



**General Conference**  
35th session, Paris 2009

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United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

Item 1.6 of the provisional agenda

35 C/43  
1 September 2009  
Original: English

**ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE SESSION AND  
REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE 34TH SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

**OUTLINE**

**Source:** Resolution 34 C/83.

**Background:** This document is submitted in addition to the customary C/2 document which details all organizational aspects of the session as recommended by the Director-General and the Executive Board.

**Purpose:** Following the request of the General Conference at the end of the 34th session, the President of the General Conference has endeavoured, through a large consultation process, to study the organization of its sessions with a view to making recommendations aimed at improving its structure and methods of work and to reinforce its role as supreme decision-making body in charge of determining the policies and main lines of work of the Organization. His report was finalized in time for the Executive Board (180 EX/INF.3) to take its recommendations into consideration when it began, at its 180th session (October 2008) to take up its responsibilities relating to the organization of the Conference.

The present document reproduces the report as presented in 180 EX/INF.3, without the annexes, supplemented by a summary of developments since October 2008, together with a proposed draft resolution.

**Decision required:** paragraph 4.

1. This report, while intended for the consideration of the General Conference, was finalized by the President of the 34th session, in time for its recommendations to be taken into account, where possible, by the Director-General and the Executive Board, in the context of their own respective responsibilities for the organization of the session.

2. At its 180th session, the Executive Board adopted a decision whereby, *inter alia*, it “Invites the Director-General to take the report into consideration and envisage incorporating those elements of the report which could beneficially be utilized in his preparation of the draft plan for the organization of the 35th session of the General Conference, to be presented at the 181st session of the Executive Board (...)” The Director-General’s comprehensive proposals, submitted to the Executive Board at its 181st session, drew inspiration from the President’s recommendations and the Board’s guidance and, with a number of adjustments (181 EX/Decision 32), were accepted, forming the basis for document 35 C/2 also considered under this agenda item.

3. While many of the Report’s recommendations could be taken into account in advance of the session, thus avoiding a delay in the implementation of what were largely practical suggestions coming within the purview of the Director-General’s responsibilities, other recommendations require proper examination by the Conference itself before any action is taken.

4. The conference may wish to adopt a resolution along the following lines at the close of its debates on this issue:

The General Conference,

Having examined document 35 C/43,

Applauds the President of its 34th session for the in-depth analysis and balanced recommendations he has presented, following wide-ranging consultations with Member States;

Appreciates the fact that both the Director-General and the Executive Board have already taken many of the Report’s practical recommendations into account for the preparation of the current session;

Approves its conclusions and recommendations.

**ANNEX**

**THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE  
REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE 34th SESSION**

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**Note:**

The present document reproduces the report as presented in 180 EX/INF.3, without the annexes. These annexes containing individual reports on the different issues contained in the Report can be consulted on document 180 EX/INF.3

## 1. FOREWORD

“Sixty years after its adoption, UNESCO’s Constitution is of enduring relevance”. Such are the opening words of the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013, unanimously adopted by the General Conference during its 34th session – which I had the honour to preside – and such is the commitment of Member States to the Organization and their conviction as to the significance of its mission. However, the world has changed enormously since the adoption of the constitutional text more than 60 years ago, and the Organization has regularly had to adapt itself to the changing environment in order to fulfil its mandate.

Consequently, UNESCO’s Member States, through its two governing bodies – the General Conference and the Executive Board – have consistently kept under review the institution’s governance and functioning and made the necessary adjustments over the course of the Organization’s 62-year history. Adapting its own methods of work to improve efficiency, yet preserving the necessary conditions for the fulfilment of its role as the supreme decision-making body of the Organization, has been a constant endeavour of the General Conference over the years. The Conference has often – and particularly during the last decade – entrusted its President with tasks related to the improvement of its functioning.

In this context, at the request of several Member States, I convened an additional meeting of the General Committee of the General Conference towards the end of its 34th session (on 31 October 2007) aimed at taking stock of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization of the work of the session in order to prepare for the 35th session. During this interesting and helpful meeting, the members of the General Committee unanimously encouraged me to establish a working group to formulate recommendations for the improvement of a number of aspects of the Conference’s organization. I acquiesced, for I sensed from Member States’ remarks that a window of opportunity was upon us for the making of some sensible and constructive changes.

Immediately following the closure of the session, therefore, in consultation with the different electoral and regional groups, I set up an informal working group composed of prominent and experienced Permanent Delegates to UNESCO (the composition of the Group can be found in Annex 1).

The Informal Working Group met five times, between November 2007 and May 2008. At its first meeting, the Group adopted its terms of reference, agreed on its methods of work and, on the basis of the comments made during the above-mentioned meeting of the General Committee, identified the major issues to be tackled. The Group agreed that any reflection should be conducted on the basis of past reform efforts, and particularly on the implementation of 29 C/Resolution 87 and 33 C/Resolution 92, respectively based on the recommendations made by the working groups led by my predecessors the late-lamented Torben Krogh and Michael Omolewa, not forgetting the pertinent work of my immediate predecessor, Musa bin Jaffar bin Hassan. Accordingly, it was decided that the state of implementation of previous recommendations and related obstacles and perspectives should be one of the major subjects to be analysed.<sup>1</sup>

The other four major areas that the Group decided to study are: (i) general policy debate: reform with a view to improving dialogue and exchange opportunities between ministers and policy-makers; ministerial round tables (timing, venue and participation, visibility); (ii) division of labour

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<sup>1</sup> In doing so, the Group also assisted me in fulfilling the responsibilities linked to 34 C/Resolution 88, through which the General Conference requested its President, together with the Executive Board and the Director-General, to assess the impact of the recommendations implemented to date and to pursue the implementation of the remaining parts of 33 C/Resolution 92, in order to present a consolidated report on the implementation of recommendations to the General Conference at its 35th session. The corresponding report is submitted to the General Conference in a separate document (reference not available at time of writing).

between the General Conference and the Executive Board in the preparation and content of General Conference sessions; and (iii) timetable of the General Conference: scheduling of subsidiary organs (Commissions and Committees) and other ad hoc structures (interdisciplinary meeting, joint meetings of commissions, etc.); articulation between official business and side events or events taking place during the session (General Assembly of States parties to the 1972 World Heritage Convention); and (iv) visibility of the Organization through the General Conference: role of Member States.

Following an initial exchange of points of view and extensive discussion during the first two meetings, it was decided to entrust a number of the members with the task of presenting individual reports on each of these areas. These reports contain an in-depth analysis of each subject by their respective authors and were duly examined and debated by the Group at its fourth and fifth meetings. Their final versions, which can be found in Annexes 2 to 6 to the present document, incorporated the main trends of the debates held by the Group as well as individual written comments received, and thus reflect consensus on a number of important issues reached by a wide-ranging group of experienced representatives of Member States from all regions.

I cannot but pay tribute to the commitment and to the quality of the contributions of the members of the Informal Working Group, and thank them all warmly for their continued support and willing collaboration. Particular praise and gratitude go to the different individual Rapporteurs, who spared no effort to deliver, in a short time, quality reports upon which the present document is largely based. Indeed, while the text itself generally reflects my points of view – and stems from my personal responsibility as President to report to the General Conference, upon its request – its authorship may actually be considered collective, based upon broad consultations and consensus-building in the spirit of the long-standing tradition of our Organization.

May I also take the opportunity to thank the Director-General for the continued support and contributions he has provided to the work of the Group, both personally and through his representatives, headed by the Deputy Director-General.

One of the subjects studied by the Group and which is of particular interest to me is that of the visibility of the Organization throughout its major event, the General Conference. As recalled by one of the distinguished Vice-Presidents of the 34th session during the aforementioned General Committee meeting, no other specialized agency is able to bring together such an impressive array of heads-of-State, ministers, high-level officials and personalities from all regions as UNESCO does at each session of the Conference. There is therefore room for improvement in order to take advantage of such an impressive gathering in the benefit of the Organization and its mission. Visibility is without question a key issue for the continued existence of any organization, and this applies most particularly to UNESCO, owing to its functions as a laboratory of ideas, clearing house and catalyst for international intellectual cooperation. Consequently, it is the interest and the duty of all Member States to contribute – individually and collectively – to enhance it through the appropriate tools and channels. I sincerely hope that, beyond the analysis of this issue and related recommendations contained in the present document, the underlying thrust of its observations will be appreciated and duly taken into account.

By the time this report is examined by the General Conference, I am confident that several of its recommendations may already have been taken into account both by the Director-General and by the Executive Board within their respective responsibilities for the preparation of the 35th session of the General Conference, and will thus shape the structure of the session if the Conference so decides. I sincerely hope that all Member States will appreciate the efforts made to render the Conference more manageable, interesting and pertinent, yet always keeping in mind that its first and ultimate goal is to determine the policies and main lines of work of our Organization.

George Anastassopoulos  
President of the 34th session of the General Conference

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – BUSINESS NOT AS USUAL

### *Altiori petamus<sup>2</sup>*

1. This report is born out of a shared recognition among Member States of the problems faced at the 34th session of the General Conference, combined with a strong willingness to work for much-needed change, an acknowledgement that many of the difficulties resulted from incoherencies among Member States themselves, and finally a sincere commitment to enhance the credibility of the Organization as a whole through a more effective and efficient organization of the proceedings of the foremost meeting of the UNESCO community.
2. As becomes clear in the detailed and in-depth analysis appearing in later parts of this report, as well as in the individual reports annexed hereto, a UNESCO General Conference has huge appeal and therefore enormous untapped potential to portray to the public, to governments, to civil society and to the media alike the value of the Organization, its ideals and main lines of action.
3. Without going so far as to endeavour to revolutionize UNESCO's fundamentals – a solid Constitution, and an institutional balance that does not particularly need to be further touched – there are a number of practical suggestions that can be made to improve the way the Conference works. This is what this report sets out to do.
4. But the Conference and its role and functioning cannot be isolated from those of the two other constitutional organs. All three interact through what has been called for years “the relationship between the three organs”, and any attempt to improve the functioning of the General Conference needs in particular the corresponding action at Executive Board level.
5. As explained in detail in the first part of the report, the governance and methods of work of UNESCO have often been reconsidered by its governing bodies, starting as far back as 1950, and continued – in a regular and consistent manner – since 1995. Indeed, the Organization saw that year the effective application of the 1991 Constitutional amendment concerning the composition of the Executive Board and, since that date, both governing bodies have regularly examined items on their agendas pertaining to the “relationship between the three organs”. However, the implications of this Constitutional amendment had not been sufficiently analysed to date. A holistic scrutiny of this major change and its consequences – together with the corresponding recommendations to adapt the working methods of the governing bodies to it – is one of the reasons why the present report may qualify as “business not as usual”.
6. There is general agreement about the fact that the General Conference must more fully play its role as supreme organ of the Organization, and its policy decisions should be of the superior level. However, the role of the General Conference as supreme policy-making body may only be fully affirmed if the Executive Board plays a more active, comprehensive and efficient role in relieving the General Conference of business not distinctively linked to the “orientation and main lines of work of the Organization”. Certain suggestions contained in the present report might create the wrong impression of diminishing the power of the General Conference, but in fact – taking into account the situation since the 1991 amendment – are aimed at enhancing its role and that of its high-level participants.
7. The presence and active participation of ministers is therefore crucial. If there is substantive input from them, and if they are given opportunity for interaction and dialogue, the Organization will benefit, and so will they. This is what is intended by the proposal to revisit the traditional General Policy Debate.
8. The proposed debate would thus be composed of two segments: national policy statements (in the traditional format of the General Policy Debate but with abridged speaking time and thus

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<sup>2</sup> Let us constantly strive for higher things.

total duration) and a parallel ministerial forum (three half-day sessions) aimed at providing actual opportunities for exchange between ministers.

9. In order to enhance the role played by heads of delegation, this first “ministerial” week would see the holding of few parallel events (apart from official visits of heads-of-State or government) and provide a number of facilities to make the best of their presence: meetings in regional groups, press and media opportunities, rooms for bilateral talks, etc. Furthermore, this first week would also be enhanced through a high-level opening ceremony and more solemn proceedings to fit the ministerial assistance, in the framework of a dignified fitting out of Room I.

10. In addition to the ministerial forum (devoted to general policy issues of a transversal nature), a “commission-level” ministerial round table (possibly on education) would also take place during the first week, as at present. A second “sectoral” round table could be organized during the second week, followed by the corresponding programme commission.

11. Apart from the necessary fine-tuning needed to incorporate the above changes (which affect in particular the ministerial segments) in the most rational way, the structure of the General Conference itself does not seem to need major changes and should remain as it is with a few, minor adjustments that are proposed in the report.

12. The subsidiary organs of the General Conference would remain as at the 34th session: the five committees foreseen in the Rules of Procedure and seven commissions. An additional, ad hoc drafting group structure might be created by the General Committee if need be upon request, to deal with issues that are difficult to handle. The report also contains a number of recommendations aimed at facilitating the business of commissions, concerning in particular the way they are run and the posts of Chairperson and Rapporteur.

13. In addition to the above, it has been proposed that an interdisciplinary meeting be held in 2009 as it was at the last session. Although the 2007 meeting failed due to insufficient preparation and lack of provision for real decision-making power, it has been considered that forward-looking debates, stemming from ministerial guidance, could be developed with an interdisciplinary thrust. This is particularly the case for the debates on the future C/5 and C/4 documents (or their adjustment in the framework of a rolling strategy) which are of the utmost importance to reinforce the role of the General Conference as supreme policy orientation organ. Effective decision-making would be ensured by the preparation of a draft resolution providing guidance for the preparation of the future programme, thus highlighting the role of the General Conference as the starting point of the programming cycle. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary structure would be the appropriate body to examine draft resolutions addressing multiple parts of the programme and budget (and thus attributed for examination to two or more commissions, with the ensuing risk of confusion and problematic timing for coherent decision-making) which were one of the difficulties encountered by the General Conference at its 34th session. While noting that the arrangements for enhanced policy debate at ministerial level do already address this problem in part since it is recommended that the themes chosen for the Plenary Ministerial Forum be of an interdisciplinary nature, there nevertheless remains a need for a structure to address the detailed programmatic aspects and craft a good and substantive draft resolution. This is indeed commission work and could therefore be assigned to an early joint meeting of the commissions. Alternatively, entrusting this task to the ad hoc drafting group under the guidance of the General Committee might be another way of solving this difficult problem.

14. The General Conference being a unique opportunity for the UNESCO community to meet at the same time and place, a number of activities running parallel to the official business have traditionally taken place at each session. This is a characteristic and essential feature of the General Conference, since these side events contribute to enriching it intellectually and provide learning and exchange opportunities for delegates and the Secretariat alike. However, it has been considered that too many side events took place at the 34th session, thus contributing to an atmosphere of confusion for the delegates. Quantity should be reduced in favour of quality, and a



lesser number of key events planned well in advance and scheduled in order to favour wide participation. The report contains a number of proposals in this regard, including with regard to the Youth Forum, the Civil Society Forum and the Exhibition. It also proposes useful recommendations to help the Director-General, for example, in the organization of the round tables, through the setting up of a small focus group consisting of a regionally balanced set of permanent delegates.

15. As was stated by one of the distinguished Rapporteurs, and a member of the Informal Working Group, the many proposals contained herein constitute a whole. They achieve balance together, and to unweave some of them would be to invalidate the whole. The General Conference is a huge and complex machine and it is not possible to consider individual elements of it separately, lest the entire set of proposals should come apart. The holistic view taken herein has one ultimate aim, to ensure that the General Conference of UNESCO achieves higher things.

### **3. ADAPTING TO THE ENVIRONMENT: 60 YEARS OF ATTENTION TO GOVERNANCE**

#### **Introduction**

16. As is normal in any democratic membership institution, the governance and methods of work of UNESCO have often been reconsidered by its governing bodies. The first part of the present chapter recalls the broad outlines of the main reviews undertaken throughout the history of the Organization and its second part focuses particularly on reform efforts since 1995. Indeed, it has been considered that 1995 is a significant watershed, since that year saw the effective application of a significant change in the composition of the Executive Board following the 1991 Constitutional amendment (whose consequences in terms of governance are the object of the third part), along with the creation of an ad hoc Working Group on the Structure and Function of the General Conference (“Krogh group”), which was the forebear of systematic reviews of the methods of work of the governing bodies right up to the present.

#### **3.1 Historical background until 1995**

17. More often than not, the purpose of reform measures has been to enhance separately the effectiveness, functioning and working methods of the General Conference or the Executive Board, or, with respect to the Director-General, the preparation, presentation and content of the documents relating to the programme and budget (and medium-term planning since 1970).

18. The first such initiative dates back to the period 1950-1952. Under the first version of the Constitution, the General Conference met each year, and took decisions “on programmes drawn up by the Executive Board”, which was “responsible for the execution of the programme adopted by the Conference” and prepared “its agenda and programme of work”. At the time, the Executive Board was composed of 18 prominent personalities elected by the General Conference (a number which was regularly increased since) and the number of Member States was not high (65 in 1952). In 1951, wishing to make savings in its operating costs, the General Conference decided to hold its sessions every two years and therefore requested the Director-General to prepare, with the Executive Board, the necessary amendments to the Constitution, including provisions to take greater account of the true role of the Director-General in the preparation and execution of the programme and budget, particularly within a biennial financial period, while preserving the Executive Board’s prerogatives.

19. Accordingly, in 1952, the General Conference adopted amendments to the Constitution which are still in force today: it is the Director-General who “prepares” the Draft Programme and Budget, which the Executive Board “submits”, together with its own recommendations, to the General Conference. The Executive Board remains “responsible for the execution of the programme adopted by the Conference”, and is furthermore authorized “having regard to circumstances arising between two ordinary sessions, [... to] take all necessary measures to ensure the effective and rational execution of the programme by the Director-General”. In this

connection, it should be recalled that ever since the early years of the Organization, the Executive Board has decided on the organization of work to be submitted to the General Conference at each of its sessions. Although this is not a provision of the Constitution or of the Rules of Procedure, it is an extremely useful practice, which helps the work of the General Conference to get under way very rapidly.

20. At its 12th session, in 1962, the General Conference invited the Executive Board to study “changes which it might be advisable to make in the relative functions and responsibilities of the organs of UNESCO” in order to enable them “to carry out more effectively the functions and responsibilities that are proper to them” and to report to it thereon at its 13th session. This matter was resubmitted to the Executive Board by the General Conference at each of its sessions until 1972. As a result of this dialogue between the two governing bodies, in which the Director-General naturally participated, a number of changes took place in the methods of work of the General Conference and the Executive Board.

21. It may thus be noted that while it was anxious to further concentrate the work of the General Conference by reducing its length and decreasing the volume of documentation, the Executive Board recommended in 1972 to the General Conference at its 17th session, to establish five programme commissions rather than the single programme commission customary until that time (subdivided into a number of sub-commissions and committees): this is the structure which is still in force today (with the addition of a sixth programme commission at the 34th session). Also in 1972, the Executive Board again came out in favour of maintaining biennial sessions for the General Conference.

22. It may also be noted that at its 67th session (1964), the Executive Board regarded “as the main problem the excessive workload borne by the three organs of UNESCO” and considered that “the best way of reducing the pressure of work on the three organs would not be to amend the Constitution of UNESCO, but to alter the character of the material and, more particularly, of the programme and budget documents, submitted to the General Conference and the Executive Board”. In addition, as early as 1966, the Executive Board expressed the wish that the General Conference pay greater attention to the Executive Board’s recommendations on the Draft Programme and Budget. This concern was subsequently reiterated on several occasions.

23. A new factor came into play in the late 1960s with the introduction in UNESCO of medium-term planning, as part of a reform affecting the whole United Nations system. It had previously been customary for the General Conference to adopt, in addition to its programme and budget for the forthcoming biennium, a resolution entitled “Preparation of the future programme” which was meant to provide the Director-General with a basis for the elaboration of the next C/5 document. Medium-term planning could provide a more systematic tool for anticipation “allowing a broad and thorough discussion to determine the Organization’s policies and its lines of work”, a concern which was to resurface later in the context of the Temporary Committee established by the Executive Board in 1984 (see below) and the Working Group on the Structure and Function of the General Conference set up in 1996 (see below).

24. The original approach to medium-term planning has gradually changed in the light of experience. The third Medium-Term Plan (1990-1995) was more concise than the first two, and was more like a general policy document than a programming document. The purpose was to help the General Conference to examine and adopt the main lines of thrust that would serve as a basis for programming through the C/5 document over the three corresponding biennia. It was in that same spirit that, for the period 1996-2001, the “Plan” gave way to a “Strategy”, in accordance with the recommendation made by the Executive Board to the General Conference.

25. At the same time, more interest was gradually displayed in the role of the National Commissions. They have thus become more involved in the preparation of the strategies and programmes. Since 1994, regional and subregional consultations have been held every two years for this purpose. The usefulness of these consultations was reaffirmed in the report of the above-

mentioned Working Group on the Structure and Function of the General Conference, which in 1997 approved the recommendations of the Working Group.

26. In 1984, following the notice of withdrawal from the Organization received from the United States of America, the Executive Board decided at its 119th session to establish a temporary committee whose mandate was “to present to the Board recommendations and concrete measures designed to improve the functioning of the Organization”. A large part of the work of the Temporary Committee was devoted to the functioning and decision-making procedures of the governing bodies, on which it made numerous concrete recommendations, which the Executive Board approved. These recommendations were basically aimed at bolstering the role of the Executive Board in the preparation of the sessions of the General Conference (focus, preparation of decisions, in particular concerning the C/5 document, organization of the General Policy Debate, etc.), and at rationalizing the organization and functioning of the Executive Board itself. As the Committee noted in 1985, these recommendations were heeded, beginning with the preparation of the 23rd session of the General Conference (Autumn 1985).

27. In this connection, the Temporary Committee strongly emphasized the usefulness of consensus as a decision-making procedure, and recommended “increased opportunities for consultation among Member States and between Member States and the Secretariat, particularly at the time of the preparation of the draft programme and budget (C/5 document) by the Secretariat and in any event before the draft programme and budget is considered by the governing bodies”.

28. This concern prompted the Executive Board, at its 131st session (1989), to recommend a change in the process of consulting Member States: with a view to the preparation of document 26 C/5 (1992-1993), the Director-General was invited to consult the Member States no longer by means of a questionnaire as previously, but by means of preliminary proposals based on the policy guidelines drawn up by the General Conference at its 25th session (1989) for the preparation of that document. At the same time, the Executive Board recommended further reductions in the length and workload of the General Conference. And beginning in the 1980s, there started a gradual but very appreciable reduction in the length of the General Conference, which has fallen from 32 days at the 23rd session (1985) to 16 working days at the 34th session (2007).

29. Similarly, the Executive Board decided a few years later, in 1992, to re-examine the frequency of sessions of the General Conference; this was done at its 141st session in 1993. The two alternatives considered on that occasion were either to maintain the biennial periodicity in force since 1952 or to go over to a three-year cycle. The arguments put forward in favour of such a move included the budgetary savings that would be achieved and the greater flexibility that would result with regard to the preparation, execution and evaluation of the programme. The arguments against stressed the need not to weaken the guidance role of the General Conference. Consensus was not reached, and the Executive Board finally did not recommend changing the biennial periodicity.

30. When, at the request of the General Conference, the Executive Board reconsidered, the following year, the methods of work of the governing bodies, it invited the Director-General to submit to it at its 145th session (autumn 1994) a study dealing in particular with the possibility of reorganizing the General Conference, taking into account the replies from Member States to a consultation on that subject undertaken by the President of the 27th session of the General Conference. The Director-General accordingly submitted to the Executive Board document 145 EX/39 “Methods of work of the General Conference and the Executive Board”. Part IV of that document contained three options which might serve as a basis for a major reorganization of the structure and timetable of the General Conference, and of the respective contributions of the two governing bodies to the process of preparing and adopting the programme.

31. Following its examination of these options, the Executive Board invited the Director-General, when submitting to it at its 146th session a proposal for the organization of work of the 28th session of the General Conference (1995), “to take into consideration, as a possible alternative to the usual timetable which places the General Policy Debate at the beginning of the session, the

option put forward in paragraphs 49 and 50 of document 145 EX/39". Under that option, the General Policy Debate would be held after the work of the commissions, rather than at the beginning of the session. However, the Executive Board decided at its 146th session to recommend that the General Conference should keep the general policy debate at the beginning of the session.

32. At its 28th session, the General Conference invited its President (Mr Torben Krogh, Denmark) to establish between the 28th and 29th sessions "an ad hoc working group whose mandate would be to examine the structure and function of the General Conference and recommend the most effective means to restore to the Conference its original function as a full-fledged policy-making body". This group was to be made up of "18 experts from Member States" and present its conclusions to the Executive Board so that they could be submitted, with the Executive Board's comments, at the 29th session of the General Conference.

33. The group held three meetings at Headquarters in 1996 and 1997 before submitting its report to the General Conference, together with the comments of the Executive Board. The General Conference endorsed all of the recommendations contained in this document, as amended by the Executive Board. They touched on various aspects of the role and functioning of the General Conference, but recommendations 1 to 10 and recommendation 23 merit particular attention as they were aimed at rationalizing the respective roles of the three organs of UNESCO in the process of the preparation, adoption and implementation of the programme and budget and, upstream, at strengthening the role of Member States, their National Commissions and permanent delegations to the Organization.

34. The major objective was to strengthen the General Conference's guidance and policy-making function, while at the same time recommending the aim of "fostering dialogue and exchanges" among delegates (recommendations 24 to 26). The spirit of the recommendations as a whole was described by the President in an introduction he wrote when the report was published. The main point underscored by Mr Krogh was that, in order to exercise its constitutional role fully, the General Conference should simplify its discussions on the C/5 document submitted to it for final approval, so as to focus more on the subsequent C/5 document, by giving the Director-General guidelines for its preparation.

35. The approved recommendations were implemented from the 30th session of the General Conference onwards. In particular, the commissions discussed not only document 30 C/5 but also the main lines of document 31 C/5. The same occurred at the 31st session, except for the fact that, as the General Conference was on that occasion also required to adopt a new Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007), the future C/5 document and the Strategy were discussed as a joint item in each commission. At its 160th session (autumn 2000), the Executive Board was informed in detail of the follow-up to the recommendations, including the difficulties that had arisen in a few cases. Part two of the present chapter addresses this matter in detail.

36. Previously, on the initiative of its Chairperson, a study on the three organs of UNESCO had been submitted to the Executive Board at its 156th session (spring 1999). After the Special Committee had examined the study, the Executive Board adopted 156 EX/Decision 5.5. The decision referred in particular to the consideration of the Draft Programme and Budget and the influence of the recommendations made to the General Conference on that subject by the Executive Board. It came into effect as of the 30th session of the General Conference (1999).

37. The Executive Board also decided to pursue consideration of the question through its Special Committee at its 159th session (spring 2000), that is, after the General Conference. At that session, the Executive Board created, within the Special Committee, an ad hoc working group with six members whose mandate would be "to carry out inter-sessional work on the issue of UNESCO's governance, the relations between its three organs and the related structure of the subsidiary organs of the Executive Board".

38. This group presented its report and recommendations to the Special Committee at the 160th session. The first of the recommendations was entitled: “The role of the General Conference with respect to the Medium-Term Strategy (C/4) and the Programme and Budget (C/5)”. It is aimed at rearranging substantially the schedule for the preparation and adoption of the C/4 and C/5 documents, including that relating to the respective involvement of the General Conference and Executive Board.

39. The Executive Board decided to resume consideration of this recommendation at its 161st session (spring 2001), after which it requested its Special Committee “to study further recommendation as well as its implications and to report thereon to it at its 162nd session, with a view to presenting that recommendation to the General Conference at its 31st session”. At its 162nd session, the Executive Board also had at its disposal an information document on the implications of the recommendations, in particular their legal aspects. It decided to transmit the relevant documents to the General Conference at its 31st session “for information”, recommending that the General Conference “decide on appropriate modalities for further consideration”. Through 31 C/Resolution 70, the General Conference invited the Executive Board to pursue reflection on governance issues, particularly through open-ended meetings of its Special Committee. Further debate and lack of consensus during the 2002-2003 biennium, led to 32 C/Resolution 92 through which a new ad hoc group was instituted under the Chairmanship of the President of the 32nd session, and whose recommendations were endorsed by the General Conference in 33 C/Resolution 92.

40. It is important to recall that one Constitutional amendment in the 1990s has had a major impact on the manner in which the three organs of UNESCO interact. This is the amendment adopted by the General Conference at its 26th session in 1991 transforming the composition of the Executive Board into that of Member States (whereas previously it had been that of individuals nominated by Member States). Once the Constitutional amendment (often referred to as the “Japanese amendment” since the item was tabled by that country) had come into full effect with the election of members of the Executive Board at the 28th session of the General Conference in 1995, the Executive Board’s role was clearly bound to change. Over the ensuing decade, little by little the Executive Board’s working practices and culture have evolved in line with its new status, sometimes generating repercussions – and at times tensions – in its interactions both with the Secretariat and its Director-General and with the full membership at the General Conference.

41. Over recent biennia, starting with the “Krogh” group in 1996-1997, discussions on the subject of the three organs and the General Conference have continued along roughly the same format, which is to say that the General Conference adopts a resolution calling upon the “three organs” to continue to make appropriate improvements, both in the internal arrangements for efficiency and relevance of the two governing bodies and also in the harmonious working relations and interactions between and among the three organs of UNESCO; the President of the corresponding session of the General Conference – usually by way of a working group – along with the Executive Board, through its Special Committee, follow up on that resolution, and an item is introduced on the agenda of the ensuing session of the General Conference.

42. It is noteworthy, however, that this work, particularly in the Executive Board, has continued to run up against the two enemies that are lack of consensus and lack of time. The Executive Board, for one, was merely continuing to reflect the significant disparities of views that have constantly manifested themselves among Member States in questions relating to the General Conference or the three organs. One example is the debate concerning the timing of the “ministerial” portion of the General Conference and the corresponding General Policy Debate: i.e. whether the senior representatives of Member States should participate towards the end of the General Conference – to endorse the technical work done in the commissions by their designated experts and alternates, or on the other hand, should initiate the policy discussions with their formal policy statements, to be followed up by the work of the commissions (the existing and long-standing format). This matter has been under debate for at least the past two decades, but it has never been definitively resolved to change the current formula.

43. One of the main reasons for this reluctance to change is that, as has been noted repeatedly over the years, UNESCO's Constitution is considered as a sturdy, solid and extremely well balanced instrument – perhaps one of the best in the international system – and as a result, Member States have often balked at the prospect of needing to amend fundamental provisions in the Constitution as a necessary prerequisite for implementing some of the modifications agreed upon during debates on these three organs issues.

44. At the same time, the Executive Board has continued to pay careful attention to its own methods of work, which were required to evolve as it felt more and more fully cloaked in its new intergovernmental status, and there have been significant improvements in efficiency and relevance as a result, even as the pressure of its agenda continued to expand and the duration of its sessions contract particularly under budgetary restrictions. It is certainly clear that, with its now mature intergovernmental character, its ability to take significant political decisions on delicate subjects on the basis of a long drawn-out process of negotiation has been enhanced and is without doubt due in large measure to the full recourse it can now have to the well-honed mechanisms of relations between States in the international system. Thus the Executive Board is fulfilling the Constitutional function of standing in for the community of UNESCO Member States on urgent and unforeseen matters in between sessions of the General Conference. In its relations with the General Conference, however, the Executive Board in its post-1995 composition has sometimes been strongly criticized by States non-Members of the Board for a tendency to act as if it were a mini-General Conference of itself, and to consider that the recommendations it transmits to the Conference – indeed often after lengthy and exhaustive discussions that are at least nominally conducted on behalf of the entire UNESCO membership – should not be touched (because of the delicate compromise surrounding their adoption) and just be “rubber-stamped”, an attitude that has aroused at times quite severe comments during the sessions of the General Conference itself.

45. In these conditions, the General Conference – itself also beset with workload, time and budget problems – has not been able either to reach full consensus on many of the issues that have constantly emerged over time, and even expressed frustration that its resolutions have not been fully implemented. It has also, at times, adopted positions that either contradict other decisions taken by it at prior sessions, or, again, seem to call for conflicting results.

46. At any rate, the General Conference, at its 33rd session (2005), adopted a very substantial and detailed resolution on the three organs and in doing so, clearly indicated which of the three organs was being charged with responsibility for follow-up. Over the 2006-2007 biennium, the three organs thus each pursued the implementation of those recommendations entrusted to it, while being attentive to the need to harmonize its work and recommendations with those being pursued by the others. Adjustments and improvements were made to the organization of the 34th session of the General Conference as a result, but no major changes were recommended, by the Director-General, the Executive Board or the President of the General Conference even when they were seemingly called for in 33 C/Resolution 92, for a number of reasons outlined in the consolidated report presented to the General Conference in 2007 at its 34th session (34 C/19 and Annex Rev.).

47. At the session, the General Conference noted the progress made in the implementation of that Resolution's numerous provisions, and the need to continue its implementation in other areas. At the same time, the Conference, perhaps conscious of some of the above contradictions, held an informal brainstorming meeting of its General Committee at which many of the comments indicated a readiness to move further forward in this regard. The present report is the consequence of the willingness expressed by Member States.

48. By way of conclusion, it is perhaps worth recalling what is noted by the Director-General, in paragraph 29 of document 34 C/19: “The Director-General is satisfied with the rate of implementation of the many provisions of this important resolution, which after many years of discussion of the respective roles of the three organs of the Organization, has finally achieved a balance among them which it is for each of the three organs, and their respective heads, to respect

and implement over the coming years. Indeed, a certain number of the provisions of 33 C/Resolution 92 still have to be more fully implemented. Financial restrictions, for example, have curtailed the Director-General's ability to implement some of the more ambitious plans concerning the Conference's organization; other procedural matters require specific adaptations to the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference and/or the Executive Board; and others again have actually met with a rather more mitigated reaction on the part of Member States during the consultations conducted than the adoption of the resolution at the 33rd session would have led to believe, meaning that the Director-General, the Chairperson of the Executive Board and the President of the General Conference both separately and collectively are inclined to allow such provisions a little more time for careful reflection and study before full implementation."

### **3.2 The reform of the methods of work since 1995**

49. This part of the chapter deals specifically with past recommendations on reform issues that have not been implemented to date, and is based upon the detailed analysis undertaken by two of the Informal Working Group's Rapporteurs, which can be found in Annex 6.

50. It should be noted that one of the reasons why this work was undertaken is to make a clear distinction between recommendations which are still considered useful, so as to insist on their implementation, and those that have not proved their worth and should thus be definitively closed in order to move forward.

51. Past reform initiatives or proposals that were not retained either by the General Conference or by the Executive Board (most of them outlined throughout the historical background part above) have also been reviewed in detail in the aforementioned individual reports. Since the Informal Working Group did not deem appropriate or useful to restore or revisit any of them, they are not reflected here.

#### 29 C/Resolution 87

52. Among the recommendations contained in 29 C/Resolution 87 (issued from the report of the 1996-1997 ad hoc working group) the following ones have not been fully or partially implemented, for the reasons explained below.

*R4 The General Conference should invite the steering committees of intergovernmental bodies to submit observations and recommendations to it, in the fields covered by each one of them, on the Draft Programme and Budget.*

53. The timetable for the preparation of the C/5 document makes it difficult to consult intergovernmental bodies in a consistent and timely fashion, since the dates of their different meetings do not necessarily coincide with the different stages of document C/5 preparation. Although some progress has been made in this area in the framework of 33 C/Resolution 92, the above reasons rule out an effective implementation of this recommendation other than the coordination and interaction of these bodies with the whole action of the Organization provided by the Director-General through the role played by Secretariat in each of them.

*R6 The General Conference should request the Executive Board to consider on its behalf questions of less importance which are usually placed on the agenda of the Conference, including minor administrative and budgetary questions. The reports that it would submit to the General Conference on these matters should be adopted without discussion, unless a delegation requests a debate on one of them.*

54. To date no definition of "questions of less importance" has been provided by either the General Conference or the Executive Board. Although it seems difficult to reduce the number of items on the agenda (see below, recommendation 7 of 33 C/Resolution 92), an enhanced and proactive role of the Executive Board in the preparation of the agenda, along with the appropriate

recommendations for the adoption of items without debate, would certainly help to further the objective of this recommendation. The fact that, since the 34th session, the agenda of the General Conference is annotated, may also contribute to this aim. Concrete suggestions on this matter are contained in the next part, under governance-related issues.

*R18 It was recommended that, during the general policy debate, the heads of delegation might inter alia wish to focus on the basic thrust and orientation of the programme submitted to the General Conference for adoption.*

55. Even though Member States are invited at each session to give effect to this recommendation, experience shows that this is rarely the case. Indeed, this is a matter of the sovereignty of Member States and the intention of their heads of delegation. Some progress could nevertheless be achieved in the framework of the proposals made in the next chapter concerning the General Policy Debate and ministerial round tables.

*R23 To enable the commissions to have genuine discussions and to bring significant influence to bear on developments in the Organization's programmes, the group recommends: (i) that they devote less time to formalities for adopting the proposed programme at a given session and to examining draft resolutions; and (ii) that they focus the major part of their work on the main lines of emphasis of the ensuing programme.*

56. Although some time has been devoted since 1997 to the future programme (within each commission or, for the 34th session, at the interdisciplinary meeting), commissions devote the major part of their proceedings to the consideration of the C/5 document to be adopted at the session and of the draft resolutions referred to it. The recommendations made in the following part of the present chapter, together with the proposals presented in the next chapter should help the General Conference go along these lines, without necessarily focusing on the work of the commissions alone.

*R27 The group recommends that all the questions to be examined by each commission be covered in a single document (apart from the C/4, C/5 and C/3 documents) which would indicate clearly the main items requiring decisions.*

57. The timetable of preparation of documents covers several months, and some documents depend on the results of meetings (including the Executive Board session) being held close to the opening of the General Conference, which makes it difficult to prepare a single document within a reasonable time frame. Furthermore, the preparation of separate documents for each agenda item facilitates its transmission to the competent authorities in each Member State.

58. The above reasons seem to make the pursuit of this recommendation difficult, although the proposals concerning a possible shortening of the autumn (year two) session of the Executive Board contained in the following chapter would certainly improve the timely preparation of all Member States for the General Conference session.

*R31 The group recommends that significant improvements be made to the information for delegates: both basic information and daily updates on the progress of the proceedings, particularly by improving the Journal and by designing, on an experimental basis, a Vice-President to be responsible for informing the delegates.*

59. While Member States consider that the information of delegates has improved since this recommendation was made, no Vice-President has ever been designated to fill the information function. This may be due to the fact that the nominees to the posts of Vice-Presidents of the General Conference are Member States, not individuals, and that the task would be a time-consuming one. However, the proposals relating to the visibility of the work of the General Conference contained in the next chapter would certainly call for an increased involvement of delegates, in particular heads of delegation, in public information issues.



33 C/Resolution 92

60. The implementation of the recommendations contained in 33 C/Resolution 92 (stemming from the report of the 2004-2005 ad hoc working group) will be reviewed by the General Conference under a separate item on the agenda of the 35th session. However, several of them are of particular relevance to the content of the present report and to the proposals it contains.

*R6 Decides that guidelines for new simplified criteria for the submission of draft resolutions to the General Conference relating to the C/5 document should be recommended by the Executive Board for the development of criteria by the Legal Committee of the General Conference.*

61. The President of the 33rd session of the General Conference had been entrusted by the General Conference with the implementation of this recommendation and, having conducted extensive consultations, concluded that there was no clear wish to amend the Rules of Procedure and therefore the criteria in force should be maintained in the preparations for the 34th session of the General Conference. The Executive Board endorsed, at its 176th session the recommendation arising from the President's consultations; the debate held at the Special Committee of the Executive Board brought out the fact that the Committee could not improve on the criteria already contained in the Rules of Procedure with regard to the submission of draft resolutions and their admissibility. The General Conference having accepted the concurring views of its President and of the Executive Board in this regard, these criteria are still in force.

*R7 Consistent with the relevant Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, decides on reducing the number of agenda items for the General Conference with a view to focusing discussions on the key priorities of the Organization.*

62. Debate on this item at the Executive Board did not result in a recommendation. It was considered that the number of items on the agenda of the General Conference was somewhat difficult to reduce because of the sovereign right of Member States, under the Rules of Procedure, to propose the inclusion of items in the agenda. However there was a discussion about available options to facilitate the work of the General Conference in cases of items already examined in depth by the Executive Board. The proposals contained in the next part of the present chapter seek to provide an appropriate solution to this problem.

*R8 Decides that UNESCO should use its convening power better in order to make the General Conference a more interesting meeting place, and better suited to allow new inputs to its programmes, for instance through the organization of thematic debates, introduced by renowned experts or ministers from Member States, as well as an increased number of round table discussions. Also decides that the general policy debate should be organized differently, taking into account best practices of other intergovernmental organizations, and using innovative means with the aim of attracting the interest of the media, and the public at large. The new format of the general debate should give the heads of delegation adequate opportunity to deliver their main political message, preferably focused on selected themes. During the General Conference, one or several ministerial round tables could continue to be held; furthermore, other innovative, interactive discussions could be held with a view to promoting "real" dialogue/networking among Member States.*

63. As indicated in one of the individual reports contained in Annex 6, this recommendation quite appropriately illustrates the difficulties and contradictions involved in this exercise. Indeed, it seems difficult to reconcile the focusing of the General Conference on key priority areas and policy-relevant debates while increasing thematic debates and Ministerial Round Tables in order to make it a more interesting meeting place, yet without adopting formal measures to curtail the number of agenda items on its agenda. Nevertheless, the said report asserts that the status of implementation of this recommendation augurs well for its future, and the complete set of ideas, suggestions and recommendations contained in the present report – particularly those relating to the General Policy Debate and ministerial round tables – go along the same lines.

*R9 Decides that, if possible, all elections should take place at the end of the first week of the General Conference, and that the election procedures should be improved, and preferably automated. Accordingly, also decides that the communications received from Member States invoking the provisions of Article IV.C, 8(c) of the Constitution should be examined by the Executive Board at its session immediately preceding the General Conference in order to allow the Conference to decide on voting rights, upon the recommendations of the Executive Board, at the opening of the session.*

64. This recommendation cannot be fully implemented without amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. Although the advanced examination of communications by the Executive Board certainly simplifies the task of the General Conference in establishing voting rights, Member States still have the right, under Rule 83, to present communications until the third day of the Conference, which in practice means that voting rights can only be established towards the end of the first week of the session and thus (owing to the rules governing elections, which establish that the Nominations Committee meets once the 48-hour deadline for the submission of nominations has expired) the best possible date for the first election to take place falls within the second week of the session. At the 34th session – owing to the fact that the General Conference opened on a Tuesday – the election of members of the Executive Board took place on Wednesday of the second week, and all other elections on the next day. Member States expressed their satisfaction with this schedule, which is the best possible one in the framework of the existing rules.

*R12 Decides on greater participation of the governing bodies of the intergovernmental programmes and UNESCO's (category 1) institutes in the drafting of the C/4 and C/5 documents as well as documents relating to the implementation and evaluation of their activities.*

65. As explained above referring to R4 of 29 C/Resolution 87, there exist practical difficulties for the full implementation of this recommendation. However, progress has been made in that the questionnaire for the elaboration of documents 34 C/4 and 34 C/5 was also addressed to governing bodies of intergovernmental programmes and UNESCO's (category 1) institutes. Efforts have also been made to seek their views at the time of preparing the joint C/3 and EX/4 document and evaluation plans and reports – falling within the purview of a particular governing body – will henceforth be brought to their attention with a view to eliciting comments and policy guidance.

### **3.3 Governance-related issues**

66. The purpose of the reflections that have led to the present report is to create the conditions to further the constitutional role of the General Conference as supreme decision-making body of the Organization, through the improvement of its functioning. However, tackling the structure and working methods of the General Conference alone would disregard an extremely important dimension: the relationship between the two governing bodies. A clear understanding of the Constitutional roles of each and thereby of the dynamics that should prevail between the two lies beneath more specific aspects of their respective methods of work. This chapter draws upon the in-depth report contained in Annex 3.

67. As indicated in the above-mentioned report, the implications of the 1991 Constitutional amendment concerning the composition of the Executive Board have not been sufficiently analysed, particularly through a holistic approach to this major change both in terms of governance (and corresponding working methods) of the Executive Board and of dynamics between the two governing bodies. This may be one of the reasons for the mixed results of previous discussions on the relationship between the three organs. The following paragraphs attempt to capture this approach, and propose various specific recommendations.

68. It should be stated from the outset that the analysis and related recommendations presented herewith are based on a firm premise: the Constitution is a solid and well-balanced text and it is generally recognized that any improvement should be achieved without changes to it, particularly

as far as the balance between the respective roles, prerogatives and responsibilities of each of the three organs is concerned. Although necessary in some cases, I believe that changes to the Rules of Procedure of both the Executive Board and the General Conference should be kept to a minimum.

69. The role of the General Conference as supreme policy-making body may only be fully affirmed if the Executive Board plays a more efficient role in (i) relieving the General Conference of items (and related decisions) that are not distinctively linked to the “orientation and main lines of work of the Organization” and (ii) creating the conditions for effective decision-making thereon by the General Conference. However, the Executive Board needs to ensure that it is perceived by all Member States, in a reinforced decision-making role, as representative of the whole community of Member States of UNESCO, whose views it voices, represents and puts into operation between sessions of the General Conference. On the other hand, the General Conference should give further recognition to the Executive Board’s broad oversight and management role, and thus focus its proceedings on major policy-setting and strategic orientations. A better understanding of these two roles, which are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, would result in strengthened UNESCO governance in the future.

70. In order to reinforce the General Conference’s role as the starting point in the programme and strategy elaboration, its debates on the future Programme and Budget (C/5) and Medium-Term Strategy (C/4) should be improved, allocated more time (possibly in the framework of either the proposed Plenary Ministerial Forum or an interdisciplinary meeting – see next chapters) and facilitated by the appropriate documentation provided by the Secretariat. It might even be worth considering reintroducing the past practice – referred to in part 1 of this chapter – of a clear and distinct resolution relating to the preparation of the ensuing C/5 (and, where relevant, C/4) document.

71. Once the General Conference has determined the appropriate orientation, it is the role of the Executive Board to issue guidance to the Director-General for the preparation of the documents (including document C/4 adjustment in the framework of the rolling strategy). Therefore, the Executive Board should have an opportunity to analyse the policy statements and strategic orientations made during the previous session of the General Conference when it begins considering the next C/5 document.

72. According to article V.B.6(a) of the Constitution, the Executive Board, at a later stage, “... examines the programme of work for the Organization and corresponding budget estimates submitted to it by the Director-General (...) and shall submit them with such recommendations as it considers appropriate to the General Conference”. All Member States should be aware of the enhanced representative process employed nowadays by the Executive Board thereon. Consequently, it should be sought at the General Conference, where at all possible, to maintain and endorse the consensus text contained in the recommendations by the Executive Board, which stem from a long process of consultation and negotiation among Member States and with the participation of the Director-General. Although the General Conference should keep its sovereign decision-making right, re-opening debate on consensual text should be envisaged at the appropriate policy-setting level and should thus preferably apply only to exceptional circumstances (i.e. additional content or recent developments) and be made, when possible, at ministerial level. Here again, it would be important to recall one of the main conclusions of the Krogh group (endorsed through 29 C/Resolution 87), i.e. it is at the beginning of the programme elaboration cycle that the General Conference should fully play its role of policy orientation, avoiding spending too much time on the final adoption of the programme at the outcome of the two-year process. Recognition of this important fact was thus underlined by Member States already a decade ago and it is the practical translation of this fact that this report seeks to go resolutely towards full implementation.

73. The whole process of preparing the C/5 document needs to be seen in the light of the intergovernmental character of the Executive Board. This was indeed the case during the 2006-

2007 biennium, when the recommendations by the Executive Board (C/6) were formulated in the form of amendments to draft document C/5 submitted by the Director-General, thus facilitating the task of the General Conference in the finalization of the document. With this positive development, it would be even more important to ensure that the recommendations by the Executive Board were finalized by the spring session of the Executive Board in the second year of the biennium, and could thus be addressed to all Member States together with the C/5 document. In practice, this would mean that the document to be finalized and adopted by the General Conference would be an Executive Board-revised (with the concurrence of the Director-General) version of the C/5 document.<sup>3</sup>

74. In this context, a question arises concerning the draft resolutions (DRs) relating to the C/5 document submitted by Member States. One possibility discussed is that of having the Executive Board receive and examine, at its autumn session just before the General Conference, the DRs submitted by Member States in order to verify the coherence and compatibility of these with the consensus reached by the Executive Board. This option would imply amendments to the Rules of Procedure governing this category of draft resolutions and would not favour the proposal (contained in the next chapter) to reduce the length of the autumn (year two) session of the Executive Board in order to facilitate a timely preparation of the General Conference. Another possibility – not implying amendments to the Rules of Procedure – would be to leave the DR process as it stands. This would enhance the individual or collective influence of Member States on draft document C/5 through the submission of DRs, since these would be able to take account of the full scope of proposals relating to the draft programme within the same time framework and deadlines. In order to ensure the coherence of content advocated in the first option, it would be desirable nevertheless that the comments issued by the Director-General on DRs considered admissible contain, in addition to his own views, an assessment of the compatibility of the proposals with the recommendations formulated by the Executive Board. Furthermore, during the session, the Board Members appointed to represent the Executive Board in each of the subsidiary organs of the General Conference would be able to offer the appropriate feedback.

75. In order to meet the deadlines described above regarding the finalization of its document C/5 recommendations (C/6), the Executive Board should consider creating its drafting group on document C/5 (and C/4) for the entire biennium in the autumn session of the first year of the biennium. This would enable this group to begin technical work intersessionally – as soon as the C/5 document is published – on verifying that the Director-General's draft is in line with the guidance issued by the Executive Board in response to his earlier outline proposals. At the ensuing spring session, further substantive comments and amendments would only be addressed by this group in-session once the general debate has provided the opportunity for an in-depth debate on the C/5 document. The terms of reference, composition and working methods of this group, as well as the in-depth consideration of its work by the plenary, should be carefully considered by the Executive Board in order to allay concerns expressed at the General Conference about its representativeness. Ideally, in such a scenario, an early (autumn, year one) agreement in principle on the foreseen provisional budget ceiling would be not only be desirable but extremely useful for the work of both the Executive Board and the Director-General respectively, having the additional advantage from the logistical and financial point of view of requiring only a single budget scenario and therefore the draft C/5 document to be prepared.

76. As far as the preparation of the C/4 document is concerned, for all the reasons put forward above, the former practice of establishing a drafting group at the General Conference (which was not pursued at the 34th session) should not be systematically envisaged. Indeed, the current process developed by the Executive Board in drafting its recommendations on the C/4 document appears to be much more inclusive and democratic. These should be accompanied by a DR for

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<sup>3</sup> In this context, it should be recalled that the statutory deadline for the dispatch of both draft C/5 and C/6 documents (recommendations of the Executive Board on the draft C/5 document) is three months before the opening of the session (Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference).

solemn adoption by the General Conference, in recognition of the significant moment it represents in the life of the Organization.

77. Although the most important topic in the relations between the Executive Board and the General Conference is doubtless the preparation of the programmatic and strategic documents, other issues related to the provisional agenda of the General Conference (prepared by the Executive Board) and items contained therein (other than the C/4 and C/5 documents) also seem in need of analysis from the broad governance point of view of the present chapter.

78. Many items comprehensively and conclusively debated in the Executive Board are further debated at the General Conference. This is often perceived as an avoidable misuse of time, energy and resources and, more importantly, allows the debates of the General Conference to stray from their major policy-setting purpose. Although some progress has already been made through delegation of authority from the General Conference to the Executive Board in specific areas (for example, the further examination and subsequent signing authorization to the Director-General concerning the creation of category 2 institutes, upon the initial approval of the General Conference), it might be desirable to enhance mechanisms whereby subjects of a routine nature comprehensively debated by the Executive Board can be referred to the General Conference with the corresponding Executive Board recommendation, including that of their adoption “without debate”. Some examples would include the admission of NGOs already maintaining official relations, many administrative matters (Headquarters Committee reports, reports on staffing issues) etc. The General Conference would of course decide in each case whether or not to accept recommendations without debate.

79. The above has already been proposed on several occasions but progress in this area has been slow. The introduction of an annotated agenda for the General Conference since the last session, together with a substantive, thorough debate by the Executive Board on the preparation of the agenda of the General Conference, should facilitate progress in this regard.

80. The Executive Board should also consider reviewing its methods for preparing the agenda of the General Conference. The provisional agenda would, as at present, be prepared by the Executive Board at its spring session in year two with annotations and an indication of items the Executive Board believes might be adopted without debate at the General Conference, but would be immediately circulated to Member States by the Director-General following the closure of the Executive Board’s session. This would require an adjustment to current Rule of Procedure 9, which sets a deadline such that the provisional agenda remains open to the inclusion of items after having been examined by the Executive Board. The inclusion of supplementary items (later in the process, i.e. at the autumn session of the Executive Board and beyond) would remain within the same procedures, in the framework of the rules currently in force.

81. In preparing the revised provisional agenda (autumn session preceding the General Conference) the Executive Board should take into careful consideration the need to allocate sufficient time at the General Conference for significant policy debates and thus seek to make more use of its prerogative to propose the non-inclusion of items or their adoption without debate. Should proposals for shortening the length of the Executive Board session preceding the General Conference (see next chapter) be adopted, this would also imply a reduction of “last-minute” items (and corresponding documentation) on the agenda of the General Conference as a result of decisions by the Executive Board at that session, and the consequent re-scheduling of the Executive Board’s programme of work throughout the biennium.

82. The Executive Board’s final recommendations (revised provisional agenda) would still be considered by the General Committee of the General Conference before adoption by the Conference in plenary. This would afford any Member State the opportunity for further reaction on these recommendations, and thus would deny no Member State its sovereign right to request to have an item debated within the existing Rules of Procedure.

83. In this context, it is recommended that all agenda items referred to the General Conference by the Executive Board be introduced at the beginning of the corresponding debate (whether in plenary or commission) by the Chairperson or a designated representative of the Executive Board, thus affording the General Conference the opportunity to get an explanation on the background leading to the Executive Board's recommendation and the main features of its own debates on the subject, and – where relevant – obviating to the maximum the need for further debate on the subject.

84. In latter years, the number of items referred to the General Conference by the Executive Board has been constantly on the increase. While this is a mark of the Executive Board's important work in the preparation of the General Conference, many of them are examined by the Executive Board only at its last (autumn) session preceding the General Conference, thus leaving little time for Member States (and particularly States non-Members of the Board) to consult and prepare themselves for decision-making during the General Conference. In order to avoid this, it would be more than appropriate for the Executive Board to ensure that its substantive business and resulting recommendations to the General Conference (programme and budget but many other matters too) be concluded at its year two spring session and dispatched in good time to Member States, and that accordingly its autumn session be distinctly shorter (three or four days maximum) devoted only to business that could not be addressed beforehand, such as the preparation of the revised provisional agenda of the General Conference, items linked to the results of meetings having taken place in that quarter, etc. (it goes without saying that this short session would have to be longer every four years, with regard to the business involved by the nomination to the post of Director-General). Finally it is to be noted that the 2009 autumn session of the Executive Board is scheduled to close almost two weeks before the opening of the General Conference. This is already a welcome measure which will help to ensure timely preparation, and should be pursued in future biennia.

#### **4. CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE STRUCTURE, METHODS OF WORK AND ORGANIZATION OF THE 35TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

##### **Introduction**

85. At the additional meeting of the General Committee of the General Conference that took place 30 October 2007, a number of comments were made as to the structure and the functioning of the session. The aim of the meeting was to point out those aspects of the session which had not worked well or where there would be room for improvement, and the comments made in this regard are the basis of the subsequent work resulting in the present report. However, it was also recalled at the meeting that the General Conference of UNESCO is, among the governing assemblies of international organizations, one of the most widely attended, in particular at ministerial and senior level. Therefore, any measure proposed should take into account the already high level of ministerial participation and make the General Conference an even more attractive event. The following paragraphs contain suggestions considered to serve this purpose.

##### **4.1 Structure of the General Conference**

86. The structure of the General Conference is defined by its Rules of Procedure. The General Conference consists of five committees (Credentials, Nominations, Legal, Headquarters and General Committee) and "as many commissions and other subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the transaction of the business of that session" (Rule 43).

##### **(a) Commissions**

87. Since 1972, the General Conference has created, at each session, six commissions: five programme commissions and an administrative commission. At its 34th session, it was proposed to create an additional commission so that each of the major areas of document 34 C/4 and

corresponding major programmes in document 34 C/5 be examined by a distinct commission (until then, two major programmes were traditionally “coupled” into a single commission, in different configurations throughout the years: Culture with Communication and Information, Natural Sciences with Social and Human Sciences, etc.).

88. This seven-commission – Education (ED), Natural Sciences (SC), Social and Human Sciences (SHS), Culture (CLT), Communication and Information (CI), Programme Support and External Relations (PRX) and Administrative (ADM) – structure seems to have given satisfaction and it is thus recommended that it be maintained at the 35th session.

89. A certain amount of thought was given to the role of the chairpersons of commissions, essential to their progress of work and success. When presenting nominations (at Executive Board level) Member States should take into account the ability and experience of the candidate, as well as his/her availability to attend the whole session or at very least the entirety of the duration of the subsidiary organ in question. In all circumstances, nominations should take place at the second quarter (spring) session of the Executive Board (as decided by the Executive Board itself), Chairpersons ought to be encouraged to manage speaking time with a firm hand (suggested: four minutes for the C/5 document; three minutes for all other items). They should establish lists of speakers and complete and close them after the intervention of the third speaker. In order to ensure punctuality, the General Committee would be informed of problems relating to timing and issue the appropriate recommendations. The possibility of appointing the Rapporteurs of the commissions at the same time as the chairpersons and to schedule a two- or three-day working meeting among them before the opening of the session should also be examined.

90. The above should become standard practice, and Member States informed accordingly in advance, through the different letters and documents dispatched by the Director-General.

91. As far as the schedule of commissions is concerned, as will be seen below, the commission(s) related to the “sectoral” Round Table(s) would take place immediately after the corresponding Round Table. The CLT Commission would be followed by the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

### **(b) Interdisciplinary meeting**

92. A one-and-a-half day long interdisciplinary meeting was introduced on an experimental basis at the 34th session. Although obvious reasons relating to the enhanced interdisciplinary thrust of documents 34 C/4 and 34 C/5 called for the organization of such a meeting, divergent opinions have been expressed as to its usefulness per se. This first meeting was a failure and there is general agreement on the need for improvement, better preparation, choice of concrete subjects and endowing with decision-making power.

93. It has been opined that the added value of such a meeting should be to lighten the workload of commissions and, in this regard, it might serve its rightful purpose if it were to examine those items of the agenda that are suitable for an interdisciplinary debate, i.e. the preparation of the future programme and budget (36 C/5 for the 35th session) and the possible adjustment (in the framework of a rolling strategy) of the Medium-Term Strategy of the Organization (34 C/4).

94. However, since this is indeed commission work, the above items could be assigned to an early joint meeting of the commissions. As mentioned in the preceding chapter under governance-related issues, decision-making might take, as in the past, the form of a resolution relating to the preparation of the ensuing C/5 document, for adoption by plenary, upon the proposal of this joint meeting. Alternatively, this task could also be entrusted to an ad hoc drafting group under the guidance of the General Committee.

### **(c) Ad hoc subsidiary bodies**

95. Between 1976 and 1987, the General Conference created, at each of its sessions, a Drafting and Negotiating Group (DNG) composed of 18 members in charge of solving controversial and/or difficult to handle issues.

96. Although the political context of the time was very different from that of today, some of the difficulties experimented by the General Conference in recent years – politically sensible items, complex DRs ... – might be solved if a similar group (perhaps with a different name) were created, on an ad hoc basis should the need arise, upon the decision of the General Committee of the General Conference. It would be composed of 18 members (three per electoral group) elected by the General Conference upon the proposal of the General Committee.

97. Should a controversial issue arise, in order to afford increased time for policy debate at the commission level, this group would, upon the request of the General Committee examine and find consensual positions on items such as: (i) DRs relating to the work of two or more commissions of the General Conference or implying heavy orientation changes or budgetary shifts in draft C/5 or C/6 documents, at the request of the Director-General; (ii) other DRs, at the request of the Chairperson of the concerned commission (subject to the endorsement of the General Committee); (iii) “difficult to handle” items of the agenda, at the request of the Chairperson of the concerned commission (subject to the endorsement of the General Committee); and (iv) any other item referred to it by the General Committee.

98. The Group would report to the organ(s) concerned, depending on the case (commission, committee or plenary).

### **4.2 General Policy Debate**

99. As stated in the report on this subject, it is increasingly obvious that the General Policy Debate (GPD), in its current form, no longer thoroughly responds to the needs of Member States which, on the one hand, wish to take advantage of the General Conference to make the Organization better known and improve its visibility and, on the other, see the General Conference as an opportunity to engage heads of delegation in substantive debates in areas that fall within UNESCO’s fields of competence. Therefore, the proposal below seeks to change significantly the content of the debates and to ensure that the 35th session will provide a more relevant forum of exchange for ministers, as well as being more beneficial to UNESCO as a whole.

100. With a view to diversifying and expanding their speaking opportunities, ministers would participate both in the General Policy Debate (in Room I) as well as in a Plenary Ministerial Forum, a new form of debate described below. In order to accommodate this change, speaking time at the General Policy Debate should be reduced from eight to six minutes; this would also have the added benefit of allowing the GPD to close at the end of the first week of the General Conference, allowing a better, less-constraining planning of work for subsidiary bodies and other events, and at the same time limiting the number of parallel events during the first week (which delegates and the Secretariat alike described as “overcrowded” at the 2007 session).

101. As stated in one of the mentioned recommendations contained in 29 C/Resolution 87, heads of delegation would still be encouraged to focus on key messages and general orientation of the Organization during their six-minute statements in Room I. They would – as currently – have the possibility to provide an extended version to be included in the Proceedings of the Conference.

102. Delegations would also be asked to provide the official statements (short or extended versions, according to their wish) in advance to the Secretariat of the General Conference for distribution. As is the practice during the General Assembly of the United Nations, delegations would be requested to make available 350 copies of the statement for distribution purposes.



103. In addition, each Member State would be requested to submit an official 10-line summary of the head of delegation's statement. The summary should be provided in English and French (working languages of the Secretariat) as well as in the original language<sup>4</sup> if this was one of the four other working languages of the General Conference. These summaries will be posted every day on line on the General Conference's website. Costs related to translation of this summary would be borne by the concerned Member State, as is the case in New York.

104. As is customary the statements would, following the closure of the session, be analysed by the Secretariat – and, as seen in the preceding chapter, fed into the work of the Executive Board for the preparation of the ensuing C/5 document.

### **4.3 Plenary Ministerial Forum and Round Tables**

105. Round tables of ministers (introduced since 1999 at commission level) are not part of the official proceedings of the General Conference, but have proved their worth as key side events allowing not only dialogue and exchange between ministers but also policy guidance from senior level representatives of Member States on important matters. Traditionally, two Ministerial Round Tables were organized on particular issues pertaining to the corresponding fields of competence of the Organization. The proposal below seeks to enhance the role of Ministers and/or ministerial-level officials during the General Conference, in order to make their attendance even more relevant and attractive, both for their benefit and for the visibility of the Organization.

#### **(a) Plenary ministerial forum**

106. In parallel to the – newly formatted – General Policy Debate in Room I, a one-and-a-half-day forum would be organized. The Forum would be divided into three half-day sessions, each devoted to a theme addressing strategic, global and interdisciplinary issues (not overlapping with items examined by the subsidiary organs) and conceived as forward-looking policy dialogue among ministers (i.e. "What should UNESCO do to increase its impact at the field level?").

107. Ten to 15 ministers (among those addressing the General Policy Debate) would be invited as panellists per session and requested to make very short opening remarks, allowing dialogue and exchange of views to flow subsequently. Other ministers wishing to attend would rightly do so (as participants but not as initial speakers).

108. Each session would be chaired by a minister who would monitor time and focus the subject as appropriate. An external speaker (an expert, a leading figure, a renowned individual in her/his field) would be asked to launch the forum session and play the role of discussant or "agent provocateur".

#### **(b) Ministerial round tables**

109. In addition to the plenary ministerial forum, it would be desirable to continue to have one, or a maximum of two, sectoral or commission-level ministerial round table(s), well prepared and focused on a concrete subject. The subject(s) would preferably be related, alternately from session to session, to each of the fields of competence of the Organization.

110. In order to afford dialogue opportunities, the number of speakers should be narrowed and pre-determined, taking into account geographical balance. Thirty ministers (five per electoral group) seems the right target. As in the case of the plenary ministerial forum, other ministers wishing to attend would do so as participants (but not as initial speakers).

111. The round table(s) would take place immediately before the corresponding programme commission. As in the past, proceedings would be retransmitted in another meeting room, as well as broadcasted on the Internet.

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<sup>4</sup> Or any other language, including the three other official languages of the General Conference.

112. As in the Forum, the round table(s) might include experts as keynote speakers. The role of moderator – essential to the success of a round table – could be conferred upon the Director-General or another skilled personality (other than a participating minister) with long experience in moderating this kind of meeting. Initial speaking time could be curtailed to two minutes, in order to avoid general statements and focus on dialogue and exchange. Should the 30 speakers/two minutes-slot be adopted, the Round Table(s) might be reduced to a one-day or one-and-a-half day event.

### **(c) General considerations concerning the plenary ministerial forum and round tables**

113. With a view to timely and appropriate preparation of the forum and round tables, an informal focus group (composed of one experienced member of a permanent delegation per electoral group, upon the proposal of the group, as well as selected members of the Secretariat) would be established during the first year of the biennium. The mandate of this informal group would be to assist the Director-General in (i) suggesting possible theme(s); (ii) establishing criteria for the selection of speakers (ministers and experts); (iii) proposing working methods (speaking time, the handling of questions and answers, etc.); and (iv) indicating preferences with regard to the calendar of preparations.

114. Since there is scope for improvement as far as the documentation for round tables is concerned, strategic but concise background information should be provided well in advance, together with clear indications as to what is expected of ministers' participation. The final output document ("communiqué") could address practical solutions and action proposals rather than general policy issues.

115. In parallel, the President of the General Conference could be requested to conduct, via the permanent delegations, a short survey among ministers responsible for relations with UNESCO in order to assess their expectations vis-à-vis the Round Tables held during the General Conference.

116. Finally, the General Conference may wish to review the status of the ministerial forum and round tables in order to mainstream their results further into the official work of the General Conference, whether at the plenary or commission level. Although these meetings are not endowed with universal membership or decision-making and cannot thus be part of the General Conference as such, their results ("communiqué" or other) should find a way to be transmitted to the General Conference – directly or through commissions, depending on the case. It could in any case seem appropriate that the General Policy Debate be henceforth understood as comprising both the successive national policy statements and the discussions in the plenary ministerial forum, and the Director-General, in his answer, would be expected to take note of the points raised and bring them to the attention of the General Conference.

## **4.4 Elections**

117. The calendar of elections, as scheduled at the 34th session, resulting from the best possible application of recommendation 9 of 33 C/Resolution 92 within the context of the current Rules of Procedure, has been deemed satisfactory. At the 35th session, the election of members of the Executive Board could be held in the middle of the second week of the General Conference and all other elections held by the General Conference the day after. Elections for the World Heritage Committee do not need to be held at the same time and should be organized in accordance with decisions taken as to the timing of the World Heritage Assembly (see below).

## **4.5 Side events**

118. The General Conference is attended by a vast number of delegates from different regions, professional profiles and specializations. Side events are of great interest for many of them and they should be planned in order to cover the wide spectrum of the Organization's fields of competence and activities. However, it has been considered that there were too many side events

during the 34th session. Quantity should be reduced in favour of quality, and a lesser number of key events planned well in advance and scheduled during the least busy slots of the agenda in order to ensure wide attendance. It might be envisaged to avoid the holding of events during lunchtime.

119. In order to rationalize the schedule, a deadline of at least two months before the opening of the General Conference should be set up for the proposal of side events both by Member States and by the Secretariat. Once a complete list of proposals compiled, the Director-General would take a decision on the final list, in close consultation with the President of the General Conference and with the Chairperson of the Executive Board.

#### **(a) Youth Forum**

120. The Youth Forum is an “integral part” of each session of the General Conference (32 C/Resolution 82) but should continue to be scheduled before the opening of the session. Its organization should be improved in order to afford clearer links between the forum and the official proceedings of the General Conference and, consequently, to enhance the feeling of ownership among its participants; efforts should also be made to increase its geographic representation; as in the 34th session, the main item to be discussed by the Youth Forum would be the main “mobilizing theme” (see below) of the session.

121. As suggested below under the proposals aimed at raising the visibility of the General Conference, the Youth Forum might be renamed “UNESCO Youth Summit” in order to make it more attractive to media.

#### **(b) Civil Society Forum**

122. In order to ensure the link between this side event and the General Conference itself, the mobilizing theme of the session – Ministerial Forum and Round Table(s), Exhibition, Youth Forum – could be the main item to be discussed at the Forum, possibly structured into two main poles of particular interest to NGOs and the private sector respectively.

123. The Forum should mainly be addressed to NGOs, the private sector and donors outside the governmental scope. Parliamentarians should not be invited as members of “civil society”, although, as part of their respective delegations, they may be particularly encouraged to participate.

124. The Forum could take place either before the opening of the session, in parallel with the Youth Forum and with the appropriate linkage between both, or in the beginning of the third week of the General Conference, before the resumption of the final plenary meetings.

125. In this connection, it seems important to secure a more significant and active participation in the General Conference of NGOs in official relations with UNESCO, in particular from developing countries – and international NGOs in official relations should be encouraged to be represented by members from these countries. NGO participation at large could be promoted by providing them with a space where they can hold discussions and meetings (on the model of an “NGO Fair” or “NGO Lounge” as worded in one of the individual reports). Rooms in the Bonvin building could be placed at their disposal to this end or temporary buildings (tents) erected in the grounds of the Fontenoy site.

#### **(c) General Assembly of States parties to the World Heritage Convention**

126. The General Assembly should follow the CLT Commission, taking place in the slot between the end of the debates of the Commission and the adoption of its report. Holding elections to the World Heritage Committee at the end of the session of the General Conference seems to be a less critical disadvantage than holding the Assembly in parallel with other important meetings of the General Conference proper.

#### **(d) Exhibition(s) and mobilizing theme**

127. The current practice of a single, thematic exhibition organized by the Secretariat (together, as appropriate, with short, ad hoc exhibitions linked to official visits of heads of State) seems to be satisfactory. However, too many side events were organized in the framework of the exhibition at the 34th session (2007).

128. The practice of a “mobilizing theme” for each session of the General Conference has increasingly gained momentum during the last sessions of the General Conference. Initially linked to the thematic exhibition, the concept of an overarching theme for each session has spread into other side events. It is therefore proposed that, for the 35th session, a theme be identified (to be coordinated by the appropriate sector of the Secretariat) around which the entire session would be federated, notably the exhibition and the various side events. Prior consultations with Member States would assist the Director-General in identifying the theme, which should also be connected with the Ministerial Round Tables and with the Youth and Civil Society Fora, thus providing a *fil conducteur* for a communication strategy leading to increased visibility.

#### **4.6 Other aspects related to the organization and functioning of the General Conference**

129. The different individual reports contained in the annexes contain a number of additional practical suggestions relating to different aspects of the organization and functioning of the General Conference, as follows:

130. It would seem convenient to foresee abridged oral presentations of the reports of commissions and committees in plenary by their respective Chairpersons; should this be done, the final phase of the General Conference would be shorter and, consequently, time would be released for commission work;

131. Practical information concerning the release of new documents or DRs should be posted in a more noticeable manner on the General Conference’s web page as well as on information screens;

132. Although difficult to enact, the recommendation concerning the appointment of a delegate representing one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Conference as responsible for internal communication should be re-examined. He or she would function as a “spokesperson” for the General Committee and would provide delegates with a daily or weekly briefing on the ongoing deliberations, the recommendations of the General Committee and logistical changes;

133. Finally, and in direct connection with the ensuing reflection on the visibility of the General Conference, the improvement of the fitting-out of Room I has been deemed an urgent, essential need. In fact, a comparative visual presentation of different moments and sessions of the General Conference made during the meetings of the Informal Working Group highlighted clear areas for improvement which should be an obvious way to underline the importance of the General Conference as the most significant event in the life of the Organization while decidedly contributing to improve its visibility, particularly among the media.

#### **4.7 Visibility of the work of the Conference**

##### **Introduction**

134. This report focuses on specific proposals aimed at raising the visibility of the Organization precisely at the time when it is the most visible, i.e. during its General Conference. Indeed, enhancing the visibility of the General Conference might increase general UNESCO visibility, and this will in turn attract more attention (political and public) to the General Conference, thereby starting a sort of virtuous circle. The General Conference indeed by its very existence as a top decision-making event has the makings of an important media event too. That having been said, it should also be acknowledged that the exercise is far from being a sure winner.

135. It should be recognized from the outset that efforts have been made so far by the Secretariat (such as the recent establishment of a Communication Plan), and that they are bringing some positive results, such as increased media coverage of the last session of the General Conference, where 356 journalists were accredited, resulting in more than 400 articles world-wide mentioning the General Conference. The proposals below are an attempt to improve this situation further in the future, even though one should note that there is still widespread doubt in UNESCO whether the Organization has ever succeeded in its efforts to make itself more visible to world opinion.

136. The Director-General presented a report (161 EX/43) on visibility to the Executive Board at its 161st session. This document was based on the recommendations submitted by an Expert Group, which were reiterated by the journalists who were present at the “60 Minutes” meeting (held on 11 March 2007) devoted to this subject (the main points of both can be found in the appendices to the individual report contained in Annex 5). In this understanding, the view has been supported that there is no need to elaborate further on the analysis concerning visibility and communication, but rather select a few key points pertinent to the objective of enhancing the visibility of the General Conference, and propose related action. This opinion is still, however, open to considerable debate.

**(a) Salient points concerning the visibility of the General Conference.**

137. The Organization as a whole is certainly in need of a communication culture based on openness towards public information and communication with media. In this regard, the idea that mass media are interested only in scandals and conflicts cannot be considered as an absolute rule. There is always some place for good and positive information that might be the object of attention, provided that it is clear and relevant, i.e. professionally transmitted. The Organization is in need of mechanisms enabling it to produce media-friendly messages – quick, focused, clear and avoiding jargon. In order to find the right target, it is necessary to know what media are interested in, and there is scope for work and close cooperation thereon both for the Secretariat and for Member States, in particular through National Commissions. Field offices should also be asked to disseminate messages based on our “hands-on” activities on the ground.

138. One matter that has constantly tested the ability of the UNESCO “community” as a whole to have a common understanding is the manner in which to communicate on politically sensitive issues where the habits and practices of international diplomacy instinctively seek calm and privacy. It is clear that there is a need for a balance in this issue, particularly in a House such as UNESCO where the practice of consensus has become so all-pervading, sought-after and – on a number of occasions – indeed successful and where other organizations have tended to fail. It can nevertheless be asserted that a well-designed media plan for such issues can successfully deliver to the media the facts and issues behind the case and thus enable the media to reflect on the issues in their own ways while at the same time the negotiations can proceed quietly within UNESCO’s walls until a result can be proclaimed. Such an approach would enable the media to focus on UNESCO and thus enhance its visibility and its credit as a forum for the resolution of internationally divisive issues. In this regard, it remains a mystery why some of the most successfully resolved issues of the past few years – ones such as the Danish Caricatures or the Mughrabi Ascent – should not have been fed to the media and nurtured for the sake of the Organization’s visibility.

139. From the standpoint of its specific programme activities, the scattering of UNESCO’s strengths over a multitude of programmes (difficult to avoid, since it stems from the scope of its multidisciplinary mandate) tends to blur its public image and thus works against it in terms of visibility. And yet it should be noted that this image may be good and positively perceived in quite a few cases. The positive image of UNESCO makes the Organization attractive to successful partnerships such as the L’Oreal Women in Science awards, and this is certainly one of the main avenues to explore further, not only because of its obvious self-worth for the international community, but also for the clear communication opportunities this kind of partnership offers to the

Organization. The role of UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors and Artists for Peace could help in the communication strategy.

140. The General Conference is relatively more successful in attracting national media of Member States, mainly due to the presence of heads of State and ministers during the session, but there is much room for improvement as far as wide-ranging international media are concerned. This target may be reached through the combination of content (attractiveness of events) and form (communication tools). The proposals below are particularly addressed to attain this objective.

141. Finally, as shown in Annex 7 to the present report, it should be noted that although greater visibility calls for greater and better focused efforts, the means devoted by the Organization to achieve it through public information have regularly decreased in each biennial period over the last decade.

### **(b) Specific recommendations**

142. To start with, it would be useful to convene communication strategy meetings between the Secretariat (in particular the Bureau of Public Information, the Spokesperson and programme sector representatives) and representatives of Member States. The first two would take place beforehand, at preparation stage, the first one a month before the opening of the session and the second a few days before, and would include also Directors of field offices present in Paris to attend the General Conference. A few days after the closure of the General Conference a third – debriefing – meeting would be convened, in order to take stock of strengths, liabilities and lessons learned concerning the communication strategy.

143. The Bureau of Public Information (BPI) should play an active role throughout the preparation of the session, issuing guidance on the right (or counterproductive) approach to media coverage and visibility. It could also organize, in close cooperation with permanent delegations, media workshops in key languages prior to the General Conference.

144. Before the opening of the session, each sector could prepare a two-page (maximum) media-friendly note, including graphics and charts, explaining major features of the debate to come during the General Conference, together with background and past achievements information. These would also serve the purpose of briefing heads of delegation.

145. Later, during the session, the Secretariat would produce a daily two-page note in the form of “News of the Day”, synthesizing the key issues debated during the day. For his part, the Director-General, together with visiting head(s) of State or royalty, could organize a press conference at the appropriate moment of the session. In this connection, it would also be convenient to foresee media assistance for ministers, notably by setting-up a press room where ministers (and the Director-General, heads-of-State, etc.) might effectively communicate to the media.

146. It would also be appropriate for Member States to take responsibility for the visibility of UNESCO within their own realm. In this connection, they should be invited to conduct, in the manner of a market-research exercise and in close cooperation with their National Commissions, opinion polls on perception of and expectations towards UNESCO. These could be based on standard questionnaires prepared with the assistance of the Secretariat. The results would be fed to the above-mentioned preparatory strategy meetings.

147. The following suggestions might also be useful to raise the visibility of the Organization during the General Conference: (i) invite a great thinker of international reputation, such as a Nobel Prize winner, to participate in the opening of the session (and/or in round tables, as suggested above) and in the ensuing press conference; (ii) further involve audiovisual media to enhance the exposure of UNESCO to the public, including broadcasting a special ministerial-level round table with a limited number of participants, selected in consultation with the media and moderated by a professional; (iii) based on partnership success stories, such as the Women in Science partnership

(L’Oreal) or the Digital Library (United States Library of Congress) reinforce partnerships that may help to raise visibility, through media-attractive events to take place during the General Conference; and (iv) make better use of the Youth Forum for visibility purposes. The Forum could be renamed UNESCO Youth Summit.