



United Nations
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Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the Information Meeting
with the Permanent Delegations
on the UN Reform**

UNESCO, 9 March 2007

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I announced during the Executive Board Information Meeting in January, I have decided to hold this special information meeting in order to provide the opportunity for a full discussion of the Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence and its implications for UNESCO.

The last time we addressed this subject in any depth was at the October meeting of the Board. While we had then been able to anticipate some of the Panel's recommendations, many issues remained unclear. With the official launch of the Report, "Delivering as One", and the intense debate that has followed, we are now in a much better position to assess its outcomes.

Let me underline at the outset that I welcome and endorse the main thrust of the Report. It provides a positive, modern vision of multilateralism and the vital role of the UN system therein. It establishes as its guiding principle coherence of action among the different UN members, both globally and at the country level, and rightly places national ownership and leadership at the centre of all UN system activities.

Reform is critical, not for reform's sake, but for reinforcing the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the UN's work. This is especially important with regard to the UN's support to country efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals. The overall aim is to improve UN action in promoting peace and

development, eradicating poverty, preventing and responding to humanitarian crises, and protecting the global environment.

Following its publication in early November 2006, the Report has attracted widespread attention, exciting discussions within the UN and beyond. This intense scrutiny of the UN system has created valuable impetus for reform. It provides an unparalleled opportunity to improve delivery and responsiveness for the benefit of Member States.

Since the last session of the Board, UNESCO has continued its active engagement in the reform process. Only last week, I visited New York to hold talks with the new Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Asha-Rose Migiro, and the UNDP Administrator, and Chair of UNDG, Mr Kermal Derviş, as well as other senior UN officials.

This week, I hosted at UNESCO a meeting of the Heads of the five large Specialized Agencies – ILO, FAO, UNIDO and WHO – to identify how we can best work together to move the reform process forward. We are all committed to making UN reform a success, and to ensuring that the Specialized Agencies are able to bring their unique competencies fully to bear in support of national development.

The Panel's report has catalyzed much reflection. Having already generated intensive inter-agency consultations – especially around the "One UN" approach at country level – the Report's recommendations now need to go through the intergovernmental stage, notably consideration and action by the UN General Assembly. The Secretary-General informed me that he will be presenting his views to the General Assembly in the course of this month.

The Report recognizes the diversity of the UN system as a source of strength, vitality and relevance. Another strength of the UN lies in its sectoral expertise, which resides in the Specialized Agencies. This breadth and depth enables the UN to rally expertise to a multitude of complex and intrinsically multi-disciplinary issues arising from globalization and other challenges.

As you know, UNESCO is directly involved in each of the three areas addressed by the Report – development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

Within the domain of education, for example, we are custodians of the inclusive vision of Education for All (EFA). The six EFA goals extend beyond the MDG's of universal primary education and gender equality, to call for the provision of good quality education to every child, young person and adult. This is crucial not only for development, but also for conflict and disaster prevention, and sound management of the environment.

UNESCO provides direct support to countries in their efforts to realize the ambitious vision of EFA. The UNESCO Education Support Strategies (UNESS) define the specific type of assistance we can bring to countries from an integrated sector-wide perspective. As we move towards "One UN", we need to look at how UNESS could serve as the basis for common country planning documents for all UN agencies engaged in education.

UNESCO's role is also to coordinate global efforts to ensure coherent international action. In this regard, UNESCO has led the development of the EFA Global Action Plan, in partnership with UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank. The Plan provides a framework for multilateral support to countries in their EFA efforts. It also furnishes a solid basis for developing UN-wide education support strategies along the lines of UNESS. Kermal Derviş and I agreed during our last meeting in New York that the Plan will now be sent out by the Chair of UNDG to Resident Coordinators for its implementation, be it in the context of One UN Plans, UNDAFs or other joint country programming exercises.

I would like to add here that when we talk of the UN in general terms the World Bank is not included. However, in the context of EFA it is critical that the World Bank is integrated in common country action.

Aimed at achieving greater coherence and effectiveness, and based on the principle of country leadership, the EFA Global Action Plan offers a compelling sectoral example of the UN "delivering as One".

Let me also highlight that UNESCO is, among others, committed to promoting the inclusion of cultural components in One UN Plans, new UNDAFs and revised versions of ongoing UNDAFs. While its significance has not always been recognized by our partners, culture is integral to human development, conflict

prevention and humanitarian relief, as well as to achieving a sustainable approach to the environment.

The Culture Sector is already working with colleagues in the field to formulate key messages on the contribution of culture to these areas, and to convey them to national governments and our development partners. The recently announced Spanish Fund for the Achievement of the MDGs, co-managed by Spain and UNDP, augurs well in this regard. It explicitly envisages funding, not only for the pursuit of the MDGs, but also for projects that address cultural diversity and development. At the invitation of UNDP, UNESCO collaborated in drawing up draft Terms of Reference for culture-related proposals to be submitted by UNCTs. We will provide the best possible backstopping to our staff in the field to succeed in this endeavour.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, UNESCO welcomes the Report's recognition of the importance of greater coherence in the transition from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction and development in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, as well as the need to address the root causes of conflict.

I believe that ensuring a smooth transition from relief to recovery and development is critical. UNESCO's own action addresses the human and institutional, rather than the physical, aspects of recovery and reconstruction. We promote a comprehensive approach in this area, providing educational, cultural and media services, as well as addressing threats to cultural and biological diversity. In addition, UNESCO seeks to make disaster prevention an integral part of post-disaster reconstruction by promoting early warning systems. The Indian Ocean Tsunami Early Warning System is a good example of this.

UNESCO is determined to strengthen its activities and involvement in humanitarian assistance, especially in the early recovery phase. In order to enhance our capacity to participate in the increasingly integrated approach to post-conflict and post-disaster situations, we are seeking membership on the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA). The latter provides strategic advice to the Secretary-General on the UN's humanitarian response.

As regards the environment, the Panel calls for coordinated multilateral action to promote environmental sustainability. I endorse the recommendation to strengthen environmental governance and to increase coherence. Specialized Agencies are

committed to further reinforcing cooperation on thematic bases and through increased partnerships with a dedicated agency at the centre, as proposed by the Panel.

Yet, I feel that there still needs to be a much more thorough analysis of current UN action in the environment. There is no question that an enhanced and streamlined system of global governance on the environment will require the strengthening of UNEP's coordinating role. It is certainly not acceptable to have over 600 independent multilateral environmental agreements, many with their own governing bodies and secretariats. UNEP definitely needs to be in the position to coordinate their implementation.

However, it would be an error to assume that the role of more than 25 agencies in this area should be merged into a single programme or organization. A number of Specialized Agencies have a clear and unique mandate in the environment, in addition to well developed operational and normative programmes.

This subject deserves more detailed examination, not least with respect to the effective self-coordinating efforts that already operate within the UN system (such as UN-Water and UN-Oceans, in both of which UNESCO plays a key role).

In this regard, I welcome the Panel's proposed independent assessment of international environmental governance within the UN system. I hope that its outcomes will help to improve the system's work, while acknowledging the many important initiatives that already exist.

In light of the above, UNESCO is working to establish a common position with a number of smaller Specialized Agencies (ITU, ICAO, IMO, UPU, UNWTO and WMO) on the Report's environmental recommendations, under the leadership of WMO.

One of the transversal issues addressed by the Report, which is of huge interest to UNESCO, is the best way to promote gender equality. For its part, UNESCO has already decided to make gender equality a priority for the duration of the 34 C/4. This will be reflected prominently in the planning and budgeting for the next biennium. Let me point out, however, that the structural adjustments proposed by

the High-Level Panel's Report only affect entities under the direct responsibility of the UN Secretary-General.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now wish to turn in more detail to the Report's major recommendation: that of establishing "One UN" at country level.

Progress is being made very quickly in this area. Moves towards greater cooperation at the country level were already underway before the Report's release, and these are being accelerated and built upon.

Since the publication of the Panel's Report, intensive consultations have taken place between UNDG members, Specialized Agencies and all organizations involved in the One UN scheme. Basic agreement on the way forward was reached at the joint UNDG management and programme groups retreat in New York at the end of January.

The 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) resolution of the UN General Assembly provides an umbrella under which we can act in implementing the "One UN" at country level. In particular, it has enabled the launch of eight pilots for working out the "One UN" concept in practice. The countries involved are: Viet Nam, Pakistan, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Tanzania, Uruguay, Albania, and Rwanda. As I said in January, we are committed to taking part in all eight of these pilots. We will play a particularly active role in those 5 countries where we have field offices. I have already sent a mission to Viet Nam.

The group of pilot countries is heterogeneous. It encompasses countries from all regions, of different sizes, and with varying types of UN presence. Clearly, one size will not fit all. The UN community must find different modalities of action and interaction.

I am therefore very pleased to see that such a flexible approach is gaining acceptance. The early stage of preparation for these pilots was marked by some rigidity. However, since the Report's launch there has been growing consensus at top decision-making levels on the importance of both flexibility and inclusiveness.

The leadership of Kermal Derviş has been particularly important in this regard. Yet, efforts are still needed to build full support for this approach across the entire system, in particular at field level.

It is equally important to clarify just what the notion of a “pilot” implies. The pilots should serve as experiments for trying out different modalities, drawing lessons and learning from mistakes. Only once these pilots have been evaluated – towards the end of 2007 – could we move towards scaling up certain approaches.

The pilots will focus on four different aspects of the “One UN” concept:

- The first is One Leader – an empowered UN Resident Coordinator, ideally delinked and “firewalled” from the dual identity of serving as UNDP Resident Representative;
- The second is One Plan/Programme – which will be pivotal for the entire exercise;
- The third aspect, and closely related to this, is One Budgetary Framework – this has the key objective of identifying funding gaps, to which the bilateral donor community would be called upon to make contributions through country-level coherence funds;
- And fourth, and where appropriate, One Office – this implies the merger of business and administrative practices, but does not necessarily mean a Joint Office.

Defining a common programme to support national development goals will be the core task for the UN system and serve as the main entry point for “One UN” processes.

The One Programme/Plan must make strategic choices, replacing the UNDAF approach of simply accumulating individual agency deliverables. It aims at improved coherence, better alignment with national priorities, stronger links to normative issues, and enhanced fund mobilization.

Each organization must be able to contribute to the implementation of the One Programme/Plan in its domains of competence, irrespective of the funds it can commit. This will be facilitated by the recent revision of the CCA/UNDAF Guidelines

by UNDG, which spell out the obligations of Resident Coordinators and country teams to integrate the sectoral expertise offered by Specialized Agencies, and not to erect artificial barriers to their contributions. In order for Specialized Agencies to effectively engage in common programming exercises, it is essential they maintain direct links with their line ministers.

An informal support group on the One UN has been established to oversee the implementation of the One UN pilots. I am pleased to note that UNESCO is part of this select group, which consists of 10 (out of the total of 28) UNDG members. Such membership grants us a strong basis upon which to help shape the entire exercise.

The group held its first meeting in Rome last weekend. The next meeting, scheduled for 19 April in Geneva, will be held at the level of Executive Heads.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN community as a whole has to demonstrate its relevance and credibility in a competitive environment that is increasingly focused on country delivery. At the same time it must continue to carry on the global tasks of the multilateral system.

Coherence must be ensured at all levels: intergovernmental, inter-agency, within each organization, globally, regionally and at the country level – as well as vertically among donors.

For UNESCO, one of the key challenges is to ensure that our field system can support more effective and coherent delivery in country. It is for this reason that I decided to bring forward the review of our decentralization strategy, initially foreseen for 2008/2009.

The Task Force in charge of the review was reactivated at the end of last year under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director-General, Marcio Barbosa. Its primary mandate is to identify the short-term adjustments and immediate measures that need to be taken to build and strengthen UNESCO's field capacity and accountability so that the Organization can effectively participate in One UN country activities. These measures will be taken under the existing decentralization framework and within the constraints of our regular budget.

The Task Force is well advanced in its discussions on putting into place accountability frameworks for each sector, such as the one already in place for the education sector, as well as a house-wide accountability mechanism for field operations. I am expecting these will be finalized by mid 2007 and operational before the next General Conference.

The Task Force is also developing policy guidance for both our field staff and the Resident Coordinators regarding UNESCO's substantive inputs to joint programming exercises, including One UN Pilots and CCA/UNDAFs for 2007. This will include emphasizing the Organization's comparative advantages in each of its fields of competence, as well as the links between UNESCO's global and normative work and its operational activities on the ground.

I am very pleased to see that there is now widespread acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining the feedback loop between the UN's global normative work and its action in country. As you know, this is something that I myself personally have been advocating throughout the discussions on UN reform.

A detailed mapping of the exact backstopping needs of the field offices involved in the pilots has also been launched. This will enable us to rapidly allocate the funds earmarked for country level programming in our current workplans. I have decided to increase these funds to 2% of the overall programme funds for the biennium. Among the measures required, one of the most important is the temporary reinforcement of offices engaged in joint UN programming exercises. Our ability to mobilize the expertise available at Headquarters, Regional Bureaux and Institutes in support of these offices will be vital.

The Task Force is also looking at various possible modalities for UNESCO's action in countries where we are non resident (NRA).

In this regard, we are very happy that UNDG has developed a support mechanism which we can draw on to include the Organization's core competencies and domains into the work of the UNCTs in countries where UNESCO is not present.

In the second phase of its work, after the next session of the General Conference, the Task Force will consider longer-term measures for strengthening our field presence within the new UN context at country level.

The work of the Decentralization Task Force is closely linked to the activities of the Working Group on UN Reform, which I set up last June under the leadership of Elizabeth Longworth, Director of ODG. This Working Group provides global guidance on UNESCO's response to UN reform. It identifies issues to be addressed and concrete action to be taken by the House, including programme sectors, administration and central services.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me remind you that the exigencies and implications of UN reform – and especially the “One UN” approach – were central concerns when preparing the draft 34 C/4 and C/5.

For every overarching objective and for every strategic programme objective in the draft 34 C/4, you will find expected outcomes that commit the Organization to deliver on its country-level mandate and operational functions.

A similar focus on the “One UN” exercise at country level is to be found in the expected results for the various main lines of action of the five Major Programmes in the draft 34 C/5.

In support of this, we will also continue our corporate training programme to build the skills, among both Headquarters and Field Office staff, to engage proactively and effectively in common country programming exercises, especially in the pilot countries.

As I have already said, we need to invest in awareness-raising and training programmes for Resident Coordinators and members of the UNCTs so that they will have a complete understanding of the entire range of our core competencies and domains of expertise. This will be facilitated by the preparation of UNESCO programming documents for individual countries, setting out the scope of action in which the Organization is engaged at that time. Such documents shall provide a good basis for the formulation of future deliverables in the context of UNDAF and One Plan exercises.

Let me also express my appreciation of the support given by some Member States through the provision of extrabudgetary funds, which will enable us to intensify our backstopping for the pilots under way.

The UN reform process has been put in motion, and is advancing fast. Seeing it through to success will depend on the support of all. Together, we must embrace the challenges ahead, so that UNESCO and the United Nations system as a whole can fulfil their important mandate. I particularly count on your support, as beneficiaries, but also as “owners” of the system, in ensuring that the full diversity and depth of expertise available across the UN is mobilized. This is essential if the UN is to effectively help its Member States meet the increasingly complex challenges of today’s world.

Thank you