

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

JOINT MEETING OF

**THE BUREAU OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL
COUNCIL (IGC)**

AND

THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

**OF THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATIONS PROGRAMME (MOST)**

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
10-11 June 2014**

The Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova, attended the meeting in person – the first time a Director-General of UNESCO has participated in a joint session of the IGC Bureau/SAC, thus showing her commitment to the new phase of MOST, especially following the restructuring of the Sector for Social and Human Sciences. Due to prior commitments, she was unable to participate in the opening session on 10 June and delivered her statement at the opening of the session on 11 June.

1. Introductory Items (agenda items 1, 2 and 3)¹

The joint meeting of the Bureau of the IGC and the SAC of the MOST Programme began with remarks from the President of the IGC, Her Excellency, Ms Alicia Kirchner, Minister of Social Development, the Government of the Republic of Argentina.

The President stressed her view that it is necessary to build a utopia coming from our hearts and contributing to a new world. She described the importance of producing a systematic approach to policy making that is layered and deals with social inclusion issues, reduces inequalities and establishes guidelines for respecting human rights. She stressed that social rights are human rights. To achieve such rights, the President emphasized that governments should work on guaranteeing a minimum and universal standard of living, equality of opportunities and equal access for all through broader and more comprehensive policies and interventions. These efforts, however, cannot be realized through a narrow lens and solely through such mechanisms as income transfers. Citing the example of Argentina, the President underscored the importance of governments' commitment and responsibility to advancing progress in inclusive socioeconomic development. The President also emphasized that while poverty exclusion and inequality are complementary, they are also distinct. By focusing national and international discussions and work only on poverty reduction, organizations and various stakeholders may overlook the deep-seated socioeconomic, political and cultural structures that perpetuate inequalities, which she stressed have been rising.

The President also emphasized that the outcomes of the joint meeting of the Bureau and Scientific Advisory Committee can inform the agenda of the 12th IGC session, provisionally scheduled for March 2015. She underlined the fact that, within the context of the MOST programme, contributions from youth, especially young researchers and social scientists, can serve as reference points for the preparation of UNESCO's 2015 Youth Forum. She observed, moreover, that through the MOST programme, the stakeholders and bureau members will continue to grow and learn from each other.

Consequently, the MOST Programme can intervene as a strategic partner by bridging social science research on poverty with research on socioeconomic and political inequalities; and elevating evidence-based policies and practices that work across disciplinary domains. Such a cross-cutting engagement supports the mandate of UNESCO and the upcoming post-2015 development agenda.

¹ The draft agenda of the meeting, as adopted in its first session, is attached hereto as appendix 1. The list of participants is attached hereto as appendix 2.

2. Contribution of MOST to UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy and Programme (agenda item 4)

The item was introduced by the Acting Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences (ADG/SHS a.i.), Mr Philippe Quéau. His presentation was primarily concerned with providing the IGC Bureau and SAC members with an overview of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-21 (37 C/4) and Programme for 2014-17 (37 C/5), the recent restructuring of the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS), and the implications of the above agendas and processes for the MOST Programme.

The challenges of poverty, inequality and exclusion lie at the heart of the work undertaken by UNESCO. Strategic Objective 6 of the 37 C/4, under which the MOST Programme falls, commits the Organization to supporting inclusive development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures, and promoting ethical principles. The 37 C/5 Main Line of Action under which the MOST Programme has to deliver (Major Programme III, Main Line of Action 1) strives to mobilize future-oriented research, knowledge and policy-making to support social transformations, social inclusion and intercultural dialogue.

ADG/SHS a.i. explained that, in order to deliver on the aforementioned Medium-Term Strategy and Programme, SHS had recently been restructured in the following manner, comprising two divisions and four sections:

- A. Division of Social Transformation and Intercultural Dialogue.** The secretariat of the MOST Programme will be hosted in this Division, which will support Member States in developing innovative inclusive policies to accompany and anticipate social transformations, and to foster intercultural dialogue. It will do so by strengthening links between scientific research and policy-making; building human and institutional capacities for the implementation of public policies; and developing UNESCO's leadership role as a laboratory of ideas and a forum for foresight. The Division will be equally responsible for the lead role entrusted to UNESCO by UN General Assembly resolution 67/104 for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).

The Division will bring together in a holistic, intersectoral and interdisciplinary manner programmes and activities dealing with social transformations and intercultural dialogue, and enhance their linkages, synergies and strengths. It will moreover federate UNESCO's action towards social inclusion, and facilitate new partnerships, in particular with civil society and the private sector.

Within the Division,

- The **Research Policy and Foresight Section** will focus its work on strengthening research in social and human sciences at the national level and enhancing the link with policy-making as well as fostering the global reflection and stimulating critical thinking and foresight on issues pertaining to social transformations and intercultural dialogue. It will encourage policy dialogue with governments, civil society and other partners.
- The **Public Policies and Capacity Building Section** will be responsible for building human and institutional capacities at the national and municipal levels to assess, compare, and reform national policy and regulatory frameworks with a view to

enhancing their inclusiveness. It will also be in charge of launching new initiatives and knowledge networks for intercultural dialogue in cooperation with existing partners and networks. Furthermore, it will coordinate the culture of peace programme.

B. Division of Ethics, Youth and Sport. This part of the Sector will lead reflection on the environmental, legal and social dimensions of ethics of science and technology, building on the established strengths of its programmes including bioethics, science ethics, ethics of nanotechnologies and environmental ethics. It will also be responsible for the youth programme and the sport and anti-doping programme.

Within the Division,

- The **Bioethics and Ethics of Science Section** will be responsible for the flagship programme on bioethics, fostering the implementation of existing normative instruments in the field of bioethics. It is entrusted with the task of reflecting on new emerging challenges in the field of ethics of sciences and technology.
- The **Youth and Sport Section** will coordinate the implementation of the UNESCO Operational Youth Strategy across the Organization. The Section is also entrusted with the coordination of the sport programme, mainly the follow-up to MINEPS V and management of the Secretariat of the International Convention against Doping in Sport and of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS).

The presentation concluded by emphasizing the central importance of the MOST mission in the overall work of UNESCO (as articulated in the 37 C/4 and 37 C/5) and, consequently, in the mandate and structure of SHS.

ADG/SHS a.i. further underlined the importance of UNESCO's major political role as the lead agency for the UN International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. Intercultural dialogue is not a scientific endeavour but rather a political instrument. The custodians of intercultural dialogue could thus pave the way for establishing epistemological elements – such as identity and citizenship, multiculturalism and interculturalism and human rights – to give the concept more meaning. This body of knowledge comprising intercultural dialogue could lead to self and community empowerment. For example, global citizenship education and “emotional education” are ways to use sustainable intercultural dialogue as a preventive measure that is not solely brokered by governing bodies. Thus, in rethinking avenues for regional cooperation and dialogue, partnerships that are commensurate can help support greater and more even participation. MOST schools, for example, can serve as hubs for important cross-cultural exchanges that can lead to enhanced regional cooperation – but they require adequate levels of support. In response, questions about financial commitments for the MOST Schools were raised, and Member States received confirmation that these schools would be financed by local extrabudgetary resources.

3. Empowering Youth (agenda item 5)

The secretariat presented UNESCO's operational strategy on youth and programme work on youth, highlighting, first, that young people are key actors for social transformation and sustainable peace and development – and not simply beneficiaries of policies to those ends. Social transformation entails changes in thinking and behaviour about youth, and at the same time new thinking and behaviour on the part of young people. It was explained that the secretariat's operational strategy is based on three axes: the formulation and review of youth policies, with the participation of youth; the development of capacities for the transition of young people to adulthood; civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation. The 8th UNESCO Youth Forum took place in October 2013 on "Youth and Social Inclusion: Civic Engagement, Dialogue and Skills Development". It adopted 10 recommendations and launched 15 operational projects. The secretariat proposed some possible areas of cooperation between MOST and the youth programme: building knowledge regarding youth development to feed into the formulation of policies on youth; involvement of young people in the development of youth policies; and provision of expertise for these policies.

4. The Post-2015 Development Agenda (agenda item 6)

ADG/SHS a.i. presented current SHS thinking on the post-2015 development agenda process and outlined some concrete actions planned to contribute to shaping the envisaged Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He indicated, first, that systemic global issues remain unchallenged. While an attempt is being made to address some of the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as identified in the *Future We Want* report² and other academic research reports, the challenge remains to go further, beyond a "shopping list" of "goals", in order to deal with systemic and interlinked global issues that hamper development in LDCs and middle-income countries. Utilizing the scientific research-policy nexus, ADG/SHS a.i. argued, the ongoing "conversation" around SDGs should provide an opportunity to bring about a transformative development agenda that addresses the root causes of poverty and unmet basic needs.

Secondly, ADG/SHS a.i. noted that UNESCO's fields of competence are not yet adequately reflected in the new draft goals.

As a third point, he stressed that there is a real danger of repeating the shortcomings of the MDGs. The emerging SDG framework has not resolved the main gaps of the MDG framework and it is adding, instead, new difficulties. He suggested that the two principal problems are that:

- a) the SDG outline is detached from a human rights-based framework. Rights are sparsely mentioned and not truly embedded; and
- b) the diverse focus areas are essentially disconnected, this problem arising from silo approaches to policy interventions and the lack of a holistic perspective of social transformation.

² *The Future We Want*, outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20"), as endorsed by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/66/288, 11 September 2012).

ADG/SHS a.i. stressed that although Member States are “in the driving seat” in formulating the agenda and proposed Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO, as part of the UN system, is involved in the process through advocacy for its focus areas and approaches, as are the research community and civil society. The post-2015 development framework will be adopted in New York in September 2015 and will be the UN system’s guidelines for the coming years. It is already clear that the issues of eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities will be high on the agenda. Responding to these concerns, the MOST Programme is focusing on the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities within a global justice approach.

ADG/SHS a.i. went on to spell out some of UNESCO’s actions, or those of its partners, in relevant areas.

- MOST represented UNESCO in the 52nd session of the Commission for Social Development, at the United Nations in New York, in February 2014, the main theme of which was empowerment of people for the eradication of poverty. Information was provided to delegates *inter alia* on the ECOWAS MOST Forum of Ministers which took place in Accra in December 2013; on the upcoming Forum of Ministers of Social Development scheduled in Quito in October 2014; and on the 2013 World Social Science Report (WSSR) *Changing Global Environments*, which addresses in detail the social transformations attendant on environmental change and the policy and social science challenges that arise in responding to them.
- An Expert Group meeting on “Global Justice, poverty and inequality in the post-2015 development agenda” was organized at UNESCO Headquarters, on 28-29 April 2014 in collaboration with the ISSC. Distinguished experts from different countries and regions gathered to reflect on how to achieve global justice by using knowledge that is already available, and how to empower excluded people with the aim of eliminating poverty, inequality and injustice.

The experts stressed that the lack of justice is a tragedy in many parts of the world. It is crucial to understand how poverty, inequality and injustice are created and perpetuated for vast sectors of the population. They further agreed that the most important questions are: who sets the agenda and whom it is for. Ensuring that the voices of the excluded are heard and included is of paramount importance and, according to the arguments presented in the meeting, should be the guiding principle in designing the post-2015 development agenda.

The report of the expert meeting was circulated to IGC Bureau and SAC members, who were invited to comment on its implications for MOST and on possible further steps to develop work in this area.³

- A key contribution of MOST, with respect both to advocacy and to the future implementation of policies, will be the forthcoming Xth Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America to be held in Ecuador from 2 to 4 October 2014. ADG/SHS a.i. noted that the overall theme of the Forum will focus on “Overcoming inequality in Latin America: social transformations and public policies”, and stressed that the Forum will make a major

³ The report is available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002299/229938E.pdf>.

contribution to the discussion of issues of great importance in the preparations for the post-2015 agenda and to the formulation of policies supported by research to contribute to the reduction of inequalities and poverty. In order to present the outcome of the Forum, along with other work in MOST's transition to the post-2015 era, a side-event will be organized in the Commission for Social Development in February 2015.

ADG/SHS a.i. then introduced Mr Mathieu Denis, Senior Research Officer, ISSC, who provided a presentation on two major ISSC activities in which UNESCO is also involved:

- ISSC's World Social Science Forum "Global Relations for a Just World", Durban, 13-16 September 2015. The WSSF is a global event of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) that brings together researchers and stakeholders in international social science cooperation to address current topical global issues and future priorities for international social science.

In organising the 2015 World Social Science Forum, ISSC will partner with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa, and will be joined by a consortium of universities and research centres from across Africa. The theme of the third WSSF 2015 will be "Transforming Global Relations for a Just World".

In the name of the ISSC, CODESRIA and the HSRC, Mr Denis invited UNESCO to consider organizing a MOST interregional ministerial debate on a "Just World". The organizers would welcome a roundtable involving ministers and key social scientists, and addressing specific aspects of the interface between science and policy making for a just world.

Mr Denis furthermore encouraged SAC and IGC Bureau members to propose, for consideration by the organizing committee, side-events to be organized by themselves or their respective institutions.

- ISSC's World Social Science Report 2016, which is foreseen to focus on inequalities. Mr Denis informed participants that it is proposed to be co-published with UNESCO, as was the case with the two previous editions of the report, and invited SAC and IGC Bureau members to propose papers for inclusion.

Mr Denis made a further presentation on 11 June, which provided additional details on these and other related points.

5. Initiatives by IGC Bureau Members (agenda item 7)

Mr Jan Monteverde Haakonsen, Special Advisor, Norwegian Research Council, and Member of the Norwegian National Commission, representing Norway as Vice-President for Group I, listed major activities undertaken during the period 2012-2014, focusing especially on the social transformations arising from global environmental change. Specifically, he co-hosted and chaired a side event at Rio+20 in June 2012, launched an initiative to identify all MOST committees and/or contact points in Europe and North America; chaired a MOST side-event on digital technologies and social transformations at the WSSF in Montreal (October 2013); participated and made a presentation at

the 3rd ECOWAS Forum of Ministers for Social Development (Accra, December 2013); co-hosted a launch event for the 2013 WSSR in Norway (May 2014); and maintained close contact with ISSC on issues relevant to MOST.

Mr Haakonsen went on to draw attention to the lessons learned from these activities. He argued that there is still insufficient enough awareness about the MOST Programme in Europe and North America and that MOST networks are virtually non-existent: there are few national MOST committees and the list of contact persons provided by the secretariat is outdated. He noted that while policymakers seem to have close contacts with social scientists, use of their research results has been selective. Mr Haakonsen stressed however that there is a more positive attitude towards the role of social sciences in Europe and North America than in some other regions.

He concluded his presentation by outlining what he regarded as priorities for the coming period:

- Establish a regional MOST network in Europe and North America;
- Underline UNESCO's unique role as the only UN organization with science as a mandate, including social science;
- Make MOST known both to research communities and to policy-makers;
- Make the resolutions of the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference that are relevant to MOST strategic development known to social science communities and national authorities;
- Focus on the post-2015 development agenda and follow up recommendations from the UNESCO/ISSC Expert Group Meeting on global justice (April 2014);
- Encourage social science communities in the region to work towards common positions and priorities for the 2015 World Social Science Forum in Durban in 2015;
- Mobilize support and interest for the 2016 World Social Science Report;
- Continue and further develop the close ties and relations with ISSC.

Mr Lubomir Faltan, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, representing Slovakia as Vice-President for Group II, informed meeting participants that migration constitutes a major priority for MOST in South-East Europe. One of the main activities planned in this area is the sub-regional conference organized by the Slovak National Commission for UNESCO (November 2014, in Bratislava, Slovakia), on cross-border migration and its impact on social transformations in South-East Europe.

Her Excellency, Ms Beatriz Tola, Minister of Economic and Social Inclusion, representing Ecuador as Vice-President for Group III, affirmed that a more mainstreamed focus on equality and human rights should be the foundation of national agendas and the post-2015 development agenda. She suggested that greater coherence between economic and social policies that do not give priority to monetary capital over human capital would be a first step in this regard. Ms Tola also introduced the example of Ecuador's recent constitutional reform, which, she indicated, had served as a mechanism for integrating human rights into the country's legal and policy framework.

Ms Tola gave a detailed presentation, complementary to the indications provided by ADG/SHS a.i., on the Xth Latin American Forum of Ministers of Social Development, which will take place from 2 to

4 October 2014 in Quito, Ecuador,⁴ on “Overcoming inequality in Latin America: social transformations and public policies”. She outlined the responsibilities of the Government, stressing that UNESCO will provide support, and also outlined the contribution of intellectual bodies such as FLACSO, CLACSO and ECLAC. She explained that the three days foreseen for the Forum will comprise, on the first day, technical work; on the second day, presentation of proposals as well as discussions and agreements; and on the third day presentation of outcome documents and discussion of decisions.

The general objective of the Forum is to encourage the creation of national and regional mechanisms to strengthen the links between academia and public institutions in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies on social inclusion. Specifically, the Forum will serve to:

- Identify the theoretical and practical characteristics of successful policy experience with respect to social transformation and overcoming inequality in Latin America;
- Identify the existing crucial points, at the academic as well as public policy level, focusing on the theme of social transformations/overcoming inequality;
- Create and institutionalize a space of interexchange of theoretical and practical knowledge to support in a sustainable way, through social research and exchange of successful experiences, to take decisions at the level of public policies.

Ms Tola furthermore outlined the three main components and expected results of the Forum:

- A Latin American observatory of social policies, based on knowledge-sharing, a network for academic and institutional cooperation and strengthening of capacities;
- Systematization of successful social transformation strategies by identifying the principal components, developing recommendations and publishing relevant analytical information;
- Promotion of social inclusion of persons with disabilities, based on exchange with persons with disabilities, exchange of knowledge and strengthening of public policies.

Ambassador Mary Khimulu, representing Kenya as Vice-President from Group Va, briefly presented the efforts of her country to gather relevant information on the activities of MOST carried out by other African Member States. She announced that this information would be aggregated in a report and presented at the next session of the MOST IGC as part of a general effort, to which Kenya is committed, to raise awareness of the work of the MOST programme.

Ms Khimulu commended the work of the secretariat in organizing the 2013 ECOWAS Ministerial Forum in Ghana and announced that the Government of Kenya was considering the possibility of hosting a Ministerial Forum in 2015.⁵ She also welcomed UNESCO’s efforts to promote youth development.

Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur, representing Malaysia as Vice-President from Group IV, first presented an overview of the ASPAC region, which comprises 44 countries, covering developed countries,

⁴ The Forum was originally planned from 6 to 8 November 2014, and these dates were communicated orally to the joint meeting of the IGC Bureau and SAC. The present report has been adjusted to reflect the subsequent rescheduling of the Forum, as well as a minor change in its title.

⁵ The Government of Kenya subsequently confirmed its interest in hosting such a Forum in a letter to the Director-General of UNESCO dated 2 July 2014. The Forum is scheduled to take place from 24 to 26 February 2015 in Nairobi.

upper- and middle-income countries and LDCs. She stressed that they have different needs and requirements to which MOST must be sensitive. Despite this diversity, however, a shared issue that will be of great importance for ASPAC in the years after 2015 is inequalities.

Dr Noruul also emphasized the gaps between social sciences and policy development and the need to enhance the capacity of researchers to produce evidence-based knowledge.

In light of these observations, Dr Noruul outlined the goals and objectives she regards as particularly relevant to the work of MOST in the ASPAC region:

- To increase regional reach of MOST in ASPAC, including meeting with ASPAC delegations to UNESCO in order to raise awareness on MOST and to solicit support;
- To foster South-South and North-South-South collaboration with a view to exchanging good practices and developing joint initiatives;
- To improve reporting mechanisms, information sharing and follow-up to MOST activities.

She informed the Bureau and SAC that she had recently organized a pre-meeting with ASPAC representatives in Malaysia, on 27 May 2014, in order to canvass views in advance of the present meeting. Specifically, the purpose of the pre-meeting was to initiate steps towards establishing mechanisms to follow-up on MOST activities and initiatives; establishing research networks through sharing of best practices; increasing involvement of national social science communities, moving from university-based research to policy advice and support; focusing on youth as a MOST priority; and compiling country reports on activities, research, studies and programmes to be reported through formal MOST channels.

Dr Noruul also summarized the outcomes of the recent MOST Forums in ASPAC (Forum of Ministers on Social Protection Policies in South-Asia: Colombo, Sri Lanka, 20-22 February 2011; High-Level Forum on Management of Social Transformations in ASEAN countries focusing on “Societal Vulnerability: The Social Inclusion Challenges of Environmental Change”, Hanoi, Vietnam, 20 December 2013).

Dr Noruul also reported on a UNESCO-organized workshop on “Support to Policy Making and Planning for Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Groups and Communities in Southeast Asia” that took place in Bali, Indonesia, from 6 to 8 April 2014, where delegations from the governments of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste met with UNESCO representatives and other stakeholders to discuss ways of improving social inclusion policies. Experts presented methodologies and tools to address the issue of address policy approaches to social inclusion and the participants agreed on a set of recommendations to improve and promote inclusive public policies. She further drew attention to an upcoming round table on “Inclusive Policy Approaches and Data Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities - Selected case studies in ASEAN” which was to be organized in August 2014 by UNESCO and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (IKMAS), the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, UNESCAP and others in August 2014, with the participation of Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Timor-Leste.

Dr Noruul also proposed that consideration be given to the organization of two future MOST activities in the ASPAC region: a Ministerial Forum on policies that constitute a priority for Member States (e.g. poverty eradication and youth), to be hosted by a Member State to be determined; and

an ASPAC MOST School. She indicated that mobilization of the Funds-in-Trust donated by Malaysia to UNESCO for these purposes could be considered.

6. Outcome of and Follow-Up to MOST Forums Organized Since the Last IGC Session (agenda item 8)

Three Forums have been organized since the March 2013 session of the IGC: in Argentina for Latin America (September 2013); in Ghana for ECOWAS (December 2013); and in Vietnam for ASEAN (December 2013). For the information of all Bureau and SAC members, their main outcomes were briefly summarized.

- **IXth MOST Forum of Ministers of Social Development and International Meeting on Social Inclusion, Youth and Gender Equality, 16-18 September 2013, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

An international meeting on Social Inclusion, Youth and Gender Equality was organized in Buenos Aires by the Government of Argentina on the initiative of the President of the IGC, consistently with the recommendations adopted at the 11th session of the IGC (March 2013). The IXth MOST Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America was organized back to back with the international meeting and took as its theme “Social Inclusion and Youth”. The two events thus made a major contribution to the MOST thematic priority on “social inclusion”.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, Mr Hector Tiberman, and the Minister of Education, Mr Alberto Sileoni, participated in the opening session of the international meeting and affirmed in their remarks the importance of the MOST Programme. The President of the IGC and the then Executive Secretary of MOST, Ms Angela Melo, subsequently spoke on social inclusion, youth and gender. They also delivered speeches in the opening of the Ministerial Forum. Ms Melo provided additional information on this occasion about the activities of the MOST Programme and the importance of research-policy linkages. UNESCO had also commissioned three substantive research papers⁶ which were presented during the meetings.

Nine ministers from the region participated in the Forum (Argentina, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Santa Lucia, Uruguay and Venezuela), along with two Vice-Ministers (El Salvador and Venezuela). Other Latin American countries were represented at official level. Furthermore, Africa was represented at ministerial level by the Minister of Women, Children and Youth of Ethiopia and the Minister of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities of South Africa. In all, representatives from 70 countries participated in the international meeting, including representatives of UNESCO National Commissions or MOST National Liaison Committees from Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, and Kenya. The meeting and Forum thus made a major contribution to South-South exchange and learning.

⁶ “Una visión comparada sobre la inclusión social. Los casos de Ecuador, El Salvador y Peru”, Giovanna Valentini, FLACSO-Mexico; “Jóvenes, violencias y cultura de paz en América Central: Enfoques, Dilemas y respuestas a desplegar en el futuro”, Ernesto Rodríguez, Director, CELAJU; “Políticas de inclusión social de jóvenes en América Latina: Situación, desafíos y recomendaciones para la acción”, Ernesto Rodríguez and Pablo Vommaro, Youth focal point, CLACSO.

- **3rd ECOWAS Forum of Ministers for Social Development, focusing on “Societal Vulnerability: The Social Inclusion Challenges of Environmental Change”, 16-17 December 2013, Accra, Ghana**

Participants included ministers (from Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone) or their representatives from 12 of the 15 Member States of ECOWAS, along with the ECOWAS secretariat, CODESRIA, the Director-General of the West Africa Institute, the Vice-President of the IGC Bureau for Group I, the UNESCO National Commission of Ghana, the UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana and other UN colleagues, and researchers.

The Forum noted that vulnerability to environmental change is a common phenomenon in West Africa, which negatively affects the majority of the population living in rural areas and depending mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. Participants underlined the need for serious attention to environmentally driven social vulnerability and for a sub-regional strategy to address it.

Ministers and high-level officials participating in the Forum adopted a Declaration, stressing their conviction that “regular organization of MOST Ministerial Forums of Ministers in charge of Social Development for the ECOWAS countries will be of great benefit for the achievement of subregional objectives with regard to inclusive and sustainable social development”. The involvement of ECOWAS in this regard was strongly stated to be desirable, and the representatives of the ECOWAS secretariat participating in the Forum responded positively to this call. In this context, UNESCO was requested to maintain and enhance its support for the series of UNESCO Ministerial Forums for the subregion, to be held as far as possible on a biennial basis.

In order to ensure follow-up and continuity, a Bureau of the MOST ECOWAS Forum was established, comprising Ghana (President), Senegal (Vice-President), Liberia (Rapporteur) and Côte d’Ivoire (Vice-Rapporteur).

- **1st High-Level MOST Forum on “Societal Vulnerabilities”, 20 December 2013, Hanoi, Vietnam**

The High-Level MOST Forum was organized in cooperation with the Government of Vietnam, the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences and the Vietnamese National Commission to UNESCO. While not convened at ministerial level, the Forum included official representatives of the governments of Brunei, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam, alongside eminent national and international delegates and researchers who presented their research on societal vulnerabilities and environmental changes in South-East Asia.

The Forum adopted the Hanoi Recommendations aiming at a coherent and coordinated social policy framework for the ASEAN subregion. Participants advocated *inter alia* the establishment of an enabling institutional environment that empowers individuals and communities, including young women and men, to gain access to the resources and conditions they need for their well-being and the resilience of their livelihoods, thus enhancing their adaptive capacity. Participants also recommended that ASEAN Governments pay greater attention to and better integrate social and ethical dimensions into environmental policies and associated policy and planning processes.

The Hanoi Forum provided participants with an opportunity to exchange knowledge and concrete examples of how social sciences can support government endeavours by improving the quality of

evidence to support policymaking in the longer term. The event thus succeeded in raising awareness about a comparatively under-researched topic in the ASEAN subregion.

7. Self-Assessment of MOST Governing Bodies (agenda item 9)

ADG/SHS a.i. introduced the item, explaining that its inclusion had been requested in order to provide information to the Bureau and SAC regarding action in response to 37 C/Resolution 96 as adopted by UNESCO's General Conference at its 37th session in November 2013. ADG/SHS a.i. explained that the General Conference had requested a strategic performance review of a range of UNESCO intergovernmental bodies, including both the IGC and SAC of MOST. The review is to be undertaken by the External Auditor of UNESCO.

Specifically, all governing bodies, intergovernmental programmes, committees and organs established by conventions are invited to perform a self-assessment covering "the overall relevance of their work in relation to their specific terms of reference as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of their meetings, including the impact and utility of experts' time". ADG/SHS a.i. emphasized that the review does not constitute an evaluation of the MOST Programme, nor of the work of the secretariat.

On this basis, the Presidents of the IGC and SAC are requested to conduct their respective self-assessments by completing and delivering directly to the External Auditor two questionnaires, one concerning factual information, the other opinions. The secretariat is available to support the Presidents in collating relevant factual information, but has been instructed by the Director-General to play no part in drafting or contributing opinions on the governing bodies.

In addition to briefing the IGC and SAC on the implications of the resolution adopted by the General Conference, ADG/SHS a.i. suggested that the President might wish to discuss with the IGC Bureau how to undertake the self-assessment, and that the SAC President might wish to do likewise on the second day of the meeting.

The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat. The President requested the secretariat to circulate the questionnaire prepared by the External Auditor to all IGC Bureau members, which were in turn invited to provide their own responses prior to finalization of the formal submission on behalf of the IGC.

8. 12th Session of the MOST IGC (agenda item 10)

After a brief discussion, the IGC Bureau confirmed the proposal to seek appropriate dates for the 12th session of the IGC in March 2015 and agreed that the session should be held at UNESCO Headquarters.

9. Conclusion of Discussions by the President (agenda item 11)

In her concluding remarks, the President reiterated the centrality to MOST of the Regional Forums of Ministers of Social Development and their potential to support the Post-2015 agenda. In this context, she noted several relevant initiatives, including the Xth Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America, and encouraging signs with respect to other Ministerial Forums, which could be held in 2015 in, *inter alia*, Kenya, the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia.

The President further asserted the value of MOST Schools and noted the plans under way to convene such events in Guatemala (2014), Morocco (2014) and Cuba (2015). She also noted the interest of Malaysia in hosting such a School and expressed the hope that concrete plans could be made in due course. She pointed out that it would be valuable to integrate the MOST Schools with the process to prepare UNESCO's Youth Forum.

The President suggested that, independently of the internal organization of the Sector for Social and Human Sciences, the MOST Programme should focus on its transversal character, of which youth issues are an important dimension. She proposed that the work of MOST should not be limited to just one UNESCO division.

She then invited the members of the Bureau and SAC to provide their own concluding remarks.

It was suggested that MOST Schools could be organized under UNESCO's youth programme, which might enable their funding from within the regular budget; that youth should be dealt with in an interdisciplinary fashion; and that the SAC could be invited to consider the issue of inequality and develop policy options.

10. Presentation by the UNESCO Director-General (agenda item 12)

The Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova, addressed the meeting on the morning of 11 June 2014. She started by congratulating all countries elected or re-elected to represent their regional groups as Vice-Presidents in the Bureau, as well as the representatives appointed by their respective governments to serve in this capacity. She also thanked the President of the IGC for her continuing vision and leadership, and expressed her gratitude to all those present and engaged in the MOST Programme.

The Director-General noted that the IGC Bureau and SAC were meeting at an important moment, as states are accelerating to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and at the same time shaping a new global sustainable development agenda to follow.

This is a time, the Director-General noted, when all countries are undergoing profound social transformations – including demographic pressure, accelerated urbanization, rising inequalities and increasing calls for social justice and social inclusion, for the eradication of poverty, for greater citizen participation in consolidating democracy. She stressed that each of these transformations is unique, and that each country has its own experience.

UNESCO works at the crossroads of these transformations, drawing on a unique mandate – and MOST is the only intergovernmental social science programme in the United Nations.

The Director-General expressed her conviction that there is and can be no “one size fits all”. The future global development agenda must be truly universal in order to be effective, it must involve all countries equally, building on their cultural diversity, reflecting their social contexts, the specificities of their people’s needs, in an open, democratic and transparent manner.

Furthermore, solutions to challenges cannot be only technical, and sustainability cannot be addressed solely from an economic angle. The Director-General asserted that it is necessary to begin with social equity and justice, with dialogue for respect and mutual understanding, with public policies that take individual rights and dignity as their cue. This is why the social sciences are so essential – to craft more effective and inclusive dialogue and policy, drawing on evidence, reflecting the “reality” of situations.

She stressed her determination for UNESCO to make the most of the opportunity of shaping a new development agenda, to shape change in positive directions for the benefit of all societies. Under the leadership of states, she noted, progress is being made, and it must continue.

The Director-General reminded participants that the “social dimension” of sustainability was reaffirmed in the Outcome Document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The indispensable social dimension of sustainability is also the core message of the 2013 World Social Science Report on changing global environments – fundamentally, the environment is not a scientific issue, it is a social issue; economic growth is not an economic issue, it is an issue of social cohesion and inclusive development.

The Director-General argued that the mandate of MOST stands precisely here – to promote knowledge to accompany states in better understanding and managing social transformations and to shape in directions that are inclusive, just and sustainable.

With a view to underlining the relevance of this mandate, the Director-General informed the IGC Bureau and SAC about the inaugural meeting, in January 2014, the Scientific Advisory Board to the United Nations Secretary General, established at his request by UNESCO as a platform to strengthen the links between natural sciences and social sciences and the linkages between sciences and policy – all to inform efforts for sustainable development.

She continued by stressing that the Regional Forums of Ministers of Social Development constitute, in her view, the flagship activity of MOST. She therefore expressed her gratitude to the Government of Ecuador for its willingness to host the Xth Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America, in October 2014, and stated that she fully supported the idea of a side-event during the 53rd session of the Commission for Social Development, in February 2015, to present the outcome of the Latin American Forum to Ministers, researchers and civil society from all regions, at a time when Member States are shaping the global Post-2015 Agenda. Such a side-event would also offer an opportunity to inform the international community about the forthcoming World Social Science Forum in Durban, South Africa, in September 2015.

In the second part of her intervention, the Director-General presented her vision of the relations between social transformations and intercultural dialogue. It is precisely the experience of societies

facing profound transformations that shows the need to maintain dialogue and build inclusion – as well as the difficulty of doing so.

Dialogue and inclusion are issues between ethnic and cultural groups. They concern minorities and migrants, for instance in cities facing an influx of new workers. Dialogue is in fact the engine of social cohesion in plural societies – it is the enabler of sustainable inclusion.

And inclusion in turn is not merely an outcome: it is a precondition for progress. In the powerful words of the President of Peru H.E. Mr Ollanta Humala, the issue is *“non crecer para incluir, ma incluir para crecer”* – not to grow in order to include, but to include in order to grow.

In this respect, the Director-General suggested, dialogue and inclusion across generations are of particular importance. Active dialogue is required with young people, in order to enable them to shape the destiny of their own societies. She therefore greatly welcomed the specific focus on social inclusion and youth of the IXth Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America in September 2013.

UNESCO’s role, the Director-General affirmed, is to find, wherever they are needed, concrete ways of putting such political orientations into practice, to turn them into innovative and impactful programmes that fulfil the recommendations made by the MOST Programme. Such is the spirit of the project that UNESCO has recently launched, with the support of the European Union, to network youth organizations in 10 Mediterranean countries and to give voice to young people in policy development. Similarly, MOST Schools are a way of involving young people, of strengthening their capacities and expanding their opportunities for integration.

Shaping policies and strengthening capacities, the Director-General concluded, constitute essential components of UNESCO’s work, to which MOST should contribute strongly. Now more than ever, the mobilization of all is required to bring this message to bear in shaping a more inclusive and more sustainable human development model.

11. Institutional cooperation with the International Social Science Council (agenda item 13)

Complementing his earlier presentation on the first day of the meeting under agenda item 6, Mr Mathieu Denis, explained that the ISSC flagship activities are platforms where collaboration between UNESCO/MOST and ISSC is mutually beneficial. The World Social Science Report (WSSR) underlined timely challenges in its first two editions, which dealt with the “knowledge divide” (2010) and “changing global environments” (2013). For the 2016 edition, the focus will be on the challenges of inequalities and social justice. A MOST partnership that supports the development of theoretical frameworks and distributes the report could help broaden the debate and learning outcomes. Additionally, the 2015 World Social Science Forum offers considerable potential for collaboration with MOST, including by organization of discussion at ministerial level.

Concerning the WSSF, Mr Denis indicated that there are 91 planned sessions, of which five are plenary. It is suggested that one plenary session take the form of a MOST interregional ministerial

roundtable. Registration for the WSSF opened on 1 June 2014, while the call for abstracts will be announced on 1 September 2014 and close on 1 April 2015. The final programme of the WSSF will be announced on 1 June 2015.

Concerning the WSSR, Mr Denis informed the IGC Bureau and SAC that an editorial team and scientific advisory committee have been established. The 2013 WSSR comprised more than 150 authors from 23 disciplines and all regions of the world. There were more than 40 external peer reviewers. It is expected that the 2016 WSSR will be on the same scale.

The audiences for the World Social Science Reports are social scientists, their colleagues in other fields, international scientific organizations and programmes, research funders and decision makers, policy shapers, practitioners and other users.

Mr Denis also provided information about the ISSC World Social Science Fellows programmes, which includes 120 Fellows selected for five seminars and workshops. Of the Fellows, 48 percent are from low- and middle-income countries and 60 percent are women. The Programme has to date produced one book, six articles (four in review), several briefs and reports. It includes grants for collaborative writing projects, post-seminar writing workshops, and opportunities to present papers at subject-matter-related conferences.

The IGC Bureau and SAC were also updated on ISSC's research programmes and networks, which focus especially on disaster risk, poverty, gender, global change and sustainability. Mr Denis particularly emphasized the ISSC's flagship Transformations to Sustainability Programme, which is designed to build a global knowledge trust on social transformations in order to inform effective and equitable solutions to the urgent problems of global change and sustainability. He indicated that the Programme will launch an open call for transformative knowledge networks in December 2015. Financial support of up to EUR 300,000 per year will be given to projects lasting up to three years. An initial call for proposals, offering seed money to develop full proposals, with a maximum amount of EUR 30,000, was successfully launched in 2014.

IGC Bureau members welcomed the strong collaboration between ISSC and MOST and congratulated ISSC on the breadth and quality of its activities. Nonetheless, certain specific concerns were raised concerning: the publication modalities for the WSSR (which, it was suggested, should in 2016 be fully open-access and published multilingually); the geographical diversity of contributors, with respect in particular to the Arab world and sub-Saharan Africa; and the geographical diversity of experts invited to the April 2013 MOST/ISSC expert group meeting on global justice.

Noting the comments, ADG/SHS a.i. reminded the IGC Bureau and SAC that UNESCO had circulated the WSSR call for papers to all Permanent Delegations and to National Commissions, precisely in order to encourage geographically diverse submissions. On the other hand, the substantive value of the WSSRs depends crucially on the impartiality of the editorial process, based on double-blind peer review.

12. The Role of the Social and Human Sciences in Integrated Science for Sustainable Development (agenda item 14)

The secretariat provided an introductory overview of issues of potential relevance to MOST in light of previous decisions of the IGC enshrining the social dimensions of global environmental change as one of two MOST thematic priorities. Building on the conceptual framework elaborated in the 2013 WSSR, in the context of the international Future Earth initiative, and in close partnership with the ISSC as discussed under agenda item 13, significant UNESCO programme work is under way to develop integrated science for sustainable development (*sustainability science* as it is termed in the 37 C/4 and 37 C/5). The IGC Bureau and SAC were invited to consider how MOST might engage with these dynamics.

Specifically, the IGC Bureau was invited to give its formal approval to the revised and updated version of the MOST consultation on the role of the social and human sciences in integrated science for sustainable development, the principle of which had been endorsed by the IGC in March 2013. The purpose of the consultation is to establish MOST as a forum within which issues relating to sustainability science are discussed, to mobilize relevant stakeholders at national level, and to provide information and opinions to shape future programme activities.

The IGC Bureau and SAC were also briefed about the establishment and inaugural meeting in January 2014 in Berlin of the UN Scientific Advisory Board, which the Director-General had earlier mentioned. It was emphasized that the work of the Board gives central importance to the issues relating to integrated science, from the perspective both of interdisciplinary research and scientific cooperation and of policy applications.⁷

Having taken note of the information provided by the secretariat, the IGC Bureau approved the revised and updated consultation document, which is attached hereto as Appendix 3, and requested the secretariat to proceed with the consultation at the earliest opportunity.

13. Workplan for the Scientific Advisory Committee (agenda item 15)

The secretariat introduced the item by outlining a vision of the tasks at hand for the SAC on the basis of the expected results of the 37 C/5 and the strategy adopted by the General Conference in the 37 C/4. It was suggested that the SAC might wish to work on:

- the development of a MOST framework for analysis of the “implementation gap” between international commitments in relevant areas and concrete policies and tangible achievements;
- the launching of a series of intercultural dialogues on conflict prevention and resolution;
- the establishment of a MOST policy initiative on social transformation and intercultural dialogue in line with UNESCO’s current Medium-Term Strategy.

⁷ The report of the inaugural meeting is available online at the following URL: http://www.sab-2014-berlin.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Report_SAB_Inaugural_Meeting_30-31_January_2014.pdf.

The secretariat also drew attention to the potential synergies to be derived from the integration of a foresight perspective within the MOST Programme and suggested specifically that connections could be made between MOST Schools and UNESCO Future Forums and other futures literacy activities, and that a template for foresight in relevant areas be designed for and made available to national decision-makers.

SAC members were invited to take note of the working documents prepared by the secretariat on “Incorporating Intercultural Dialogue in the MOST Programme” (attached hereto as appendix 4) and “Incorporating Foresight in the MOST Programme” (attached hereto as appendix 5). It was suggested that SAC members might consider these documents as “zero drafts” of SAC reports to be submitted to the IGC in due course.

In his opening remarks, the SAC President, Mr Emir Sader informed the meeting that a SAC workplan for the period running to the next session of the IGC was in preparation, and invited members’ inputs to it. He suggested that the SAC should present, at the next session of the IGC, a report on methods to link social sciences and policies. He also indicated that he was proposing a MOST School in connection with a Human Rights Forum involving Arab and sub-Saharan African countries planned for 27-30 November 2014 in Marrakech, Morocco, and that plans are in discussion for a further MOST School in 2015 in Senegal.

In the course of the discussion, SAC members called for improved communication between the SAC, the IGC Bureau and the secretariat, as well as within the SAC. In particular, it was judged that the SAC should be more involved in commenting on draft MOST documents. SAC members generally felt that the mandate of the SAC needs stronger and more operational definition, with a priority focus on outreach, networking and quality control.

SAC members thus strongly emphasized the need for stronger connections between MOST and social science communities in their respective regions, and undertook to take relevant steps in this regard through their own existing networks. Consideration may be given to mobilizing or revitalizing MOST National Liaison Committees, but in many cases it may be relevant to work through UNESCO National Commissions.

Responding to the remarks by the SAC President, SAC members echoed the emphasis on the research-policy nexus. A number of barriers were noted, including inadequate public understanding of major policy issues; lack of cooperation between the social sciences and professional bodies; greater interest on the part of social scientists in academic publication than in contributing to society; insufficient attention to accountability and foresight in government; and limited policy sharing and mutual learning across states.

Commenting on the UNESCO programme work as presented by the secretariat, SAC members endorsed the emphasis on inequalities as an essential dimension of contemporary social transformations and as a core policy challenge for contemporary states, reflecting the growing expectations that they face. In this regard, the approach proposed by the ISSC and supported by UNESCO to the 2015 WSSF and 2016 WSSR was considered valuable.

Finally, SAC members endorsed the proposal that formal SAC reports on intercultural dialogue and on foresight, as these issues relate to MOST, should be prepared and submitted to the IGC at its next session.

Responding to the discussion, ADG/SHS a.i. thanked SAC members for their constructive comments and proposals and stressed that the SAC and IGC should function as a couple and in synergy, each in its respective capacity.

14. Self-Assessment of the Scientific Advisory Committee (agenda item 16)

The discussion initiated under agenda item 9 was briefly continued with specific reference to the SAC. The President of the SAC requested the secretariat to circulate the questionnaire to all SAC members who were invited to provide relevant information to the President.

15. Concluding Statements (agenda item 18)

ADG/SHS a.i. thanked all participants in the joint meeting of the IGC Bureau and SAC. He expressed confidence that the recommendations made by Bureau and SAC members would provide a sound basis for the work of the MOST Programme during the forthcoming months.

He stressed that this meeting reiterated the centrality of the Ministerial Forums within the MOST Programme, as well as the positive role that those important events could play in facilitating the contribution of Member States to the construction of the post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, he specifically echoed the Director-General's remarks on the uniquely intersectoral experience that UNESCO – and in particular MOST – can provide to the emerging international development agenda.

All participants recognized the importance of strengthening the connection between the Ministerial Forums in various regions. It was thus encouraging that the Minister of Economic and Social Inclusion of Ecuador should have proposed to invite selected Ministers of Social Development from other regions to attend the Xth Forum of Ministers of Social Development of Latin America, to be held in Ecuador in October 2014. It was also recommended that other upcoming Ministerial Forums consider the possibility of supporting such interregional exchanges.

The IGC and SAC also endorsed proposals to improve follow-up mechanisms and to upgrade processes for sharing information, and also commended the experience of the MOST Schools, not only as means to disseminate knowledge but also as platforms to strengthen capabilities to produce knowledge. Supported was given to the extension of MOST Schools outside Latin America and the Caribbean.

The meeting reiterated the transversal character of the MOST Programme, which encompasses various dimensions of social transformation that need to be understood in a systemic way. With that in mind, Bureau and SAC members pointed out that the planning and implementation of MOST activities cannot be constrained to specific divisions within the new structure of the SHS Sector. The

case of youth, as a highly transversal issue closely connected to social transformations, was highlighted.

Participants suggested closely integrating the MOST schools with UNESCO Youth Forums, in particular by facilitating the contribution of young researchers and representatives from youth organizations to the preparation of the next UNESCO World Youth Forum, on the occasion of the 38th session of the General Conference in November 2015.

ADG/SHS a.i. expressed the view that discussions on the work of the SAC had been very productive and underlined the recommendation that the SAC adopt a well-defined work plan that could strengthen its scientific advisory role during the period 2014-2017, paying special attention to the need to involve all actors relevant to public policies for social development in the co-production of the knowledge that is required for effective delivery. He also welcomed the call by SAC members to establish better procedures for sharing information, for achieving a more proactive engagement of social science networks, and for ensuring regular exchanges with decision-makers, taking due account on all three levels of regional perspectives.

In closing, ADG/SHS a.i. summed up four key outcomes of the meeting, representing a consensus among participants, and pointing to necessary action in the short and medium term to strengthen MOST:

- The agreed need to mobilize the social and human sciences through the MOST Programme to support Member States more effectively in the context-specific design and implementation of public policies for social development and in strengthening capacities in this regard;
- The central significance of Ministerial Forums to the MOST Programme;
- The recognized success of MOST Schools and the desirability of extending them to other regions and integrating them with the UNESCO Youth Forum;
- The need for the SAC to adopt a workplan.

Appendix 1

DRAFT AGENDA

**JOINT MEETING OF
THE BUREAU OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL (IGC) OF THE
MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS (MOST) PROGRAMME
AND
SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC) OF MOST**

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
10 - 11 June 2014, Room IX

Chair of the meeting: Her Excellency, Ms Alicia Kirchner, Minister of Social Development of the Republic of Argentina, and President of the IGC of the MOST Programme

10 June

<i>Time</i>	<i>Item</i>
9:30 am	Registration
10-10:15 am	1) Welcoming words President of IGC, Her Excellency, Ms Alicia Kirchner, Minister of Social Development, the Government of the Republic of Argentina Assistant Director-General, Social and Human Sciences (SHS), Mr Philippe Quéau President of SAC, Mr Emir Sader, Laboratorio de Políticas Publicas, Brazil
10:15-10:20 am	2) Adoption of agenda and timetable
10:20-10:30 am	3) Self-introduction of IGC Bureau and SAC members
10:30-11:30 am	4) Discussion concerning cooperation between the IGC Bureau and the SAC around strategies and activities to contribute to the strategies for MOST in line with the 37th session of the General Conference: policies supported by research through also building strengthened partnerships in the context of the restructured SHS Overview of the C/4 and the C/5 by ADG/SHS <i>a.i.</i> Introduction to the debate by President of IGC Bureau and President of SAC
11:30-11:45 am	Coffee break
11:45am-12 pm	5) SHS's work for the empowerment of youth, including youth's

contribution to influence public policies

Presentation by Ms Moufida Goucha, Social and Human Sciences Sector, UNESCO, followed by discussion

12-1 pm

6) Future SDGs/Post 2015 agenda: SHS's approach and activities

Overall presentation by ADG/SHS a.i., followed by discussion:

- 52nd session of the Commission for Social Development, United Nations, February 2014
- Expert Group meeting on "*Global Justice, poverty and inequality in the post 2015 development agenda*", UNESCO HQs, 28 and 29 April 2014 and its outcome
- X Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America in Ecuador, November 2014

Followed by presentation by Mr Mathieu Denis, Senior Research Officer, the International Social Science Council on their forthcoming activities in which UNESCO will be involved:

- ISSC's World Social Science Forum "*Global Relations for a Just World*", Durban, 13-16 September 2015
- ISSC's World Social Science Report 2016

Discussion about MOST's involvement

1-3 pm

Official lunch

3-4 pm

7) Initiatives undertaken/to be undertaken by the President of IGC and the IGC Bureau Members for their regions or in general

Presentation by the President of MOST IGC and the 6 Vice-Presidents for the electoral groups

4-4:30 pm

Coffee-break

4:30-4:45 pm

8) The outcome of the Fora of Ministers of Social Development co-organized with MOST since the last session of the MOST IGC and follow-up: Argentina for the Latin-American countries, September 2013, Ghana for the ECOWAS countries in December 2013 and Vietnam for the ASEAN countries in December 2013

Presentation by the MOST Secretariat followed by discussion

4:45-5 pm

9) Self-assessment as per 37 C/Resolution 96 (37 General Conference, resolution enclosed)

Presentation by President of MOST IGC and ADG/SHS a.i

Open discussion by Bureau

5-5:30 pm **10) The agenda for the 12th session of the IGC of MOST, March 2015**
(date tbc)

5:30-6 pm **11) Conclusions of discussions by President of MOST IGC Bureau**

Additional remarks by the President of the SAC; and ADG/SHS *a.i.*

11 June

Time

Item

10 am **12) Intervention by the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova**

10.30-11.30 am **13) Institutional cooperation with the International Social Science Council and some of the Council's key activities such as the Transformations to sustainability Programme**

Presentation by Mr Mathieu Denis, Senior Science Officer, the International Social Science Council (ISSC)

11.30 am-
12 pm **14) The outcome of the first meeting of the UN Scientific Advisory Board, Berlin, January 2014, Berlin and SHS's work on integrated science**

Presentation by ADG/SHS *a.i.*, and Mr John Crowley, Social and Human Sciences Sector, followed by discussion

12-1 pm **15) The workplan for the Scientific Advisory Committee and initiatives taken or foreseen to be taken by SAC members either collectively or individually**

Presentation by President of SAC and SAC members followed by discussion

1-3 pm **Free lunch**

3-3.15 pm **16) Self-assessment as per 37 C/Resolution 96 (37 General Conference, resolution enclosed)**

Presentation by President of SAC and ADG/SHS *a.i.*

3:15-5 pm **17) Pending issues/discussions and time for bilateral meetings between Bureau members, SAC members and the Secretariat**

5-5:30 pm **18) Closing words**

President of SAC and ADG/SHS *a.i.*

Appendix 2

Participants

Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council

President: H.E. Ms Alicia Kirchner, Minister of Social Development, Argentina

Vice-Presidents:

Group I: Norway: Mr Jan Monteverde Haakonsen, Special Advisor, Research Council of Norway and Member of the Norwegian National Commission to UNESCO

Group II: Slovakia: Mr Ľubomir Faltan, Senior Researcher, Institute for Sociology, Slovak Academy of Science

Group III: Ecuador: H.E. Ms Beatriz Tola Bermeo, Minister of Economic and Social Inclusion

Group IV: Malaysia: Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur, Secretary-General, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development

Group Va: Kenya: Ambassador Mary M. Khimulu, former Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO

Group Vb: United Arab Emirates: Mr Jassim Mohd Al-Ali, Chief of Section, (Conflict Resolution), Sector for International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Scientific Advisory Committee

President: Mr Emir Sader (Brazil), Director, Laboratorio de Políticas Públicas

H.E. Ms Judi Wakhungu (Kenya), Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources

Ms Fadia Kiwan (Lebanon), Professor at the University of Saint-Joseph in Beirut and Director for the Political Science Institute and member of the Board to the United Nations University

Ms Zdenka Mansfeldova (Czech Republic), Deputy Director, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences,

Mr Michael Woolcock (Australia), Lead Social Development Specialist in the World Bank Development Research Group and Lecturer in Public Policy at Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Mr Luk Van Langenhove (Belgium), Director of the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS), was unable to attend the meeting.

Appendix 3

Consultation of National Commissions, MOST Liaison Committees, academies and social science communities on the contribution of social science to science, technology and innovation for sustainable development

1. Rationale

Sustainable development constitutes a shared focus for the international community as it follows up the agenda set at Rio+20 with a view to elaboration of post-2015 “Sustainable Development Goals”, currently in the process of intergovernmental negotiation through the Open Working Group (OWG) established by the UN General Assembly. Even disagreements about the scope and implications of sustainable development occur within the context of agreement about the importance of the issues involved.

Within this context, a process is emerging within global science communities to reshape the institutional and intellectual landscape in order to provide the necessary basis for understanding of and response to the challenges of sustainable development. Effective representation of the social and human sciences within the new paradigms and processes that will emerge is not a desirable but ultimately decorative addition. It is, on the contrary, a practical and conceptual necessity. Every major issue that bears on sustainability, whether regarded in environmental or in social terms, relates to the dynamics of complex hybrid systems that are inseparably physical, biological and social. They can neither be understood nor acted upon without a strong contribution from the social and human sciences. This will require new ways of producing knowledge, and at the same time new modes of knowledge utilization.

The nexus between producing and applying knowledge is precisely the core business of UNESCO’s intergovernmental MOST Programme.

Furthermore, the contribution of the social and human sciences is not simply analytical. Ensuring that cities, agriculture, transport and energy systems – and every other sustainability challenge within contemporary societies – are understood as shaped by human beliefs, values, institutions, and behavioural patterns, is not just a matter of improving descriptive or predictive capacities. Managing the social transformations inherent in the search for sustainability means also establishing a normative – ethical and political – basis for them. What the world needs, in the face of challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and freshwater scarcity, is not to “do what science demands” – since science, as such, does not “demand” anything. The task is rather to create a framework within which the values, beliefs, institutions and behaviour that might underpin sustainability can be imagined, legitimized and promoted. Without the contributions of the social and human sciences, none of those objectives is likely to be attained.

This general vision is well captured in the final declaration of the March 2012 Planet under Pressure conference, which was convened jointly by the ICSU-led interdisciplinary Earth science programmes (http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/pdf/state_of_planet_declaration.pdf). The declaration states, in particular:

Interconnected issues require interconnected solutions. Rapid scientific and technological progress can provide potential solutions – if adopted in timely manner – to reduce the risk of deleterious consequences for societies everywhere. But technological innovation alone will not be enough. We can transform our values, beliefs and aspirations towards sustainable prosperity.

Taking seriously this call for “interconnected solutions” to respond to “interconnected issues” is nonetheless challenging in several respects.

First, such a call presumes recognition of the essential and perhaps preponderant role that environmental pressures are playing, and will increasingly play, in the dynamics of social transformation. This claim is still controversial in many circles, both academic and political. The counter-claim that emphasis on environmental issues distracts from more important questions of human rights, social development and social justice is often made and deserves serious attention. Without strong engagement from the social and human sciences, there is little chance of clarifying how the social and environmental dimensions of contemporary societies relate to each other both analytically and normatively.

Secondly, the emphasis on “integration” as one aspect of what the sciences need to achieve creates specific problems for the social and human sciences, many practitioners of which are committed to the view that the “naturalism”, “positivism” and “reductionism” to which the physical and life sciences are supposedly committed are incompatible with serious understanding of social dynamics. Furthermore, more mundanely, interdisciplinary engagement of the social and human sciences with the physical and life sciences takes place on a very unequal terrain, where the balance of resources massively favours the latter over the former. The risk that ambitious initiatives towards transdisciplinarity might simply dissolve the social and human sciences is real and needs to be taken seriously.

Thirdly, it is easy enough to say that “we can transform our values, beliefs and aspirations towards sustainable prosperity”, but it is much less clear what the claim means – and even who “we” are. Making sense of such transformative change is a mission for the social and human sciences that they are not necessarily well equipped for at present. It is also, obviously, the core business of MOST.

Finally, on the basis of answers to the above questions, a series of institutional issues arise, relating to the most appropriate ways in which social science priority-setting, funding, evaluation and structures should be established and/or strengthened at national, regional and international level.

In institutional terms, one important global reference point for reflection on these issues is provided by the ongoing “Future Earth” initiative (<http://www.icsu.org/future-earth>), which was launched in 2012 by a consortium of bodies, including ICSU, ISSC, UNESCO and a number of national funding agencies, to support the emergence – and application – of the kind of Earth systems research that sustainability demands. The 2013 document “Future Earth Initial Design: Report of the Transition Team”, developed by a group of more than 30 researchers and experts from many countries and representative of the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, sets out the initial design of

“Future Earth”, comprising a research framework and governance structure, preliminary reflections on communication and engagement, capacity-building and education strategies, and implementation guidelines (http://www.icsu.org/future-earth/media-centre/relevant_publications/future-earth-initial-design-report).

Ensuring that social and human sciences play the required role in this initiative – and in others in the same general area – is important not just for the disciplines involved, but for the capacity of contemporary societies to respond to some of the major challenges they face.

Relevant preliminary work towards meeting these challenges has been conducted by a wide range of networks and institutions. In order to provide a shared starting point for the consultation, it is suggested that reference might be made to the *2013 World Social Science Report – Changing Global Environments* (<http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/book/9789264203419-en>), edited by ISSC and published jointly with UNESCO and OECD in November 2013. The World Social Science Report may be complemented by three other documents published by ISSC, working with UNESCO, which open debate on some of the key issues for consideration:

- The document “Transformative Cornerstones of Social Science Research for Global Change” (May 2012) (<http://www.worldsocialscience.org/documents/transformative-cornerstones.pdf>), which looks at the areas in which substantive paradigmatic efforts are required within the social and human sciences in order to rise to the challenges of sustainable futures;
- The document “Making Knowledge Work. From Social Science Research to Socially Reflexive Sustainability” (May 2012) (<http://www.worldsocialscience.org/documents/making-knowledge-work.pdf>), which explores the central MOST concerns of knowledge utilization;
- The Programme Description and Call of the “Transformations to Sustainability” global research funding programme, launched on 31 March 2014 (<http://www.worldsocialscience.org/documents/transformations-sustainability-programme.pdf>), which will support researchers from the social, behavioural and economic sciences to take the lead in developing international *Transformative Knowledge Networks*.

In addition, it is recommended to consult the document “*The contribution of the sciences, technology and innovation to sustainable development. Examples from UNESCO’s experience*” (http://isp.unu.edu/SSPIC-paris/files/ISSS_note_UNESCO.pdf), prepared for the UNU/IR3S/UNESCO Joint Symposium “Sustainability Science. Promoting Integration and Cooperation”, held on 19 September 2013 in Paris.

References to other documents or initiatives along similar lines will of course be very welcome in response to the present consultation.

2. Objective of the consultation

The objective of the present consultation, conducted under the aegis of UNESCO’s intergovernmental Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, is to invite expression of views on the challenges that arise for the social and human sciences from the

requirement to equip contemporary societies with the capacity to imagine and achieve sustainable futures.

Analysis of the responses received will serve to inform both the development of UNESCO’s programmes in relevant areas and action through national policies and international cooperation by UNESCO’s Member States.

In addition, the discussion favoured by the consultation will contribute directly to engagement of social science communities at national and international level in consideration of the substantive and institutional issues raised by current concerns for sustainable development.

3. Specific questions

In addition to general comments about the background documentation referred to above, or other relevant material, participants in the consultation are invited to express views on some or all of the following specific questions.

4. How significant, in your opinion, is global environmental change as a driver of social transformation in your country, compared to other contemporary or emerging dynamics which also are driving social transformation?

Choice of answer:

- The most important
- Very significant
- As significant as at least other factor (In case of selecting this option, please identify which other factor?).....
- Less important than at least other factor (In case of selecting this option, please identify which other factor?).....
- Not very important

5. Which would you regard as the three key knowledge gaps with respect to scientific understanding of sustainability issues in your country?

- Gap 1:
- Gap 2:
- Gap 3:

6. How significant, in your view, are the scientific challenges of sustainability compared to the social and political challenges?

Choice of answer:

- Scientific challenges are more significant
- Social and political challenges are more significant (In case of selecting this option, please identify which would you regard as the key social and political challenges that are more significant than scientific challenges as regards sustainability)
- Challenge 1:
- Challenge 2:
- Challenge 3:

7. What could or should be the role of the social and human sciences in addressing knowledge gaps in your country with respect to scientific understanding of sustainability issues?

Choice of answer (Please, select the three roles that you consider more relevant):

- Production of new knowledge
- Systematization of previously existing knowledge
- Fostering academic discussion
- Contribute to developing inputs for the educational system
- Raising public awareness on issues
- Facilitating exchange between scholars and other social actors
- Provide policy advice
- Intervene in the political debates around the issues

Comments on the above (in case you wish to clarify some point):

8. Which are the three main strengths and weaknesses of the institutional organization of the social and human sciences in your country as regards issues of sustainable development?

Strengths:

.....
.....
.....

Weaknesses:

.....
.....
.....

9. In the research systems with which you are familiar, are new policy initiatives required to promote stronger integration among the sciences in your country? If so, which would you regard as the top three priorities?

10. What distinctive role can an intergovernmental programme such as MOST play in enhancing mobilization of knowledge for sustainability policy in your country?

11. The Planet Under Pressure final declaration claims that “we can transform our values, beliefs and aspirations towards sustainable prosperity”. How would you characterize in your country the weight and role of ethics as regards debates on sustainability?

12. If you could make just one change – of any kind and at any level – that would directly contribute to enhancement of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in your country, what would it be?

Incorporating intercultural dialogue in the MOST Programme Overview of issues, questions and challenges⁸

Executive Summary

Cultural factors and processes are among the major drivers of contemporary social transformations. Furthermore, all transformation processes are mediated through diverse and sometimes divisive cultural understandings. Dialogue is thus both an object of study and a modality of action within the management of social transformations.

There are thus clear potential benefits for MOST in extending its scope to include intercultural dialogue, which could facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of social transformations and of the technical requirements for delivering evidence-based policy advice. However, realizing such benefits requires critical reexamination, in analytical and conceptual terms, with the involvement and support of the Scientific Advisory Committee, of some traditional tenets that have framed UNESCO's work on both intercultural dialogue and social transformation.

In this regard, it will be of particular importance to devote attention to the relation between the descriptive and normative uses of "dialogue"; to the connection between theories of change and analysis of social transformation; and to the relation between systemic analysis and complexity.

Technical challenges will arise from integrating intercultural dialogue and "systems thinking" into MOST, in particular achieving heightened transdisciplinarity and translating complexity and "systems thinking" into policy-making. Addressing them entails much more sustained attention to the nature of "evidence" and to the relation between research and policy processes. In particular, greater attention needs to be given to understanding the expectations of policy-makers and to clarifying the capacity of MOST to elaborate and propose normative positions.

In light of these concerns, three concrete proposals for programming are proposed for the consideration of the Scientific Advisory Committee: a) developing a MOST framework for "implementation gaps"; b) launching a MOST series of intercultural dialogues focused on policy advice for the solution of concrete conflicts; and c) establishing a MOST "Research and Policy Initiative".

⁸ Background discussion paper submitted to the MOST Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and circulated on the occasion of the joint meeting of the MOST IGC Bureau and SAC (10-11 June 2014).

1. Introduction

Cultural factors and processes are among the major drivers of contemporary social transformations. For example, many societies are confronted with challenges related to cultural pluralism, whether inscribed in their history (e.g. the position of indigenous peoples and regional minorities) or emerging more recently (e.g. in the context of international migration). In addition to the structural implications of such issues, they have a significant imaginative dimension, which affects how societies conceive of themselves, and thus potentially transform them. Furthermore, all transformation processes are mediated through diverse and sometimes divisive cultural understandings. For instance, the implications of new technologies and socially constructed relations to the environment are cultural processes that help to explain why dynamics that present strong objective similarities produce different social transformations in different settings. Similarly, globalization has very diverse implications in different societies because its meaning and modes of appropriation are shaped by cultures.

With respect to these considerations, dialogue is of significance at several levels. First, empirically, cultural differences give rise to various modes of exchange and mediation, of which dialogue – understood as a structured joint search for common ground based on the neutralization of power relations – is one possible variant. It is not, to be sure, the most likely one. But even the absence of dialogue, including in cases of unresolved conflict, can be helpfully understood in terms of the unrealized possibility of dialogue, which while normative in origin is also widely recognized empirically as a reference point within real social debates. Secondly, and precisely for this reason, the ideal of dialogue is a component of an available policy repertoire. As a result, while it does not typically arise spontaneously, it may be, and often is, promoted by deliberate political initiatives, of which the most extensively studied often relate to regime transitions. In other words, dialogue is both an *object of study* and a *modality of action* within the management of social transformations.

However, while these connections may appear straightforward in a purely thematic sense, the structural and programmatic challenge of incorporating intercultural dialogue into the thematic matrix of the SHS Sector, and in particular into the MOST programme, does call for detailed consideration. It demands changes in our ability to apprehend the complex reality of social transformation and it requires an improvement in our capacity to research and narrate change in a way that is useful to policy-making. The expansion of the themes under the responsibility of the Sector which were already included in the 37 C/4 and 37 C/5 (intercultural dialogue and foresight) is compatible with the long-term aspiration of bringing together in a holistic and multidisciplinary manner all key programmes and activities relevant to UNESCO's work to support Member States in developing innovative policies to accompany and anticipate social transformations, including the MOST programme. Furthermore, this ambition corresponds to the vision of the Director General to consider establishment of a *Centre for Social Transformations and Intercultural Dialogue* as a new focus for the Organization's work in the social and human sciences.

There are thus clear potential benefits for MOST in adopting a wider thematic scope that could facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of social transformations, and in embracing the associated heightened technical requirements for delivering evidence-based policy advice. For instance, the recent planning of activities in the SHS Sector, in particular on "*Intercultural Dialogue for Respect, Inclusion and Peace. An Advocacy and Institution Building Project*", has showed that intercultural dialogue and social transformations can be explored and linked in a variety of ways which represent an opportunity to upgrade the delivery of the MOST Programme.

However, realizing such benefits requires critical reexamination, in analytical and conceptual terms, with the involvement and support of the Scientific Advisory Committee, of some traditional tenets that have framed UNESCO's work on both intercultural dialogue and social transformation.

In this regard, at least two fundamental questions need attention from the perspective of the social and human sciences. First, what are the implications of a cultural understanding of social transformations for the scope and orientation of the MOST programme? And secondly, when considering dialogue as a policy option, what might constitute “enough evidence” to act under time constraints and in situations that are uncertain and unpredictable? It will be observed that these questions focus primarily on the implications for social transformations of considering intercultural dialogue from the perspective of MOST. The correlative question how intercultural dialogue might be affected, from the perspective of the programmes focusing on it, by consideration of social transformation would require complementary discussion.

The purpose of this paper is to bring these issues, questions and challenges to the attention of SAC in order to enable it to provide operational advice to the IGC. It is proposed that a formal SAC paper on this subject be submitted, after discussion, consultation and further substantive work, to the IGC session provisionally scheduled for March 2015.

2. Revisiting social transformation and rethinking intercultural dialogue

The need for critical examination of established ways of thinking does not mean that they necessarily should be replaced – rather that to justify them on a forward-looking basis requires them to be revalidated in light of new concerns. Ensuring the right programmatic and operational connections between intercultural dialogue and social transformation will be assisted by scrutinizing habits of thinking with the intellectual instruments that are available to the SHS Sector. Challenging prevailing wisdoms and assumptions is, after all, an intrinsic function of the social sciences.

Although it has been widely recognized that culture plays an important role in social transformation by providing context and through its connection with practices of governance, and though it is accepted that constantly evolving articulations of the relations between culture, social structures and agency defines a complex interplay which is crucial for development, it could be argued that cultural factors – in particular intercultural dialogue – have played a token role in the way that social transformations have been addressed within the MOST Programme.⁹

Taking note of these historical gaps, which correspond to the ways in which the programmes have evolved separately over time, points to a number of key issues that require further detailed attention in order to clarify what is at stake in establishing new connections between social transformations and intercultural dialogue and to design specific activities to respond to the challenges. Three are of particular significance:

- the relation between the descriptive and normative uses of “dialogue”;
- the connection between theories of change and analysis of social transformation;
- the relation between systemic analysis and complexity.

The subsections that follow consider each of these issues in turn.

⁹ The expert group meeting (EGM) on “*Global justice, poverty and inequality in the post-2015 development agenda*”, jointly organized by UNESCO and the International Social Sciences Council (ISSC) from 28 to 29 April 2014 in Paris, recommended that UNESCO should “*prioritize the mobilization of the social sciences to produce policy-oriented research findings aimed at elucidating the role that culture plays in understanding the context of development and thus contributing to enhance the standing of culture in the post-2015 development agenda*”.

Should MOST adopt a “normative plus” approach to intercultural dialogue?

The notion of “intercultural dialogue” has not primarily been elaborated within UNESCO as a scientific concept relevant to empirical situations of a certain kind. Rather, it has from the start been a normative construct, defined as follows: “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect”.¹⁰ However, dependence on such a normative vision of intercultural dialogue is not sufficient to transform intercultural dialogue into an effective policy-making instrument in the context of MOST.

It is clear enough that a dialogic approach to the tensions arising from diversity, difference, pluralism etc. is consonant with key values by which UNESCO defines itself. However, value coherence does not, in itself, provide any assurance that such tensions can be adequately managed through such dialogic means. Policy-makers will reasonably demand “proof” that building intercultural competences, for instance, can make a difference in concrete policy areas, especially as regards conflict resolution. Policy-makers need policy advice that it is not only “correct” in the sense of having the “right” moral argument (normative dimension) but also “workable”, in the sense of being something practical which could be applied with some degree of feasibility.

Thus, addressing intercultural dialogue in connection with social transformation will require a “normative plus” approach. In other words, a framework that takes into consideration the normative dimension of intercultural dialogue but that also encompasses the “phenomenological” dimension of intercultural dialogue, as an observable phenomenon the occurrence of which does not inevitably depend on the materialization of value-based propositions. That is, examining intercultural dialogue as something that might occur even in the absence of preconceived ideas about dialogue because it can result from practical necessity, arising from “learning by doing”.

Should MOST adopt “theories of change” based on a sociocultural approach in order to address social transformations?

The second issue that should be considered is the “theories of change”¹¹ that should be used in the context of the MOST Programme, taking into consideration the incorporation of intercultural dialogue within the thematic content of the Programme.

The core goal of the MOST Programme is the conversion of knowledge into transformational policy advice: using ideas to change reality. Therefore, “theories of change”, generally understood as the frameworks that identify how and why specific transformations will occur as the result of suggested ideas, are crucial in implementing the MOST Programme. An improved understanding of “theories of change” and of the difficulties in elaborating them would allow the Secretariat of the Programme to put forward its best assessment of what it is assumed that will happen, given what has happened before and based on current analysis. By making explicit the full chain of causal linkages from planned intervention to expected impacts, “theories of change” are clarifying first steps and foundational ideas of programming, and they can be also powerful communication tools.

Bringing intercultural dialogue into the “change hypothesis” and “change strategies” of the MOST Programme demands a second type of expansion, in addition to the “normative plus” approach. Current MOST frameworks are culturally “thin”, which raises the question whether “theories of change” based on a sociocultural approach would be more “fit for purpose”, especially with respect

¹⁰ UNESCO. *Intercultural Competences. Conceptual and Operational Framework*. 2013.

¹¹ Stein, Danielle and Craig Valters, “Understanding Theory of Change in International Development: A Review of Existing Knowledge”, Justice and Security Research Program (JSRP) and the Asia Foundation (TAF), August 2012.

to patterns of social transformation driven by or closely related to cultural diversity. That process of reflection would require, at least, the active contribution from a type of sociological theory – “socioculturalism” – that has not played thus far an active role in the MOST Programme.¹²

A redesigned MOST Programme (inclusive of intercultural dialogue and foresight) must deal with social transformations occurring in vast and complex sociocultural systems that encompass material, structural, and cultural elements. In that context, theorizations inclusive of culture that may have practical implications for programme delivery need to be incorporated into the way in which social transformation is conceptualized under MOST. One example could be the assessment of the contribution that textbooks and capacity-building on intercultural dialogue could make to social transformation, an issue illuminated by key theoretical categories of socioculturalism, such as “process ontology” and “inseparability”.¹³

At first sight, such categories may seem too abstract, but on closer examination different theoretical perspectives on the “learner” could have quite distinct practical implications as regards policy advice on the effectiveness of textbooks and capacity-building schemes. Assuming that the “learner” essentially internalizes knowledge that is “externally” produced leads to policy recommendations that are very different from those that assume that the “learner” actually appropriates patterns of participation in group activities, implying that learning transforms social practices. Socioculturalism can inform that type of discussion.¹⁴

Should MOST adopt the notion of intercultural dialogue as an “emergent property” in the context of social transformation?

One of the main benefits of incorporating intercultural dialogue into MOST is that it contributes to put in very clear perspective the complexity of social transformation. In that sense, at least two issues deserve emphasis: a) social transformation is about change in complex social systems that are largely unstable, unpredictable and co-evolving in interaction with other systems; and b) addressing complexity demands the adoption of “systems thinking”.

This is entirely new to the MOST Programme but that discussion is required whether “systems thinking” should now become the standard conceptual paradigm of the Programme rather than an optional analytical approach. If so, the stakes would not be merely theoretical: there would be practical implications for the MOST Programme.¹⁵

If the social problems of concern to MOST are related to complex social systems that are inherently unpredictable, discontinuous and shaped by local context, there are a series of practical implications in the following areas:

¹² It is not being suggested that socioculturalism needs to be used over any other theoretical approach but that it should be part of the reflection. See Archer, Margaret S. and Dave Elder-Vas. “Cultural systems or norm circles? An exchange”, *European Journal of Social Theory*, February 2012, vol. 15 no. 1 93-115; Archer, Margaret S. *Culture and Agency. The Place of Culture in Social Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1996; Giddens A. *New Rules of Sociological Method*, Polity Press, 1991.

¹³ Sawyer, R. Keith, “Unresolved tensions in sociocultural theory: analogies with contemporary sociological debates”, *Culture Psychology*, September 2002 vol. 8 no. 3 283-305.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ A reference point for discussions on complexity and systems thinking within MOST, could be given by the ongoing work on complexity theory and international development by social scientists such as Ben Ramalingan, Duncan Green, John Young, Harry Jones, and Owen Barder. Of particular interest are Ben Ramalingam’s 2012 book *Aid on the Edge of Chaos*, and his blog under the same title; Richard Hummelbrunner and Harry Jones “A guide for planning and strategy development in the face of complexity”, Duncan Green’s OXFAM blog “From Poverty to Power”; Owen Barder’s blog “Owen Abroad”; and the work done by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on the value of complexity theory for improving performance in delivering development through international cooperation.

- notions of causality (change from linear to non-linear perspectives);
- analytical methods (change from discrete multi-level analysis to holistic analysis);
- programming notions (questioning “results-based management”, as it is currently practiced¹⁶); and
- the very conception of MOST intervention (entailing a change from “We all see there is a problem, and we know how to fix it; let’s coach you on what to do” to “We all see there is a problem, but we are not sure how to fix it; let’s work something out together”).

One of the themes that should be discussed by the MOST Programme, in light of cutting-edge debates in the social sciences, is whether intercultural dialogue can be addressed as an “emergent property” of co-evolving social systems the environment of which is all other systems. In other words, can intercultural dialogue (both as a norm and as a set of socially embedded practices) be analyzed as a manifestation of how systems respond to changes in their environment, whether in isolation or as a manifestation of mutual impact (co-evolution, when several systems change in an interrelated manner)?¹⁷

The discussion of well-documented concrete cases could assist in facilitating such discussion within the MOST Programme.

For instance, in the case of conflicts in multicultural contexts (e.g. nomadic cultures coexisting with sedentary cultures, as in many countries in Africa), intercultural dialogue may develop as an “emergent property” of the co-evolution of different systems (cultural, economic, environmental, political, legal, etc.). Conversely, conflict might arise due to the unpredictable impact of changes occurring in given systems, for example the extraordinary pressure that climate change and the impact of agribusiness can exert on the well-being of nomadic groups already living under some of the most fragile socio-economic and environmental conditions of the planet.¹⁸

Intercultural dialogue is clearly not the only the only possible “emergent property” in such configurations: enforced settlement policies, or violence, could also be outcomes of co-evolution. However, as noted above, even the absence of empirical dialogue is shaped in part by the background availability of the norm of dialogue. In other words, using intercultural dialogue to influence peaceful outcomes requires a holistic understanding of the complexities that might be involved in the process. Conversely, knowledge deriving from oversimplification of reality is unlikely to produce effective policy advice. For instance, as shown by an extensive literature, inappropriate policy recommendations could result from mislabeling as “cultural”, “religious” or “ethnic” certain conflicts that are in fact much more complex, and often entangled with powerful socio-economic dynamics.

¹⁶ The Results Based Management (RBM) approach has been the subject of intense criticism within the larger discussion on how the “value/results-driven” agenda to which it is related is poorly equipped to assess complex development issues. In that sense, RBM is criticized on the ground that it is associated with linear thinking in which development is conceived as objectively knowable on condition it is broken down into discrete and small bits. RBM has indeed been criticized by reviews commissioned by the UN system, even though it is among the larger users of RBM in the world. A report produced by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services in 2008 concluded that “RBM in the UN has been an administrative chore of little value to accountability and decision making” (document A/63/208, 22 September 2008). Those findings were confirmed by a 2012 UN-wide evaluation on RBM (Angela Bester, “RBM in the United Nations Development System: Progress and Challenges”, July 2012). It seems paradoxical that, in the face of such assessments, RBM should continue to be the programming tool of choice in the UN system.

¹⁷ Walby, Sylvia. “Complexity theory, systems theory, and multiple intersecting social inequalities”, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Volume 37 Number 4, December 2007, 449-470.

¹⁸ UNDP Sudan (2006). *Nomads’ Settlement in Sudan: Experiences, Lessons and Future Actions*.

3. Delivering evidence-based policy advice under pressure and complexity¹⁹

Integrating intercultural dialogue and “systems thinking” into MOST would present two immediate “technical” challenges to the programme: first, how to achieve the required heightened transdisciplinarity, which seems to elude academic systems entrenched in disciplinary silos; and secondly, how to effectively translate complexity and “systems thinking” into policy-making without alienating policy-makers by use of unintelligible jargon? It will be noted that these issues are not determined by the need to integrate intercultural dialogue into the thematic and programmatic scope of MOST. They arise in essentially the same within the traditionally circumscribed perimeter of MOST. However, reflection on intercultural dialogue provides an excellent opportunity for thoroughgoing rethinking of established ideas.

The first challenge would require MOST to pay much closer attention to the institutional academic barriers that obstruct transdisciplinarity in the social sciences. The second challenge would entail a potentially far-reaching revision of the conceptions and concrete mechanisms within MOST to support policy-making.

With respect to the first problem, the MOST Programme, given very limited resources, may need to choose between two operational approaches. One would engage MOST frontally in reform of academic social science systems, for example through broad reviews of national science systems. It may be unrealistic in practice, though experimental pilot approaches may be envisaged. An alternative, less resource-intensive approach might involve supporting the work of individual or group “boundary crossers”: in other words, instead of fighting institutional inertia, supporting incremental institutional change through “positive deviance”.²⁰

The solution to the second problem might be more difficult. It requires, as a first step, internal discussions through the mechanisms of MOST, in particular under the aegis of SAC, on several key questions that do not have obvious answers:

- How should MOST henceforth interpret the “research-policy nexus”, building on but at the same critically interrogating its own legacy? As “providing advice” or as “advocating specific changes to policy”? There is a fine line between the two, but the consequences of choosing one over the other could have significantly divergent impacts. In some cases, input from research to “evidence-based policy-making” is welcome when it confirms predetermined policy orientations, but less so when researchers challenge such orientations.²¹
- Should MOST focus on knowledge production or on knowledge absorption? Would it be feasible to address both, given resource constraints?
- Should MOST adopt a “high volume/low knowledge” model or a “low volume/high knowledge” model? With respect to both options, what are the implications in terms of knowledge management practices and tools?

¹⁹ This section draws heavily on the discussions and documents hosted by OXFAM’s blog “From Poverty to Power”, written and maintained by Duncan Green.

²⁰ Succinctly defined by Ben Ramalingan as “to look at those people who are deviant in a positive direction, and who are prevailing when the conventional wisdom says that you can’t” (See Ramalingan’s blog “Aid on the Edge of Chaos”, 8 February 2011, <http://aidontheedge.info/2011/02/08/a-qa-on-positive-deviance-innovation-and-complexity/>)

²¹ The case of how policy-oriented social-science research on mining activities in Africa and North America is being obstructed was highlighted during the expert group meeting (EGM) on “Global justice, poverty and inequality in the post-2015 development agenda”, jointly organized by UNESCO and the International Social Sciences Council (ISSC) on 28-29 April 2014 in Paris.

- Should MOST maintain an operational approach that essentially assigns research tasks to academics in the expectation that the findings of research might be understood and applied by practitioners? Might it not be more fruitful to experiment with “co-production”?²²

How should MOST address what policy-makers expect from research?

The social systems which are supposed to be transformed through policies are complex, but policy-making – while policy-makers clearly recognize complexity because they deal with it every day – is not interested in complexity theory in itself. “Selling” complexity to policy-makers is likely to fail if the arguments do not squarely address the specific interest that policy-makers normally have concerning any piece of advice originated in academia: how that advice might enable them to adopt correct policy decisions in situations that are unreliable and unstable, usually under time pressure?²³

In simpler terms: the promise of complexity – from the perspective of policy-makers – is summarized in the possibility of achieving a higher rate of successful decisions on the basis of the strongest point that can “sell” complexity: *adaptability*.

In general terms, policy-makers will be interested in social science knowledge that could assist them in navigating the tradeoffs of policy-making, especially in the context of development programmes.²⁴

1. Policy advice on how to scale up interventions (maximizing the number of beneficiaries);
2. Policy advice on how to apply policies in complex systems (unpredictable and shaped by local context);
3. Policy advice on how to measure and attribute change (capacity to verify that change happened and that it was the consequence of a given intervention).

Tradeoffs exist, because in the majority of cases, policy interventions do not simultaneously tick all “three boxes” (complexity, scale, and measurability/attributability). For instance, there are interventions in complex systems that can be attributable but that cannot go to scale due to the crucial role of context (i.e. local governance); while there are interventions in complex systems that can go to scale but that are difficult to attribute to specific interventions (i.e. strengthening civil society).²⁵

There are two other issues that MOST needs to consider as regards what policy-makers expect from research: the exact meaning of “evidence” in the context of the issues with which MOST is concerned, and the distinct “policy contexts” under which “evidence” would be produced and utilized. It is important to emphasize that “evidence” is a contested concept. It is not sufficient to state that the MOST Programme supports “evidence-based policy-making”, because it is first necessary to clarify the following questions:²⁶

²² For possible MOST discussions on “co-production” it could be appropriate to refer to the work done by the Institute of Development Studies and the experience of the “Farmers Field Schools”. The recent work of authors like Bina Agarwal, John Gaventa and Andrea Cornwall could be useful.

²³ See Andy Sumner, Nick Ishmael-Perkins and Johanna Lindstrom “Making science of influencing: assessing the impact of development research”, IDS, 2009; and John Young and Enrique Mendizabal, “Helping researchers become policy entrepreneurs”, ODI Briefing Paper No. 53, September 2009.

²⁴ See Duncan Green, “The Aid trilemma: are complexity, scale and measurability mutually incompatible?”, <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/the-aid-trilemma-are-complexity-scale-and-attribution-mutually-incompatible/>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ For an interesting discussion on the meaning of “evidence” in the context of policy-oriented social science research, see Katya Fels Smyth and Lisbeth B. Schorr, “A lot to lose. A call to rethink what constitutes ‘evidence’” in “Finding Social Interventions that Work”, Working Paper Series, January 2009, Harvard Kennedy School, at <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/ocpa/pdf/A%20Lot%20to%20Lose%20final.pdf>.

- Can performance with respect to predefined objectives (what “works”) always be accepted as good “evidence” with respect to the design of appropriate policies? Or should an evidence approach also involve critical assessment of objectives?
- Is “evidence” (scientifically validated) a solid foundation by itself for guiding policy-making? What else might be needed?
- Should social science deliver “evidence” to policy-makers or rather “enough evidence”? In principle, adopting a “robust determination of effectiveness” regarding policies does not require access to all evidence that might be available – which implies considerable time and resources – but access to adequate evidence that might be critical for the specific decision to be taken).

On the other hand, MOST cannot be satisfied with the blanket assumption that governments “want” policy advice based on scientific knowledge. Rather, specific policy cultures may need to be fostered. It would thus be more appropriate to identify the different “policy contexts” under which “evidence-based policy-making” could occur.²⁷

How should MOST address what policy-makers need to do?

Realizing the benefits of embedding “systemic thinking” in the MOST Programme, favoured by the thematic incorporation of intercultural dialogue, requires the Programme to address not only what policy-makers expect from researchers but also what policy-makers need to do with research findings. MOST therefore needs to elaborate, extending its previous work, the “value proposition” that it could submit to governments, which implies addressing difficult and controversial political issues that are informed by but not reducible to research-based evidence. Among such issues, on which it may or may not be possible for MOST to adopt an institutional position, are the following:

- whether inequality, poverty and exclusion are political conditions, entailing that solutions to those problems must be based upon transformations and redistributions of power;
- whether governments have a responsibility to empower people in order to change the relations of power that have been keeping people in poverty?
- whether empowerment can be achieved simply by setting out, in advance, a blueprint and then implementing it, or whether a more comprehensive and adaptive “empowering approach” might be required.

In addition, on the basis of the same substantive concerns, certain questions need consideration that bear more directly on what should be done within the MOST programme itself. Two deserve particular mention here:

- Should MOST continue to accept the mantra of “best practice” solutions or embrace alternative approaches, such as “Problem-Driven Iterative-Adaptation” (PDIA)?²⁸
- Should MOST prioritize Ministerial Forums and MOST Schools as modalities of intervention aimed at strengthening the research-policy linkage, or might different modalities of intervention, more focused on empowering people, be required?

²⁷ Some studies have proposed a five-part typology in this regard: 1. Clear government demand; 2. Government interest in research, but leadership absent; 3. Government interest in research, but with a capacity shortfall; 4. A new or emerging issue activates research, but leaves policy makers uninterested; 5. Government treats research with lack of interest, or hostility. See Fred Carden, “Knowledge to Policy: Making the Most of Development Research”, 2009, based on research of the experience of international projects implemented by the IDRC (Canada), at <http://idl-bnc.idrc.ca/dspace/bitstream/10625/37706/1/IDL-37706.pdf>.

²⁸ See Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, and Michael Woolcock, “Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)”, Working Paper 299, June 2012, Center for Global Development.

Another challenge that the MOST Programme needs to address is the incorporation of a more nuanced perspective, based on current developments in the social sciences, as regards the application of a “rights holders” and “duty bearers” approach to MOST programming. Some of the issues that should be considered are that politics and power are not binary affairs (government vs. civil society) but driven by complex coalitions; and that civil society is not monolithic but “granular”.²⁹

How should MOST evaluate its programme?

Especially with a view to effective integration of intercultural dialogue and foresight, more sustained reflection would be needed on the evaluation of the MOST Programme and/or its distinct components/activities. Before dealing with “what” will be measured and “how” things should be assessed, it would be crucial to discuss within SAC, and in light of current social science knowledge, “why” the Programme needs to be evaluated.

As discussed above, the problem of “attribution” is very important for the operation of the MOST Programme. Strictly speaking, from the perspective of social transformations, many of which “happen” without being planned or designed, the “big question” is not whether research is being incorporated into policy-making. Rather, it is whether the projected social transformation occurs as the result of the specific policy advice that was given based on research.³⁰ In the end, the MOST Programme is all about collective learning. This in turn, given the discrepancy that may exist between programmes based on “systemic thinking” and a “results based management approach”,³¹ it will be important to discuss whether monitoring and evaluation should take precedence over learning in a programme like MOST?

“Proving” that the MOST Programme would be capable of delivering previously agreed results should not be more important than learning how to improve the Programme. Dealing with complexity needs constant feedback, adaptation, and improvement. In that sense, failure is an important source of learning although it could be a “nightmare” in terms of accountability. How should “failure” be treated in the context of a programme such as MOST?

4. Ways forward: three suggestions

In light of the analysis proposed in this document, three concrete proposals for short-term programming may be advanced.

²⁹ See Duncan Green, “What’s missing from the ‘Active Citizens + Effective States’ formula in From Poverty to Power?”, <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/whats-missing-from-the-active-citizens-effective-states-formula-in-from-poverty-to-power/>.

³⁰ Programme evaluation in the field of international cooperation for development is currently the subject of lively discussions, in particular related to complexity and context. The MOST Programme might consider adopting “systematic review” as its “gold standard” for assessment and evaluation. The work of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) could be utilized as a reference.

³¹ As noted previously, criticism of RBM does not represent a complete rejection of a “results agenda” but a call to apply it in a way that is relevant to complex and uncertain situations. What is needed is to “*think through the problem, the context and the intervention at hand ... There is no contradiction between an iterative, experimental approach and a central place for results in decision-making: on the contrary, a rigorous and energetic focus on results is at the heart of effective adaptation*” (Quoted from Ben Ramalingam’s “*Aid on the Edge of Chaos*”).

Develop a MOST framework for “implementation gaps”

The MOST Programme does not currently have a tool for providing comprehensive guidance for planning policy advice, nor a rigorous framework for identifying the most favorable “entry points” for programming. Developing a framework for “implementation gaps” – defined as the gaps that arise when institutions or policies do not have impact on the ground – will make it possible to focus on supporting the implementation of programmes to which Member States have already agreed, increasing the optimization of “invited spaces” rather than trying to create new ones. This concern is all the more important that issues such as intercultural dialogue and foresight give rise to different implementation issues than more familiar MOST areas such as social policy.

Launch a MOST series of “convene and broker” intercultural dialogues focused on co-producing policy advice for the solution of concrete conflicts

Based on the application of the framework for “implementation gaps”, MOST could convene and broker a series of discussions among local players to resolve blockages to collective action related to specific issues in ways that reflect and adapt local traditions and values. MOST could support the application of “participatory institutional appraisal” and other high quality social science tools and resources.

The inclusion of this activity in MOST programming would be a concrete contribution to a more effective performance of the lead role entrusted to UNESCO by the UN General Assembly resolution 67/104 for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). In principle, that could assist in the articulation of UNESCO’s intersectoral work concerning the Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures which; ideally, should not be absorbed by high-level discourse but involve tangible contributions to the solution of concrete conflicts (i.e. real-life social transformation) through intercultural dialogue.

Establish a MOST “Research and Policy Initiative” relating the linkages between overarching strategic objectives

Such an initiative could focus on understanding how policy processes operate in the four overarching areas that define the strategic mission of UNESCO (peace, eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue). The basis for launching it could be the accumulated experience of MOST with Ministerial Forums, MOST Schools and other activities, from which responses could be derived to two key questions: how research and policy have been integrated in development practice, in the MOST context; and what the Organization can learn from that experience. A relevant reference for the design of the initiative could be the work of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) with its Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme.³²

³² See <http://www.odi.org.uk/programmes/rapid>.

Incorporating foresight in the MOST Programme Overview of issues, questions and challenges³³

1. Introduction

The idea of “social transformations” is inherently about the future. However, recent evidence shows that the nature of the future and how to think about it remain largely unarticulated for both social scientists and policy-makers.³⁴ Lacking well-developed theories of how anticipation influences what is perceived and what is done makes it more difficult to engage with the opportunities and threats of transformation. Furthermore, this lack of both theoretical and applied understanding of anticipatory systems may be one of the sources impeding the use and effectiveness of social science research for policy formulation and implementation.

Fortunately recent advances on a range of different fronts, from university-based initiatives³⁵ to grassroots efforts, have started to fill the gap in understanding anticipatory systems. The MOST programme is well positioned to take advantage of these activities, including developments in complexity and systems theory, data creation and collection methodologies, and specifically the theory and practice of anticipatory systems. Such work can be integrated into the analytical and policy work of the MOST programme in a variety of ways, from encouraging further research and experiments with innovative policy formation processes to fostering the creation of technical networks and new communities of practice.

2. The trouble with trends

The fairly self-evident connections between social transformations and the future can easily be misinterpreted, as if the main issue for understanding and response to social transformations was to identify present trends and extend them into the future in order to define what exactly needs to be “managed”. This very common approach raises three methodological difficulties that require more careful and more systematic examination.

1. Trend analysis is, by its very nature, deterministic, and thus clashes with the idea that the future might be managed and thereby shaped. This clash should not be overstated, of course: there is nothing absurd in the idea that future paths will be chosen within the constraints of certain macro-trends that are largely resistant to deliberate collective action (e.g. availability of primary energy sources, demography). On the other hand, it is not empirically obvious that such trends are in fact fixed over the long period. Past experience shows a tendency to underestimate the potential for change even in apparently rigid systems, and while such change may be “sticky” (due to inertia, in particular of infrastructure, and to lags built into phenomena such as demography), it is nonetheless

³³ Background discussion paper submitted to the MOST Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and circulated on the occasion of the joint meeting of the MOST IGC Bureau and SAC (10-11 June 2014).

³⁴ UNESCO, Scoping Global/Local Anticipatory Capacities, forthcoming.

³⁵ In 2013 the first UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Systems was established at Trento University.

dramatic over the medium term. Just as “the Stone Age did not end for lack of stone” (a dictum attributed to Sheikh Yamani), our future will be shaped as much by unanticipated ruptures as by extrapolated trends.

2. Trend analysis has a methodological bias towards continuity, even though we know that the future will be shaped by disruption and in particular by exceptional periods of fundamental transformation. In a very simplistic but nonetheless convenient way, transformation in this sense can be defined by the synchronization of three dynamics that usually proceed separately: those of technology, of ideas, and of social and political forms. Such synchronization, which is inherently disruptive, reflects both the latent connections between technologies, ideas, and forms, and their very different rhythms of change. What this implies is that fundamental transformations (as opposed to routine change) may escape management entirely, if management is interpreted as the application of certain established ideas within stable social and political forms. This possibility needs to be considered all the more seriously that it constitutes a strategic challenge for the MOST programme.
3. The idea of trends that can be extrapolated, or at least anticipated, lends itself reasonably well to the analysis of technology – though even in this case the importance of disruption should not be underestimated. It is far less obvious, on the other hand, whether adequate methods are available – or even could be available – to identify trends in ideas and in social and political forms. Furthermore, the connections between them are so dense, and comprise so many feedback loops, that attempts to anticipate the structural consequences of specific ideological changes (or the ideological implications of assumed structural changes) tend to have very disappointing results. In addition, the scope for deliberate ideological production is in principle much greater than with respect to technology or even institutions. Ideas are not something that “happens” to societies: they are the stories societies tell to themselves (and to one another) and which thereby shape their existence. Attempts to shape the future take the form, in particular, of ideological production, and thus introduce a degree of reflexivity that defeats straightforward forecasting. It is in this sense that the “future” is – from the perspective of social transformations – less a temporal construct external to the “present” than a form of agency embedded in the present.

The point of these methodological caveats is not to deny the existence or relevance of trends, nor to suggest that they should not be studied. On the contrary, the idea of transformations that can be grasped and perhaps even shaped depends crucially on the assumption that change is not simply composed of random patterns but has a logic to it and therefore occurs within something like a system – or at least something that can usefully be understood for analytical purposes as a system. The suggestion is rather that the value of trends is less in terms of the future than in relation to the present, and to how it came to be, and to the properties of the system within which it is set. Finally, precisely because trends exist within a system, they can say little about change at the level of the system itself – which is precisely the domain of transformation.

3. Implications for MOST

From the perspective of the MOST programme, therefore, a foresight-oriented approach implies two distinct but coordinated tasks.

On the one hand – if one accepts the convention that change occurs within a system whereas transformation modifies the system itself – it is important to understand how anticipatory systems allow us to elaborate a systemic understanding of contemporary social challenges, including observable and emerging trends, that can underpin a shared vision of available knowledge, of policy requirements and of their nexus.

On the other hand, taking seriously the call to use human agency to act in light of transformational changes, a deeper understanding of anticipatory systems needs to be developed and applied.

In light of these considerations, the MOST programme could consider emphasizing the following areas of future-oriented work:

1. exploration of the evolving field of anticipatory systems and its relationship to transformation;
2. political discussion with respect to such issues, fully cognizant of the need for intercultural dialogue to take account of very different cultural perspectives on anticipation;
3. elaboration of methods and mechanisms to facilitate engagement in the comprehension and application of anticipatory systems by extended and dynamic stakeholder communities in order to ensure that documented lessons from real-world cases are available for consideration.

Creating new and dynamic spaces for using the future to analyze and act on social transformations relates closely to developing more adequate descriptions of the world we occupy and of the constitutive tensions that are shaping its development. From the perspective of MOST, this implies two related tasks: first to mobilize through MOST (meaning through academic stakeholders organically connected to MOST) the full range of available knowledge, and secondly to develop at the level of MOST (and in particular through the work of SAC) an agenda to prioritize certain key issues and bring them to the attention of the IGC.

If such a shared vision – not so much of specific outcomes as of constitutive tensions that will shape uncertain futures – can be developed at the intergovernmental level, then MOST has an established set of objectives, and to some extent existing capacity, to operate both as an ideas-driven forum and as a mechanism to provide tangible policy support.

4. Operational suggestions

In order to mobilize and enhance this capacity, a number of practical avenues can be envisaged:

- to consider convening Ministerial Forums specifically oriented towards the way the future is used to analyze and to act;

- to use existing expertise in the organization of Futures Forums in order to create a new dynamic around anticipatory systems for MOST Schools at national and regional level, with the objective in particular of engaging senior officials in rethinking the fundamental assumptions on which current policies are based;
- to develop within MOST a template for interventions at national level to facilitate futures-oriented thinking by national institutions, again building on expertise within UNESCO and across the many communities of foresight theory and practice around the world;
- to integrate into capacity-building and policy support at the national level, e.g. with respect to social inclusion, a foresight dimension that might in particular guard against the risk of addressing yesterday's problems with yesterday's ideas – not because foresight provides privileged knowledge about the future, but rather because it helps call into question what we think we know about the present.