



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

15 MAY 2009

Ref.: CL/3880

Subject: International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010)

Sir/Madam,

The General Conference of UNESCO, at its 34th session (34 C/Resolution 46), expressed the hope that 2010 would be proclaimed *International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures*. The United Nations General Assembly endorsed this proposal by adopting resolution 62/90 of 17 December 2007. One year later, the General Assembly invited UNESCO, "in consultation with Member States, and through extrabudgetary resources, to play a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the International Year ..." (resolution 63/22 of 16 December 2008).

The new mandate given to UNESCO by the United Nations is a sign of renewed confidence and is consonant with the missions with which the Organization has already been entrusted, particularly the *International Year for the Culture of Peace* in 2000 and the *Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations* in 2001. The new mission comes on the heels of a number of decisions by the Executive Board and resolutions of the General Conference of UNESCO, including 32 C/Resolution 47 on "New perspectives in UNESCO's activities pertaining to the dialogue among civilizations and cultures" (2003) and "the Plan of Action for the promotion of the dialogue among peoples and UNESCO's contribution to international action against terrorism" (2006).

With this renewed confidence, the General Assembly acknowledges the pioneering role and long-term work performed by the Organization which, in keeping with its Constitution, has always sought to "develop and to increase the means of communication between [...] peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives" so as to "construct the defences of peace in the minds of men".

Enriched by its extensive and regularly-reviewed experience, today UNESCO gives greater importance to this topic that is one of the main objectives of its Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013), which states that "the fostering of cultural diversity and of its corollary, dialogue, thus constitutes one of the most pressing contemporary issues and is central to the Organization's comparative advantage".

7 place de Fontenay
75352 Paris 07 SP, France
Tel +33 (0)1 45 68 10 00
Fax +33 (0)1 45 68 16 90

www.unesco.org

To Ministers responsible for relations with UNESCO

The year 2010 will provide a unique occasion to reaffirm the key ideas underpinning our Organization's commitment, based on the paradigm of a plural humanity where cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are mutually reinforcing and whose implications drive all UNESCO's programmes in the fields of education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information.

In this context, UNESCO is required to undertake consultations with a view to drafting a plan of action for preparations for the celebration in 2010. This plan will be a flexible and efficient companion tool, and will underline the added value of intercultural dialogue in local, national and regional policies. To this end, the Executive Board at its 181st session made the following observations and suggestions which you may use to guide your thoughts on the drafting of the Plan of action, which must:

- adopt a holistic approach which incorporates those of other agencies in the United Nations system, States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;
- take advantage of UNESCO's experience in the field;
- promote positive examples and original projects, particularly on the occasion of political and cultural events, at national, regional and international levels;
- launch a call to raise extrabudgetary funds to finance relevant projects.

The plan of action, inspired by these thoughts, must respond to a dual objective to raise the awareness of the international community of the virtues of diversity and intercultural dialogue, using specific examples to show that all cultures and civilizations derive from and feed into each other, and to fight for human rights and against new forms of racism and discrimination.

Our partners – National Commissions for UNESCO, UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs and UNESCO Associated Schools, Goodwill Ambassadors and UNESCO Clubs and Centres, as well as parliamentarians, locally elected officials, culture, education and the media professionals and youth organizations – are called upon to participate actively in this Year.

I should be grateful if you would send your comments in writing **by 30 June 2009**, preferably by email, to Ms Katérina Stenou, Director of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, at k.stenou@unesco.org (tel. + 33 1 45 68 43 03), with a copy to Ms Klara Issak, Programme Specialist, k.issak@unesco.org; (tel. + 33 1 45 68 47 62). In addition, you may wish to fill in the attached form which will be used to create a database of good practices for intercultural dialogue.

Your answers will be incorporated into the draft plan of action to be presented to the Executive Board at its 182nd session in September 2009, before adoption by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 35th session in October 2009.

I hope that your Government will associate itself fully with the preparations for 2010.

Please accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Koichiro Matsuura
Director-General

cc: Permanent Delegations to UNESCO
National Commissions for UNESCO

Enclosures: 34 C/Resolution 46
Resolution 62/90
Resolution 63/22
Form on good practices