Executive Board

Hundred and eighty-first session

181 EX/20

PARIS, 20 February 2009
Original: English

Item **20** of the provisional agenda

BIENNIAL EVALUATION REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES
AND RESULTS OF ALL UNESCO DECENTRALIZED BODIES

SUMMARY

Pursuant to 30 C/Resolution 83(I) and 174 EX/Decision 18, the Director-General presents the biennial evaluation report on the activities and results of UNESCO decentralized bodies which provides the findings from the evaluation of the eight Delivering as One pilots, called for in document 34 C/5 Annex V.

There are no additional policy implications of a financial or administrative nature.

There is no proposed decision.

INTRODUCTION

1.   One of the criteria for the implementation of UNESCO's decentralization reform is that decentralized bodies be subjected to periodic review by the Executive Board with a view to making decisions on their future (30 C/Resolution 83). To facilitate this, the Executive Board receives biennial evaluation reports on the activities and results of decentralized bodies. This report presents the summarized findings from an evaluation of the eight locations participating in the Delivering as One (DaO) initiative.

2.   In accordance with the 34 C/5 Evaluation Plan (34 C/5 Annex V), IOS undertook an evaluation of the eight pilot locations of the DaO initiative from September to December 2008. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify and analyse the key opportunities and constraints for UNESCO in working with United Nations organizations in a more integrated fashion. All pilot locations were visited, i.e. Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam. Extensive interviews were held in each location with the concerned government, the Resident Coordinator, other United Nations organizations, in particular other specialized agencies, UNESCO National Commissions and UNESCO staff involved with the initiative.

3.   This report builds on 179 EX/42 which provided (1) an update on United Nations reform processes and UNESCO's positions and involvement therein, with a particular emphasis on the DaO pilots and the 2008 UNDAF roll-out countries, and (2) a set of principles which was providing a framework for greater coherence, efficiency and quality of delivery at the country level. These principles, covering the four Ones (One Programme, One Budgetary Framework, One Leader and One Office), formed the framework for the evaluation undertaken by IOS.

4.   The One Programmes of the DaO pilots are just entering the implementation stage, with other aspects such as harmonization of business practices only in the initial stages. It is therefore premature to draw conclusions on the outcomes of the initiative. Overall emerging opportunities for UNESCO include: (i) possibilities to contribute to all One Programmes; (ii) assertion of thematic leadership in areas of UNESCO's competence; (iii) better programmatic involvement in non-resident situations; (iv) increased cooperation with other United Nations organizations; and (v) increased visibility.

ONE PROGRAMME

Participation and visibility

5.   The DaO initiative has afforded increased influence and visibility to UNESCO. Through the United Nations Country Team mechanism and the level-playing field provided by the DaO, UNESCO has operated in a constructive and open environment in which it can impart its sectoral expertise and bring to the table competencies and networks of a specialized agency. The analysis clearly points out that UNESCO's sectoral competencies are now being better understood across the eight pilots by governments, Resident Coordinators and other United Nations organizations and, in addition, are included in a more systematic and strategic manner than in earlier UNDAF documents.

6.   The success of UNESCO in influencing programming and improving its visibility was observed in all locations. UNESCO has taken on leadership responsibilities for a number of joint programmes in the majority of the pilot locations. UNESCO's involvement varies from being a heavily involved player leading several joint programmes to a player with one or two programmes as a non-resident agency (NRA).

7.   IOS observed several cases where UNESCO was leveraging the support of other agencies to be able to deliver programmes more efficiently. In Albania, UNESCO was benefiting from the

administrative support of UNDP for a significant project on culture and development. In Viet Nam, UNESCO was working with five other United Nations organizations to deliver a programme on crafts, local economic development and tourism. This ability to leverage was a direct result of the DaO initiative and augurs well for UNESCO to enhance its impact in other country programming exercises in the future through applying the principles and lessons learnt.

Joint programmes

8.   Development of joint programmes remains a challenge for the United Nations system, and in some locations, there is scope for much more. For example, in Albania joint programmes accounted for less than 10% of the total programmes. UNESCO itself can also take better advantage of the opportunities offered by joint programmes by being more proactive. In Rwanda, for example, UNESCO is not involved in any joint programmes, although its programmes are in the One Plan.

Capitalization on sectoral competencies

9.   As a specialized agency, UNESCO has particular expertise in specific fields. The DaO provides UNESCO with a unique opportunity to bring to bear its sectoral competencies to the initiative. The analysis found that there were opportunities for UNESCO to capitalize on its sectoral competencies and participate in joint interdisciplinary programmes. Some excellent examples of interdisciplinary actions were found, such as in Mozambique (programme entitled *Promotion of Youth Employment* in which the Education Sector works with five United Nations agencies), United Republic of Tanzania (programme entitled *Maternal and Newborn Mortality Reduction* in which the Education, Culture and Communication and Information Sectors work with other United Nations agencies) and Viet Nam (a World Bank-funded programme entitled *Hanoi Local Knowledge Project* in which three UNESCO sectors work with UNICEF), but there is scope for much more. The efforts made by UNESCO and the other specialized agencies to advocate their role in the process should continue to ensure that the specialized agencies' knowledge and skills are fully put to use.

10.   UNESCO's success and leadership was demonstrated in those locations where UNESCO's key competencies were most in demand by national governments and where capacities were available on the ground and backed up by Headquarters and responsible field offices. For example, UNESCO is leading or co-leading culture-related actions in Albania, Uruguay and Viet Nam and education-related actions in Pakistan, Uruguay and Cape Verde. UNESCO needs to make strategic choices about the extent to which it is involved in each pilot location given the fact that the most effective course of action may be to focus on two or three areas in which UNESCO can effectively add value, depending on available resources and national priorities. Given the importance of having capacities on the ground, UNESCO may wish to form small rapid deployment teams drawing on sector specialists to assist offices in locations for short-term assignments where UNESCO can play a significant role, but has capacity constraints.

Inclusiveness

11.   Three of the principles expounded upon in document 179 EX/42 relate to inclusiveness: inclusiveness should be achieved across the United Nations, with line ministries and with civil society. With respect to inclusiveness across the United Nations, a clear positive trend was emerging across the board. Particularly encouraging is that participation of NRAs in the pilot countries has increased. For example, in the case of Uruguay, 16 organizations had signed the One United Nations Programme in November 2007, compared with 10 agencies having signed the UNDAF in April 2006; NRAs accounted for most of the increase. This may be partly due to the fact that special efforts have been made to include NRAs in the process, including through creation of non-resident agency focal points in each of the locations. These developments are particularly pertinent to UNESCO given the limited number of national offices.

12. IOS found that the participation of line ministries was mixed. In general, line ministries participated under the direction of a designated central ministry, but the extent of their involvement varied among pilot countries. Better coordination between line ministries and central coordinating ministries could improve articulation of national priorities, enhance communication channels with United Nations organizations and strengthen overall national leadership.

13. The potential contribution of UNESCO National Commissions to common country programming processes in the UNCT has recently been taken up in an MoU with UNDP. The MoU specifies that the Resident Coordinator may invite a UNESCO National Commission member to attend certain UNCT meetings when relevant programming issues are being discussed and Commission participation is deemed useful. A recent workshop in Hanoi between field office directors and National Commissions of the pilots identified a number of opportunities for improving engagement.

Significant commitment

14. One of the key objectives of United Nations reform is to improve interactions between national government counterparts and the United Nations system. During the evaluation, governments in the pilot locations consistently stated that interactions with the United Nations system were becoming more effective, simpler and less time-intensive. The DaO process has, however, been very resource intensive in all locations and at Headquarters for all United Nations organizations involved. For UNESCO, the initiative has been particularly demanding for cluster offices and regional bureaux responsible for pilot locations (Dakar, Montevideo, Nairobi and Venice) to the extent that other cluster and/or regional responsibilities have had to be curtailed, at least in the short term.

ONE BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

15. The One Budgetary Framework has created significant opportunities for additional funding to be entrusted to UNESCO, and in almost all pilot locations UNESCO has been successful in securing additional resources through the One Fund and other sources. For instance, in the case of Uruguay, over the course of 2008-2010, extrabudgetary funding is expected to have increased by at least 45%, one third of the Office's total budget (RP and extrabudgetary). In the case of Rwanda, UNESCO secured significant funding for a range of programmes through the One Fund.

16. There are indications that accessing programme funds through the One Fund will prove to be more effective for individual agencies when compared to the practice of approaching donors individually for funding.

17. The One Plan process tends to have a longer time horizon than the UNESCO biennial planning cycle. To participate fully, UNESCO offices are required to commit to regular and extrabudgetary funding beyond the span of UNESCO's normal budget planning cycle. A key issue for UNESCO will be to sustain funding over several C/5 periods for multi-year programmes. Cases may also arise where One Plans extend beyond the current C/4 period, as is likely to be the case in Viet Nam from 2011.

ONE LEADER

Resident Coordinator

18. The role of the Resident Coordinator is being progressively defined, and there are good examples of positive leadership, respected by government and United Nations organizations. Nevertheless, the need for a conflict resolution mechanism has been identified and appropriate tools and processes are being put in place.

19. The DaO initiative has provided a useful forum to accentuate programme leadership and agency participation. The DaO has also provided a mechanism for United Nations organizations to coordinate their activities, find synergies and complement each other's work. Very few cases of competition, either in the past and present, were reported and respective Resident Coordinators were able to resolve tensions.

ONE HOUSE

20. Processes are still under way to harmonize operational procedures and movements to a One House and common services have only begun recently. To date, some cost savings in several service areas (such as insurance, telecommunications and travel) have been reported, but not in all locations.

21. The One House notion needs to be very carefully considered for UNESCO. UNESCO has been able to negotiate very advantageous terms for its offices in many cases, in terms of cost, location and building quality. Moves to a One House would incur one-off transitional costs, with a particular issue being how to integrate IT systems between Headquarters and those deployed in the One House location. These integration costs could be substantive and there needs to be full attention to identifying and clarifying the benefits, such as better information flows, improved coordination and enhanced knowledge sharing, from residing with other United Nations organizations in the same building. Analysis should also take into account the security dimensions identified by the *2008 United Nations Independent Panel on Accountability*.