This present document has been prepared pursuant to the mission and in line with 181 EX/Decision 15 on the draft integrated comprehensive strategy for category 2 institutes and centres. It reviews the prerequisites for the establishment of the Centre, and provides the rationale behind the Syrian Arab Republic's proposal.

It is supplemented by a Draft Agreement between UNESCO and the Syrian Arab Republic (Annex).

Financial and administrative implications are covered in paragraphs 8(c) and (d).

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 13.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Syrian Arab Republic, hereinafter referred to as “the SAR”, has proposed the establishment of a Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States, hereinafter referred to as “the Centre”, in Damascus.
2. The total population of the Arab countries is estimated at around 312 million inhabitants (2005), with an estimated average growth rate (2000-2012) of 2% as against a world average of 1.1% per annum. It is estimated that with the progressive decline of under-5 mortality rates and of fertility rates, the 0-14 age group makes up to 35% of the total population. More specifically, the share of children aged 0 to 5 in the total population is 14% of the total population (16% in 2000) with a slight decline to 13% in 2010 (EFA GMR, 2007). This relatively significant share of children aged 0 to 5 in the total population has important consequences for the planning of public investment efforts in education, health and welfare services. Large numbers of children are therefore in need of care in general and education in particular.
3. The SAR and other Arab countries urgently need to build capacity in early childhood comprehensive development programmes in order to attain the early childhood care and education (ECCE)-related Education for All (EFA) goal by 2015. Only seven of the 13 Arab countries with data indicate that care and education programmes targeting children aged under 3 are available. As for education for children aged above 3, regional gross enrolment rates (GERs) in pre-primary education rose only by 2%, from 15% to 17%, between 1990 and 2005, compared with a rise of 6 percentage points in developing countries and 7 percentage points across the world.
4. The Dakar Framework for Action reaffirms the importance of ECCE in national and regional education plans and includes “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” as the first of its six goals for EFA.
5. In this context, the emphasis that has been placed on reaching the ECCE EFA goal since 2000 is of particular significance, as the Centre will serve to build national and regional capacity for ECCE development by targeting senior officials of ministries of education (MoE) and of other Ministries and agencies, in addition to ECCE professors of teacher-training institutions, professional practitioners and the regional ECCE workforce.
6. In January 2009, the Minister for Education in the SAR, H.E. Dr Ali Saad, submitted to UNESCO’s Director-General an official request to consider the establishment of a “Regional Training and Upgrading Centre for Early Childhood Development” under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2).
7. Following a request from the Government of the SAR, UNESCO, with the assistance of a regional specialist consultant, conducted a study to assess the feasibility of the proposed regional Centre. The main findings are as follows:
 - (a) the establishment of a regional Centre for training in early childhood development is justified in terms of training needs and priorities for the countries of the region;
 - (b) the objectives, activities and modes of operation foreseen for the Centre are fully in accordance with the criteria approved by the Executive Board in 181 EX/Decision 16, pursuant to 34 C/Resolution 90, concerning the creation of institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO;
 - (c) there is no non-private training institution of this kind in the Arab countries that at present offers, or has confirmed plans to set up in the foreseeable future, training programmes and activities such as those foreseen by the proposed Centre; and

- (d) given the recent instructions of the General Conference not to engage UNESCO resources in the establishment and operation of institutes, centres and the like, but rather to make UNESCO's technical and professional support available in other appropriate ways, the Director-General could extend UNESCO's cooperation in the creation and running of the proposed Centre on a cost-recovery basis, meaning that all costs including travel expenses, daily subsistence allowances and all other UNESCO staff-related costs incurred by calculated UNESCO staff time will be reimbursed through the Centre.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL

8. The ECCE proposal presented by the Government of the SAR has endeavoured to address in detail the requirements specified in document 181 EX/16 Add. Rev., "Report by the Director-General on a draft integrated comprehensive strategy for category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO", approved by the Executive Board in 181 EX/Decision 16, pursuant to 34 C/Resolution 90. Some of the salient aspects of the proposal are as follows:

(a) Objectives and functions

The main objective of the proposed Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education for the SAR and other Arab countries is to build national and regional capacity for ECCE development by targeting senior officials of Ministries of Education, other ministries and agencies related to ECCE (Health and Social Welfare Ministries, NGOs, civil society associations) as well as the ECCE workforce through four types of activities:

- (i) training in policy development processes in ways that allow on-the-job training and facilitating awareness concerning crucial development issues of priority for the countries of the region;
- (ii) training of trainers (TOTs) for ECCE workforce upgrading, with special emphasis on pre-primary teachers as a priority for the two to three years to come. Other categories would be targeted later;
- (iii) facilitating access to professional technical information in Arabic on educational policy development issues as well as workforce upgrading issues from other countries of the region, relevant to ECCE; and
- (iv) training in applied research by undertaking fact-finding and analysis work focused on the specific needs of the countries of the Arab region.

(b) Legal status and structure

The Centre should be conceived as an independent legal entity, an "autonomous non-profit educational institution", within the legal context of the host country, the Syrian Arab Republic. It shall enjoy, on the territory of the SAR, the personality and legal capacity for the exercise of its functions.

- (i) The Centre will be governed by a Board composed of representatives of Member States that have sent notification and expressed interest in being represented on the Board, as set out in the Draft Agreement, and a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO. The Chair of the Governing Board will be the Minister of Education of the host country, who will also act as the representative of the Government.

- (ii) The structure of the proposed Centre as well as the number and qualifications of its professional and administrative support staff will be determined by the four types of activities that it will undertake. The Centre will be managed by a director to be appointed by the Minister of Education in the host country. In order to ensure high technical quality as well as the broad experience of staff, the Centre will have a core group of at least five professional staff under long-term contract (five years renewable) and a number of short-term experts hired for specific tasks and for limited periods of time. Fluency in spoken and written English will be essential.
- (iii) A model kindergarten shall be established within the Centre premises. It will have its own administrative and teaching staff appointed by the Minister of Education in the SAR.

(c) Financial matters

- (i) The costs for providing premises, facilities, equipment, maintenance and furniture are already being covered by the Government of the SAR. The rough estimate for the premises, facilities, equipment and furniture is US \$4 million. The annual budget for maintenance and repair is estimated at around 5% of the investment costs in line with budgeting for maintenance and repair worldwide.
- (ii) The Centre has already received an allocation of funds to the value of \$150,000 from the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND). This allocation is earmarked to finance the following components: development of kindergarten curricula; development of learning and training materials; organization of training of trainers workshops; and rehabilitation and provision of equipment for the kindergarten created within the Centre.
- (iii) The Government of the SAR is committed to financing the running costs of the proposed Centre by a financial contribution made to the Centre's annual budget. The Centre may seek cost-sharing arrangements with the other countries of the region and other agencies. UNESCO will support the Centre's efforts to secure additional resources from the Organization's Member States and other regional and international organizations.

(d) Areas of cooperation with UNESCO

Cooperative activities will be in line with UNESCO's programme priorities relating to ECCE and EFA through capacity-building in the areas of policy and curriculum development, the strengthening of national and regional teacher training capacities, and the facilitation of regional and national skills and knowledge interchange. In accordance with the instructions of the General Conference (issued at its session in October/November of 2001), the Director-General cannot enter into cooperation arrangements that could engage UNESCO as a full partner in institutions, centres and similar bodies, committing the Organization to engage budgetary and staff resources. In addition, the integrated comprehensive strategy for category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO adopted by the 181st session of UNESCO's Executive Board (181 EX/66 Add. Rev.) clearly indicates that UNESCO shall have no financial obligations or accountability for the operations, management and accounting by any category 2 centre or institute, and shall not provide financial support for administrative or institutional purposes. Under these circumstances, UNESCO would provide its support to the proposed Centre on a cost-recovery basis, meaning that all costs including travel expenses, daily subsistence allowances and all other UNESCO staff-related costs incurred by calculated UNESCO staff time will be reimbursed through the Centre. Accordingly, the nature of the cooperation between UNESCO and the Centre will include the following:

- (i) UNESCO will, during the preparatory phase, provide support by mobilizing a team of two to three senior international experts. These experts will work with the core group and part-time experts to assist in the preparation of the training materials, undertake intensive training and advise on the selection of materials to be made available in Arabic.
- (ii) UNESCO will, during the launching phase, make available on a cost-recovery basis the same team of international experts. These latter will visit the Centre from time to time to check on the quality and relevance of its activities and advise on suitable ways to improve its performance.
- (iii) The relevant units of UNESCO's Secretariat, in particular the Education Sector and UNESCO Beirut, will make available materials (reports, working papers, publications, etc) that could be used for the preparation of training materials and for the information and documentation of the Centre.

RELATIONSHIP TO UNESCO'S OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAMMES

9. The objectives and activities of the proposed Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education, as well as its modes of operation, aim to build national and regional capacity for early childhood development in the SAR and Arab States in order to lay a strong foundation for the development of their education systems. The activities of the proposed Centre are in accordance with UNESCO's Constitution, programme priorities and the objectives that it seeks to attain through the implementation of its programme. This is particularly clear in relation to the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4), Strategic Programme Objective 2 detailing the contribution to building Member States' institutional capacities with a view to increasing access to quality education at all levels. Without UNESCO's involvement, the proposed regional capacity-building in ECCE development could hardly succeed.

RESULTS EXPECTED FROM UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION

10. (a) Role of the Centre in executing the Organization's programme:

- (i) As pointed out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of this document, the Centre fits well with UNESCO's general objectives, in particular its efforts to build the national technical and networking capacities of Member States in the Arab region in order to assist them to achieve the EFA goals, specifically the Goal 1 related to "expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children".
- (ii) Furthermore, the financial and human resources, logistical and in-kind support, and commitment of the SAR as host country, as assessed by UNESCO staff and consultant missions, provides a solid base for the activities of the Centre in the SAR.
- (iii) Finally, as a component of intra-regional development support, knowledge sharing and networking, the establishment and operation of a regional Centre of this nature serves to develop international cooperation among Member States in the field of education and to promote peaceful dialogue across the region.

(b) Potential impact of UNESCO's contribution on the Centre's activities:

- (i) UNESCO's catalytic function during the nascent period of the Centre is to lend its technical and organizational expertise.

- (ii) UNESCO's role as a bridge to other countries, international organizations and relevant NGOs working on sustainable ECCE development and training management is essential for the successful dynamic exposure of the Centre.

REGIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL IMPACT OF THE CENTRE

- 11. (a) The Centre will hold training sessions for policy-makers, Ministry of Education officials and curriculum developers in addition to practitioners and professors working in ECCE. As a regional unit playing a major role in organizing and facilitating such research and training activities for ECCE, the ECCE Centre in the SAR will strengthen ECCE national and regional capacities in terms of its expertise in the fields of its activities.
- (b) The Centre will promote and facilitate increased networking and cooperation among all levels of stakeholders, from Ministries of Education officials, academics, policy-makers and curriculum developers, to practitioners across the Arab region, in order to exchange experiences and technologies and participate in collaborative educational and capacity-building training.
- (c) As a clearing-house for ECCE-related information, the Centre will serve to collect, translate into Arabic/English and disseminate the most recent local and international research on ECCE.

CONCLUSIONS

- 12. (a) The Centre, its foreseen objectives, activities and modes of operation are fully in accordance with the criteria for the creation of institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2) as outlined in the Principles and Guidelines regarding the establishment and operation of UNESCO institutes and centres (category 1) and institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2) (34 C/ Resolution 90 and 181 EX/Decision 16).
- (b) The establishment of a regional centre for early childhood care and education is justified in terms of training needs and priorities for the countries in the region in striving towards achieving the EFA goals of the Dakar Framework by 2015.
- (c) The conditions are good for the adequate functioning of the Centre as far as the financing of its infrastructure and sustained financing of its activities are concerned. Support from other countries in the region should be in the form of commitments concerning membership in the Governing Board, the use of the Centre's training services and the co-financing of its activities. Such regional commitments are crucial to ensuring not only the regional service function of the proposed Centre, but also UNESCO's own support.
- (d) There is no non-private training institution of this kind in the Arab countries that at present offers, or has confirmed plans to set up in the foreseeable future, training programmes and activities such as those foreseen by the proposed Centre.
- (e) Given the recent instructions of the General Conference not to engage UNESCO's resources in the establishment and operation of institutes, centres and the like, but rather to make UNESCO's technical and professional support available in other appropriate ways, the Director-General could extend UNESCO's cooperation to the creation and running of the proposed Centre on a cost-recovery basis.

ACTION EXPECTED OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

13. In light of the foregoing, the Executive Board may wish to consider the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined the basic outline of the proposal to establish a Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States, in the Syrian Arab Republic under the auspices of UNESCO (182 EX/20 Part V),
2. Aware of the importance of international and regional cooperation in the area of early childhood care and education,
3. Welcoming the proposal of the Syrian Arab Republic,
4. Taking note of the observations and conclusions of the present feasibility study,
5. Deeming the considerations and proposals contained therein to be such as to meet the requirements needed for the creation of institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2), as stipulated in 181 EX/Decision 16,
6. Recommends that the General Conference at its 35th session approve the establishment of the Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States, in Damascus in the Syrian Arab Republic under the auspices of UNESCO, and that it invite the Director-General to sign the corresponding agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic contained in the Annex to document 182 EX/20 Part V.

ANNEX
DRAFT AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
AND
**THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL CENTRE FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN THE ARAB STATES,
IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, AS A CATEGORY 2 CENTRE
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO**

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic

and

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

Having regard to 29 C/Resolution 8, by which the UNESCO General Conference highlighted the need to build capacity for early childhood care and education programmes,

Considering that the Director-General has been authorized by the General Conference to conclude with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic an agreement in conformity with the draft that was submitted to the General Conference,

Desirous of defining the terms and conditions governing the framework for cooperation with UNESCO that shall be granted to the said Centre in this Agreement,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1 – Definitions

1. In this Agreement, “UNESCO” refers to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
2. “Government” means the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR).
3. “Centre” means the proposed Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the Arab States.
4. “Arab region” means the Arab States as specified in UNESCO’s definition of regions.

Article 2 – Establishment

The Government shall agree to take, in the course of the years 2009 and 2010, any measures that may be required for the setting up in Damascus, in the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR) of the Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

Article 3 – Purpose of the Agreement

The purpose of this Agreement is to define the terms and conditions governing collaboration between UNESCO and the Government concerned and also the rights and obligations stemming therefrom for the parties.

Article 4 – Legal status

4.1 The Centre shall be independent of UNESCO.

4.2 The Government of the SAR shall ensure that the Centre enjoys within its territory the functional autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and the legal capacity:

- to contract;
- to institute legal proceedings;
- to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

Article 5 – Constitutive Act

The constitutive act of the Centre must include provisions describing precisely:

- (a) legal status granting to the Centre, within the national legal system, the legal capacity necessary to exercise its functions and to receive funds, obtain payments for services rendered, and acquire all means necessary for its functioning;
- (b) a governing structure for the Centre allowing UNESCO representation within its governing body.

Article 6 – Functions/objectives

The objectives of the Centre shall be:

- (a) Build national and regional capacity for ECCE, promote collaboration and strengthen networks for knowledge transfer in the field of ECCE.
- (b) Contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the achievement of the Dakar Framework for Action Education for All Goals by 2015.
- (c) Train senior officials of regional Ministries of Education, other ministries and agencies related to ECCE (Health and Social Welfare Ministries, NGOs, civil society associations) in policy development processes in ways which allow on-the-job training

The functions of the Centre shall be to:

- (a) Facilitate awareness among regional Ministries of Education concerning crucial ECCE development issues which are of priority for the countries of the region.
- (b) “Train the trainers” for ECCE workforce upgrading with special emphasis on pre-primary teachers as a priority for the two to three years to come.
- (c) Facilitate access to professional technical information in Arabic on educational policy development issues as well as workforce upgrading issues from other countries of the region, relevant to ECCE.

- (d) Train the regional professional and academic ECCE workforce in applied research by undertaking fact-finding and analysis work focused on specific needs of the countries of the Arab region.

Article 7 – Governing Board

1. The Centre shall be guided and supervised by a Governing Board renewed every two years and composed of:
 - (a) a representative of the Government or his/her appointed representative;
 - (b) representatives of Member States, which have sent to the Centre notification for membership, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 10.2 below and have expressed interest in being represented on the Board;
 - (c) a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO.
2. The Chair of the Governing Board will be the Minister of Education of the host country, who will also act as the representative of the Government as set out in 7.1(a).
3. The Governing Board shall:
 - (a) approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of the Centre;
 - (b) approve the annual work plan and budget of the Centre, including the staffing table;
 - (c) examine the annual reports submitted by the director of the Centre;
 - (d) adopt the rules and regulations and determine the financial, administrative and personnel management procedures of the Centre in accordance with the laws of the country;
 - (e) decide on the participation of regional intergovernmental organizations and international organizations in the work of the Centre.
4. The Governing Board shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year; it shall meet in extraordinary session if convened by its Chairperson, either on his or her own initiative or at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO or of two-thirds of its members.
5. The Governing Board shall adopt its own rules of procedure. For its first meeting the procedure shall be established by the Government and UNESCO.

Article 8 – UNESCO's Contribution

1. UNESCO may provide assistance, as needed, in the form of technical assistance for the programme activities of the Centre, in accordance with the strategic goals and objectives of UNESCO by:
 - (a) providing the assistance of its experts in the specialized fields of the Centre;
 - (b) engaging in temporary staff exchanges, whereby the staff concerned will remain on the payroll of the dispatching organizations;
 - (c) seconding members of its staff temporarily, as may be decided by the Director-General on an exceptional basis if justified by the implementation of a joint activity/project within a strategic programme priority area.

2. In all the cases listed above, such assistance shall not be undertaken except within the provisions of UNESCO's programme and budget, and UNESCO will provide Member States with accounts relating to the use of its staff and associated costs.

Article 9 – Contribution by the Government

1. The Government shall provide all the resources, either financial or in kind, needed for the administration and proper functioning of the Centre.
2. The Government undertakes to:
 - (a) make available to the Centre all facilities necessary to fulfil its objectives and functions;
 - (b) entirely assume the maintenance of the premises of the institution as a category 2 centre under UNESCO's auspices
 - (c) contribute or secure the regional contribution to the Centre of a total amount of US \$6,864,000 in running costs per annum on top of the already contributed amount of US \$4,000,000 for land and renovations on the existing structure;
 - (d) make available to the Centre the administrative staff necessary for the performance of its functions, which shall comprise a core team of support staff, temporary/part-time researchers as well as a librarian, amounting to 5-10 persons at any given time.

Article 10 – Participation

1. The Centre shall encourage the participation of Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO which, by their common interest in the objectives of the Centre, desire to cooperate with the Centre.
2. Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO wishing to participate in the Centre's activities, as provided for under this agreement, shall send to the Centre notification to this effect. The director shall inform the parties to the agreement and other Member States of the receipt of such notifications.

Article 11 – Responsibility

As the Centre is legally separate from UNESCO, the latter shall not be legally responsible for the acts or omissions of the Centre, and shall also not be subject to any for legal process, and/or bear no liabilities of any kind, be they financial or otherwise, with the exception of the provisions expressly laid down in this Agreement.

Article 12 – Evaluation

1. UNESCO may, at any time, carry out an evaluation of the activities of the Centre in order to ascertain:
 - (a) whether the Centre makes a significant contribution to the strategic goals of UNESCO;
 - (b) whether the activities effectively pursued by the Institute/Centre are in conformity with those set out in this Agreement.
2. UNESCO undertakes to submit to the Government, at the earliest opportunity, a report on any evaluation conducted.

3. Following the results of an evaluation, each of the contracting parties shall have the option of requesting a revision of its contents or of denouncing the Agreement, as envisaged in Articles 16 and 17.

Article 13 – Use of UNESCO name and logo

1. The Centre may mention its affiliation with UNESCO. It may therefore use after its title the mention “under the auspices of UNESCO”.
2. The Centre is authorized to use the UNESCO logo or a version thereof on its letter-headed paper and documents in accordance with the conditions established by the governing bodies of UNESCO.

Article 14 – Entry into force

This Agreement shall enter into force, following its signature by the contracting parties, when they have informed each other in writing that all the formalities required to that effect by the domestic law of the Syrian Arab Republic and by UNESCO’s internal regulations have been completed. The date of receipt of the last notification shall be deemed to be the date of entry into force of this Agreement.

Article 15 – Duration

This Agreement is concluded for a period of three years as from its entry into force, and shall be deemed renewed unless otherwise expressly denounced by either party as provided for in Article 16.

Article 16 – Denunciation

1. Each of the contracting parties shall be entitled to denounce this Agreement unilaterally.
2. The denunciation shall take effect within 60 days following receipt of the notification sent by one of the contracting parties to the other.

Article 17 – Revision

This Agreement may be revised by consent between the Government and UNESCO.

Article 18 – Settlement of disputes

1. Any dispute between UNESCO and the Government concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement, if not settled by negotiation or any other appropriate method agreed to by the parties, shall be submitted for final decision to an arbitration tribunal composed of three members, one of whom shall be appointed by a representative of the Government, another by the Director-General of UNESCO, and a third, who shall preside over the tribunal, shall be chosen by the first two. If the two arbitrators cannot agree on the choice of a third, the appointment shall be made by the President of the International Court of Justice.
2. The Tribunal’s decision shall be final.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have signed this Agreement,

DONE in 2 copies in the English language, on

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For the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

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For the Government