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**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE EXECUTION
OF THE PROGRAMME ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

**UNITED NATIONS YEAR OF DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS
UNESCO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

SUMMARY

The present document is prepared for information of Members of the Executive Board. It provides background about the consideration of the subject "Dialogue among Civilizations", especially in the context of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, 2001 and sets out principles followed by UNESCO. Furthermore, it reviews activities undertaken by UNESCO in observing the year and presents a framework of action for UNESCO and its programme sectors pertaining to the subject, which is the result of an intersectoral effort.

I. BACKGROUND

1. By resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2001 United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In doing so, the Assembly emphasized the importance of tolerance and recognized “the diverse civilizational achievements of mankind, crystallizing cultural pluralism and creative human diversity”. The resolution invited “Governments, the United Nations system, including UNESCO to plan and implement appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, including through organizing conferences and seminars and disseminating information and scholarly material on the subject ...”.
2. Subsequently, by its resolution 55/23 of 11 January 2001 the General Assembly stated that “civilizations are not confined to individual nation-States, but rather encompass different cultures within the same civilization ...” and that “globalization brings greater interrelatedness among people and increased interaction among cultures and civilizations”. Moreover, the Assembly noted that “the celebration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations ... constitutes a profoundly human challenge that invites us to embrace the interdependence of humankind and its rich cultural diversity. The General Assembly also invited “Governments, the United Nations system, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and other relevant international and non-governmental organizations to continue and further intensify planning and organizing appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, *inter alia*, through organizing conferences and seminars and disseminating information and scholarly material on the subject, and to inform the Secretary-General of their activities”.
3. By resolution 55/23, the General Assembly also decided to devote two days of plenary meetings at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, on 3 and 4 December 2001, to the consideration of the item, including consideration of any follow-up measures, and commemoration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and encouraged Member States and observers to be represented at the highest possible political level.
4. General Conference resolution 31 of 17 November 1999 endorsed the terms of proclaiming the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, welcoming “the collective endeavour of the international community to enhance understanding through constructive dialogue among civilizations on the threshold of the third millennium”. It also recognized “the importance of the values embodied in the resolution, such as the importance in international relations and the significant role of dialogue as a means of reaching understanding, removing threats to peace and strengthening interaction and exchange among civilizations”.
5. The General Conference further recommended that “UNESCO play a leading role in the organization of activities of a cultural, educational, scientific and social nature, which aim to facilitate and promote dialogue among civilizations, through, for instance, active collaboration in the organization of special events, conferences and colloquia on themes related to intercultural dialogue”; and urged “Member States to give the year 2001, the United Nations year of Dialogue among Civilizations, all due prominence and to support activities aimed at facilitating and promoting dialogue among civilizations”.

II. PRINCIPLES

6. The guiding principles for the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations are intrinsically linked to the three fundamental principles of universality, diversity and dignity, which will guide UNESCO's activities during the forthcoming Medium-Term Strategy (see Draft 31 C/4). These principles are closely related to the values of justice, solidarity, tolerance, sharing and equity, respect for human rights and democratic principles.

7. The United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations represents an opportunity for UNESCO to highlight, in all its domains, the accomplishments by various civilizations and cultures, to promote the concept of dialogue, and to facilitate dynamic and inclusive modalities for dialogue between cultures and civilizations in a globalized world.

8. UNESCO's efforts are based on an understanding of the term "civilization" as a universal and plural phenomenon, nourished by each society's specific characteristics, and encompassing a multiplicity of dimensions (economic, political, social, environmental, educational, cultural, scientific, philosophical, spiritual etc.). In contrast to the evolutionary vision that separates civilizations in order to place them in a hierarchical order or oppose them, UNESCO is emphasizing that there is no civilization which has not been enriched by interaction and exchange with other civilizations: civilizations are profoundly "intercultural". They are founded on sharing and mutual enrichment through dialogue.

9. Intercultural exchanges have intensified in scope and pace with globalization. It has resulted in cultural penetration and overlapping, the coexistence in a given social space of several cultural traditions, and in a more vivid interpenetration of cultural experience and practice. In such a context, the notion of "civilization" carries with it the implicit assumption of a homogenous, integral, and coherent unity, which hardly corresponds to a lived reality. Rather, the question of promoting and protecting cultural diversity lies at the core of the larger framework of dialogue among civilizations in the contemporary context.

10. It should be recalled that the general principles for dealing with diversity were spelled out clearly by the World Commission on Culture and Development in 1995 and endorsed by the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, held in Stockholm 1998.

11. In today's knowledge-based societies, cultures are rapidly becoming transboundary creations exposed and exchanged, often instantaneously, throughout the world via the media and the Internet. Certain types of activities – networking, building of solidarity, lobbying and reflection – suggest that culture must increasingly be regarded as a process rather than as a finished "product". The challenge for governments and civil societies is to find ways of channelling such exchanges – "dialogues" – through democratic practices that respect human rights, gender equity, tolerance, sustainability.

12. UNESCO is facing new types of challenges in the struggle to promote cultural diversity, to preserve the world's heritage, including its intangible domains, and to foster dialogue among cultures and among civilizations. Cultural diversity has come under siege owing to the preponderance of limited cultural and linguistic approaches and content, effectively disseminated through new and old media. Indigenous people and cultures as well as local knowledge are most affected and UNESCO has an important mission to help preserve their uniqueness and identity.

13. Information and communications technologies hold the potential to foster hitherto unknown types of engagement, contacts and interaction among individuals, peoples,

communities, nations, cultures and civilizations that can be harnessed to build understanding, solidarity and peace at all levels and to reduce isolation and exclusion so often associated with poverty. Participatory governance, the promotion of creativity, intensified intercultural dialogue, new forms of cultural exchange and dialogue among civilizations leading to better understanding and exchanges are other potential benefits and areas of intervention for the Organization.

14. Many of the problems faced by today's world have arisen as a consequence of differences *within* nations. Dialogue therefore begins at home. While globalization is creating new opportunities for cultural exchange, conflicts arising within nation-States often involve cultural matters. New forms of intolerance and aggression are emerging. Xenophobia and racism, ethnic wars, prejudice and stigma, segregation and discrimination, mainly based on ethnicity and gender, are widespread, generating violence and suffering. Tensions between migration and citizenship have intensified, as cultural minorities increasingly articulate their cultural rights as human rights. According to the International Organization for Migration, there are currently some 150 million migrants in the world, a figure expected to rise to 230 million by 2050. In ever more countries, migrants are sustaining economic activities and social service systems. Understanding the relationship with "others" therefore has acquired a new urgency, and this will be one focus in UNESCO's many initiatives throughout the Year 2001.

15. The acknowledgement, approval and even celebration of diversity does imply pluralism. Cultural pluralism refers to the way in which different nation-States, civil groups, and national and international institutions understand and organize cultural diversity. The manner in which diversity is defined and acted upon by governments and civil society will determine whether it is to lead to greater overall social creativity, cohesion and inclusion – or to violence and exclusion. Equity and cultural recognition are major avenues to turning cultural diversity into an opportunity rather than an obstacle – and they hold the key to sustainable pluralism. Hence, the very apt motto by the United Nations for the Year "Diversity is not a threat".

16. Real dialogue occurs when a full recognition of the different "other" generates a preoccupation with and responsibility for the "other". In many respects, it is an invitation to re-think the idea of humanity. The capacity of human beings to feel empathy and compassion for others goes deeper than the mere coexistence of different ethno-cultural groups. Such feelings touch the most profound spiritual nature of human beings and should be given overt recognition in social and political discourse relating to a global society.

III. REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES ALREADY CARRIED OUT BY UNESCO

17. In September 2000, UNESCO organized a launch event for the Year at United Nations Headquarters and it has since carried out a broad range of activities, in cooperation with Member States, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The launch took the form of a Presidential Round Table on "The Dialogue among Civilizations" held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 5 September 2000, on the eve of the Millennium Summit. The round table was organized in cooperation with the United Nations and with the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ten Heads of State and two Ministers of Foreign Affairs participated in the session, sharing their views of how the dialogue among civilizations could lead to a new paradigm of international relations that recognizes universally shared values while preserving and respecting cultural diversity. A group of internationally eminent scholars and thinkers also met the same day for a further debate.

18. UNESCO has produced a video on the proceedings of the Round Table on Dialogue among Civilizations. It will be made available on the Internet for UNESCO's field network, governments, National Commissions for UNESCO and other partners. A publication with the proceedings of the round table is in print and will shortly be released.

19. Since the launching event, UNESCO has contributed to many international events, including:

- From 14 to 16 September 2000, UNESCO organized in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, an international congress on interreligious dialogue in the framework of the “Spiritual Convergence and Intercultural Dialogue” and the “East-West Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia”.
- In November 2000, UNESCO participated in the annual conference of the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO in Ottawa, Canada. One of the main themes of this conference was devoted to the dialogue among civilizations.
- In November 2000, UNESCO participated as the only United Nations Organization in the Second Quadrilateral Conference of Ancient Civilizations, bringing together parliamentary leaders from Egypt, Greece, Islamic Republic of Iran and Italy, held in Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran.
- In December 2000, UNESCO organized in Paris a seminar for German journalists with briefings on the United Nations Year for Dialogue among Civilizations.
- On 8 January 2001, UNESCO co-sponsored a major philharmonic concert with the Government of Lithuania at the Théâtre de Champs Elysées in Paris to inaugurate the Year.
- On 5 February 2001, the Director-General delivered a guest lecture at the Oxford Centre for Islamic studies, United Kingdom, focusing on the renewed contexts for dialogue at all levels of society, the recognition of diversity inherent in the notion of dialogue, and its important potential for humanizing globalization.
- On 8 and 9 February 2001, the Director-General addressed the UNEP Governing Council in Nairobi, Kenya, in connection with its ministerial meeting devoted to the subject of the Dialogue among Civilizations and Sustainable Development.
- UNESCO also contributed to the Conference on Dialogue among Asian Civilizations, held in Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 17 and 18 February 2001.
- The Director-General addressed the International Colloquium on the Indus Valley Civilization on the occasion of its inaugural ceremony held in Islamabad, Pakistan, 6 April 2001.
- An international conference on “Dialogue among Civilizations” was held in Vilnius, Lithuania (23-26 April 2001), under the auspices of the President of Lithuania, the President of Poland and the Director-General of UNESCO.

20. During the remainder of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, UNESCO will organize, initiate or sponsor a range of activities in its fields of competence – education, culture, science and communication – which aim at facilitating and promoting dialogue

among cultures and civilizations, including special events, conferences, colloquia, publications and media productions. Among the events scheduled will be the UNU/UNESCO “International Conference on the Dialogue of Civilizations”, Tokyo and Kyoto (31 July-3 August), and the Summit of the Francophony on “Dialogue of Cultures”, Beirut, Lebanon (26-28 October), complemented by many national and regional events.

21. Several UNESCO special days and observances, festivals (especially youth festivals) as well as activities by the UNESCO Prizes and Chairs will be oriented towards the theme of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Among the Prizes selected for such focus are the “UNESCO Prize for Peace Education” (10 December 2001), the “UNESCO Cities for Peace Prize” (during the General Conference, 22 October-10 November 2001), the “UNESCO ‘International Music Council’ Music Prize” (September or October 2001), as well as the forthcoming “UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence” (16 November 2002).

22. Towards the end of 2001, an issue of the *Courier* will be devoted to the theme of dialogue among civilizations. This will enable the Organization to take stock of the results and main features of the many events held throughout the Year. It will help to capture the significance of dialogue in an increasingly interconnected world where cultural diversity poses new challenges and opportunities for mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.

23. UNESCO has also created a dedicated website for the Year – available in English, French and Spanish. This internet site will continue to be maintained and expanded. It contains key information latest news on ongoing activities and forthcoming events and is linked to numerous other sites of relevance, among them the United Nations website. It can be accessed at:

<http://www.unesco.org/dialogue2001>

<http://www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/en/events.htm>

IV. THE FRAMEWORK OF ACTION FOR UNESCO’S FUTURE ACTIVITIES

24. At the policy level and level of strategic orientation, the dialogue among civilizations will be a significant issue for UNESCO’s activities, especially in the Culture Programme, not only during the Year but beyond the Medium-term Strategy covering the period 2002-2007 (Draft 31 C/4). One of the three major strategic thrusts and objectives for the Culture Programme centres around universality, diversity and participation. As regards the Programme and Budget for 2002-2003 (Draft 31 C/5), the principal priority for Major Programme IV has been defined as “Diversity, cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue”.

25. Through its mankind and regional histories and through interregional, intercultural projects (notably the Silk Road and the Slave Route projects), UNESCO has already shed light on the complex processes involved in cultural interaction and their relevance for today’s life. The activities undertaken during the United Nations Year for the Dialogue among Civilizations will provide opportunities to reflect on these relationships and their present-day implications from different angles. Through conferences, workshops, publications and a dedicated website, UNESCO will promote awareness about these processes and relationships. It will also stimulate the conduct of research in order to document and demonstrate in more detail the benefits and enrichments civilizations and cultures have drawn from each other, for the larger good of humanity. UNESCO will support the creation of online networking facilities and interaction among research institutions internationally to promote synergies, collaboration and multidisciplinary results.

26. But beyond culture, it is clear that the dialogue among civilizations is of direct relevance for all other areas of the Organization. The dialogue among civilizations transcends dimensions of culture and heritage, affecting all areas of UNESCO's competence. It extends to a much larger agenda: different ways in which societies relate to and protect the environment, express solidarity, harness scientific and technological knowledge in innovative ways and express their societal experience and life through literature and the arts. UNESCO will seek to introduce aspects of the need and value of the dialogue among civilizations into curricula for history, geography and citizenship education.

27. All UNESCO's sectors, with input from field offices, will be actively involved in the preparation and implementation of relevant activities under the umbrella of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations within their specific spheres of competence.

28. The overall UNESCO focal point is the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP) who will be responsible for the coordination of all activities among the various sectors, and will ensure liaison with the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

29. Relevant UNESCO activities will also be organized in connection with the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), which will promote a culture of peace and non-violence that benefits humanity, in particular future generations. The first year of the Decade has been designated by the Director-General to focus on the dialogue among civilizations. The Decade places children at the centre of programmatic action and it will be specifically geared to their needs and involvement. Priority will be given to education with the aim of preparing children for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origins.

30. Activities in the various programme sectors include:

Education

Promoting universally shared values

An important dimension of UNESCO's role as catalyst for international cooperation in the pursuit of Education for All (EFA) goals consists in promoting new approaches to improve the quality of education for all throughout life, including the values forming the basis of social cohesion and respect for human dignity and linguistic diversity.

Revision of school textbooks

Support is being provided to Member States for the revision of school textbooks with a view to removing prejudices and stereotypes against specific groups in this literature. This action is undertaken on an intersectoral basis (ED/CLT) as it implies revisiting the general history of countries and revision of curricula. Particular attention is given to countries afflicted by internal conflicts.

Human rights education

The "Intercultural education and education for human rights" project, financed by the Government of Italy, is being implemented in Albania. Its objectives are to promote a climate of intercultural understanding and respect for human rights in all educational establishments,

through the introduction of the dimension of peace, human rights and democracy in the curricula, both at formal and non-formal levels.

Promotion of multilingual education

Within the LINGUAPAX network, a Language Institute on regional languages in the Caribbean region (Haiti) is planned, the preparatory work on the UNESCO Report on the world's languages has progressed, and the preparation of specialized teaching materials for language policies in education has been promoted.

International understanding

The approximately 6,500 institutions in 166 countries, which are part of the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), have been invited to undertake special activities for the celebration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. An International Friendship Encounter "Sport for a Culture of Peace" will be held in June, in Dinard, Saint Malo, France.

Promotion of student-teacher exchanges (and UNESCO Chairs) and internationalization of higher education

UNESCO will promote policy dialogue between all actors and stakeholders in education and enhance the exchange of information and expertise on innovative approaches and local solutions through advocacy and networks of learners, educational professionals and decision-makers. Measures will be taken to facilitate the mobility of teachers and students and to encourage broad participation of women.

Sciences

Tolerance

UNESCO's activities follow the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and the related Action Plan, adopted by the General Conference at its 28th session as follow-up to the United Nations Year of Tolerance. Special emphasis is placed on education and on sensitization for tolerance as a universally recognized value which transcends nations and communities.

The International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001) and the World Conference

UNESCO is actively involved in the observance of the International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The main event will be the World Conference against Racism (Durban, South Africa, 31 August-7 September 2001).

Preparations for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia (Durban, South Africa, 31 August-7 September 2001)

UNESCO has contributed to all preparatory meetings for the World Conference. Close links are maintained with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Mobilization of partners

UNESCO's traditional partners are being mobilized to contribute actively to the Year and the Conference. Among these are the UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance, the UNESCO Associated Schools, as well as various human rights research and training institutions.

Publications, information and media outreach

Special publications, handbooks and kits will be published during 2001. A compilation of articles by eminent human rights specialists on various aspects of discrimination, as well as the texts of major standard-setting instruments in this field, is being prepared in cooperation with OHCHR. *A Guide to Human Rights Institutions, Standards, Mechanisms* will be dedicated to the International Year, as will *Human Rights: Major International Instruments, Status as at 31 May 2001*.

Social sciences and dialogue

An International Colloquium on "Les Civilisations dans le regard de l'autre" will be co-organized with L'Ecole Pratique Des Hautes Etudes, Paris at UNESCO Headquarters on 13 and 14 December 2001.

Follow-up to the World Conference on Science

Worldwide cooperation among scientists can make a constructive contribution to global security and to the development of peaceful interactions between different nations, societies and cultures. UNESCO's programmes in science focus on issues that are at the root of potential conflicts and ensure that the ethical dimensions of the current scientific and technological evolution are fully addressed.

The World Water Assessment Programme

In accordance with the outcomes of the World Water Vision project, UNESCO regards the resolution of water-related disputes, especially at the international level, to be dependent, to a large extent, upon the reconciliation of different cultural perceptions and value systems. These perspectives form an integrated part of the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) and its subcomponents.

Scientific and traditional knowledge holders

In order to strengthen the dialogue between scientific and traditional knowledge holders, intersectoral field projects are under way in Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Haiti, and Jamaica. The enhancement of natural resource management through the creation of synergies between science-based approaches and local and indigenous knowledge is also pursued in a series of international meetings and forums of scientists organized by UNESCO.

Culture

Intercultural dialogue

The priority given to dialogue among cultures and civilizations will focus, in both reflection and action, on two closely linked lines of emphasis: the promotion of mutual knowledge of cultures, civilizations and spiritual traditions and the highlighting and recognition of instances of interaction and cross-fertilization. Cultural tourism constitutes

another thrust of the Organization's action for the protection and revitalization of cultural diversity, which, by its very nature, affords an opportunity for dialogue among civilizations. During 2001, the intercultural "Route" documentaries and television programmes will be re-diffused, and a new publication: "Silk Roads: Highways of Culture and Commerce" widely distributed.

Examples of planned events

"Reflections on Interculturality", Barcelona, Spain (Centre of Documentation and Research on Interculturality (CIDOB), 28-30 June

"International Conference on Education, Religions and Science on the Silk Routes", Almaty, Kazakhstan, October 2001 (CLT/SC)

"Intercultural Dialogue in Central Africa and in the Region of the Big Lakes", Libreville, Gabon, Autumn 2001

Participatory pluralism

Based on best practice analysis, UNESCO will develop guidelines for participatory pluralism, and seek to sensitize national and local authorities as to the crucial role to be carried out by cultural and educational institutions in this regard. Notions of dialogue, debate, tolerance and mutual respect for the other irrespective of their origins, gender, race or creed are at the core of this approach.

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

In the framework of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004), UNESCO will apply an interdisciplinary approach towards ensuring the full participation of minorities and marginalized and vulnerable groups in devising, implementing and monitoring policies and actions which directly affect them. An International Colloquium and book fair on "Indigenous identities: oral, written expressions and new technologies" will be held at UNESCO Headquarters in May 2001.

Intangible cultural heritage

The ceremony of the first Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity will take place at UNESCO Headquarters on 18 May 2001.

"UNESCO will encourage nominations for the programme of "Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage" and stimulate the use of the Guidelines for the establishment of a Living Human Treasures system. This will feed into the preparatory work for a normative instrument which is intended to improve the Recommendation on the safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore and create new conceptual and legal framework for intangible cultural heritage. An exhibition on "Youth and world heritage" will be co-organized by UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) in the context of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the International Year of Volunteers at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 25 November 2001 to 9 January 2002. The exhibition will be accompanied by a symposium entitled "Youth and World Heritage: A Privileged Space for Dialogue among Civilizations".

Communication and Information

Intercultural communication

The “Screen Without Frontiers” project provides a database of television programmes to public service television stations in developing countries, fostering the circulation of audiovisual productions from South to South. A series of CreaTV workshops will be held during 2001 in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia, with the aim of co-screening productions and promoting cultural diversity through audiovisual media.

Networking of institutions

In Central Asia, “HeritageNet” seeks to converge methods of research via digital catalogues, enhance access to multilingual websites, establish virtual exhibitions between different museums, and promote international dissemination of e-digests on cultural development. La Bibliothèque virtuelle méditerranéenne (MEDLIB) highlights, via the Internet, the documentary heritage of the Mediterranean world produced by different establishments within and outside, the countries of the region.

Enhancing mutual understanding

In collaboration with EBU, Europe by Satellite and the Finnish TV YLE, UNESCO and the Baltic Media Centre will set up a Daily Regional Satellite News and Current Affairs Exchange Programme for southern Eastern Europe. The objectives are to ensure the free flow of information in the region, to assist in de-escalating tension and conflict between and within the countries of the SEE, to ensure the access to regional news, and to enhance the independence and professionalism of public television stations.

Women and Youth

Cross-cultural encounters

As 2001 is also the International Year of Volunteers, UNESCO will develop pilot projects on youth volunteering, with a focus on intercultural learning aspects, in cooperation with international volunteer NGOs. UNESCO will be further organizing a series of round tables or special action days on the theme of the “Dialogue of civilizations” within the framework of several international youth festivals.

“ Arab Women in a knowledge society”

This project envisages to focus on the role of Arab women in the creation and sharing of knowledge, their access to and use of information-communication technologies, and their contribution to humankind’s cultural and scientific heritage. It is expected to provide a forum for discussion *among* Arab women and *between* Arab women and women of other regions and cultures of the world.

V. PRINCIPAL ACTORS

31. The principal actors in all activities will be UNESCO Member States, National Commissions, relevant international and non-governmental organizations, UNESCO Secretariat units including field offices, the scientific community, and the media. UNESCO will seek to mobilize decision-makers, intellectuals, educators, and members of the scientific

community in a series of regional, international conferences and meetings. UNESCO Clubs, Parliamentarians, 21st Century Partners, and key partners from the private sector will also be associated with UNESCO activities. The electronic “Global Constituents Agora” will play an important role in this outreach effort.

32. National Commissions will be invited to foster awareness about the Year in collaboration with the media, NGOs and schools (through country coordinators of associated schools in Member States) with the aim of promoting the publication of brochures and leaflets in local languages for wide distribution to the representatives of civil society, parliamentarians, organizers of academic lectures and symposia, and to social events such as “Day of Dialogue among Civilizations” in schools and universities.

VI. CONCLUSION

33. UNESCO’s contribution to the celebration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will be both significant and highly visible. In accordance with its mandate, and while drawing on the vast experience of the Organization in this domain, UNESCO will implement programmes and activities in its spheres of competence in order to promote and facilitate dialogue among cultures and civilizations. The motto chosen by the United Nations “Diversity is not a threat” is most appropriate and fully endorsed by UNESCO.

34. In today’s world, the need for dialogue is increasingly relevant and acute, both at the national and international levels. The faster pace and huge volume of global interaction have prompted a greater awareness of cultural diversity. While it has given wider scope to the expression of such diversity, it has also permitted the representation of differences such as hierarchy, domination and conflict. Difference is often used as an excuse for intolerance, hatred and the annihilation of others. Yet the very same differences, in a framework of political equality, human rights and responsibility for others, can – and often do – offer the opportunity to explore new horizons and to enrich our lives.

35. In many ways, the human trajectory is the history of different answers to the same questions. How do people behave towards those of a different community? How should they behave? These questions are as relevant at the level of interpersonal relations as in interstate, international and intercultural contexts. Our choices in relating to others with different cultures, traditions and heritages will shape the societies of the twenty-first century.

36. The United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is therefore a unique opportunity for UNESCO to take a fresh look at the potentialities of dialogue in a globalized world, to provide the concept with new meaning, and to facilitate dynamic and inclusive modalities for imbibing it with vivacity. The challenge is to broaden the spectrum and to orient the dialogue, not only towards the historic past but also towards the present and future, so that it becomes an instrument of transformation, a yardstick for peace and tolerance, a vehicle for diversity and pluralism, especially in culture, with the ultimate aim of furthering the common good.