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

**PART I**

**Dialogue among Civilizations**

**Information document by the Director-General**

**SUMMARY**

Pursuant to paragraph 405 of document 167 EX/4 Part I, this information document contains specific information on recent high-level activities undertaken by UNESCO in pursuit of a dialogue among civilizations. In particular, this note contains the full text of the Delhi Declaration adopted at the International Ministerial Conference on the “Dialogue among Civilizations – Quest for New Perspectives”, co-organized by the Government of India and UNESCO, and the Message from Ohrid adopted at the Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilizations, held on 29 and 30 August 2003 in Ohrid, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The document further makes reference to numerous national, subregional, regional and international events which were organized by governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations on the theme of the dialogue among civilizations in the various regions of the world (accessible on the website) [www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/en/conferences.html](http://www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/en/conferences.html).

1. Paragraph 405 of document 167 EX/4 Part I reports on various activities undertaken or co-organized by the Secretariat in pursuit of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. Two of the most significant events held during 2003 were: (a) an International Ministerial Conference on the theme “Dialogue among Civilizations – Quest for New Perspectives”,

co-organized by the Government of India and UNESCO, held in New Delhi, India, 9 and 10 July 2003; and (b) the Ohrid Regional Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations, co-organized by the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and UNESCO, held in Ohrid (FYROM) on 29 and 30 August 2003.

2. Both conferences resulted in significant policy statements, unanimously adopted by the participants in each event. The New Delhi Declaration and the Message from Ohrid set out new approaches, concepts and perspectives for future activities with respect to the dialogue among civilizations and define future UNESCO action and follow-up. Both texts are therefore reproduced in the annexes to this information document. Annex I contains the Delhi Declaration and Annex II, the Message from Ohrid.

3. Mention must be made of the extraordinarily high level of participation in each of the two events. The Delhi conference was opened by the Honourable Prime Minister of India and the Director-General of UNESCO and was attended by representatives from over 80 countries representing all regions, among them some 30 ministers or deputy ministers. The President of the UNESCO General Conference, the President of the UNESCO Executive Board and Permanent Delegates to UNESCO from several countries also participated. In addition, numerous eminent experts and senior personalities from all walks of life – including government, parliaments, academia, the media, religious and spiritual communities, the private sector and civil society – contributed to the deliberations, especially through three special working groups.

4. The Ohrid Regional Forum was a historic event bringing together eight Heads of State from the South-East Europe region – The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM – host country), Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovenia. Personal representatives of Heads of State from 20 other countries, both from within and outside the region, also attended as did the President of the UNESCO General Conference, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the High Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of UNMIK, the President of the Appeals of Conscience Foundation, the Director-General of ALECSO and the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Dialogue among Civilizations. More than 100 other personalities from the regions and international organizations as well as religious and spiritual leaders and representatives of the private sector contributed to the work of the Ohrid Forum.

5. The Director-General wishes to pay tribute equally to all initiatives undertaken and events with respect to the dialogue among civilizations organized by many governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the academic community, the private sector, religious and spiritual leaders and communities, and various actors of civil society. The results of all these events will help to focus and inspire future action by UNESCO and the international community at large. Information on these activities can be found on the dedicated UNESCO dialogue website at [www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/en/conferences.html](http://www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/en/conferences.html).

## ANNEX I

### **New Delhi Declaration adopted at the International Ministerial Conference on the “Dialogue among Civilizations – Quest for New Perspectives” New Delhi, 9 and 10 July 2003**

We, the participants in the International Ministerial Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations – Quest for New Perspectives, held in New Delhi from 9 to 10 July 2003,

Recognizing that all civilizations celebrate the unity in diversity of humankind and are enriched and have evolved through dialogue with other civilizations,

Underlining the contemporary relevance of the ancient Indian concept of Vasudeva Kutumbakam, which means that all the world is one family, and that a common humanity unites all civilizations,

Recognizing that dialogue among civilizations, which has existed since the earliest stages of history, has blurred the frontiers of different civilizations and led to today’s multitude of overlapping cultures, which are rich in diversity while preserving the uniqueness of identities,

Noting that while civilization provides an important source of identity, people have multiple identities deriving from nationality, gender, profession, etc.,

Emphasizing that complementarity of civilizations is strengthened by constant interplay and exchange of ideas as well as by creativity in science, art, philosophy, ethics and spirituality, and allows for the highest attainments of civilizational diversity,

Noting that globalization, while offering great benefits, also presents the challenge of preserving and celebrating the rich intellectual and cultural diversity of humankind and of civilization,

Noting further the threat to equitable social and economic development of all civilizations consequent to problems of poverty, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, and profligate utilization of the natural resource base of the planet,

Emphasizing that international cooperation, as a key means of promoting dialogue among civilizations, should contribute to enabling everyone to have access to knowledge, to enjoy the arts and literature of all peoples, to share in advances made in science in all parts of the world and in the resulting benefits, and to contribute to the enrichment of social, economic and cultural life,

Convinced of the need to contribute to the Global Agenda and Programme of Action for Dialogue among Civilizations contained in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/6 of 21 November 2001,

Recognize that tolerance is a fundamental value common to all civilizations and that this includes respect for others, regardless of diversity of belief, culture and language, neither fearing nor repressing differences within and between societies but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity;

1. Underline the need to address and overcome ignorance and prejudice about the ways of life and customs of peoples;

2. Recognize the crucial role of education in promoting a scientific temper and an ethical and spiritual value system which facilitate the use of knowledge and reasoning in understanding other cultures and civilizations;
3. Recognize further that education promotes tolerance, respect for diversity and friendship among peoples and nations;
4. Affirm that the nature and content and quality of education should help to develop knowledge, values, attitudes and skills necessary to ensure a high quality of life for all;
5. Recognize that education is necessary to develop communities and societies rooted in principles of democracy, justice and respect for human rights;
6. Invite governments to also give special emphasis to democratic principles and practices as well as pluralism, including through the teaching and learning at all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education;
7. Encourage all governments to expand their educational curricula and learning materials in order to promote a better understanding of all cultures and civilizations – especially through the teaching of respect for various cultures and civilizations and their histories and philosophies, human rights education, non-violence and the teaching of languages;
8. Emphasize the importance of knowledge, information and scholarship among governments and civil society in order to promote a better understanding of all cultures and civilizations;
9. Emphasize that the pursuit of the six Education for All (EFA) goals, including especially the fight against gender discrimination in education, is essential to an inclusive approach to dialogue among civilizations;
10. Resolve to take suitable steps to establish in educational institutions a learning environment which will contribute to tolerance, respect and understanding about the diversity and wealth of cultural identities;
11. Urge governments to take full and effective measures to ensure that educational institutions are protected from teachings that promote extremism, intolerance and violence;
12. Reaffirm that all acts of terrorism represent an attack against humanity, as the killing of innocent civilians in order to spread terror is despicable to the values of all civilizations;
13. Affirm that in the twenty-first century, science must become a shared asset benefiting all peoples, serving as a powerful resource for economic transformation and for understanding natural and social phenomena;
14. Recognize that science and technology are major engines of social change which should be guided by ethical and moral perspectives and approaches;
15. Emphasize that social and human sciences should assume a much more proactive role in analysing all the dimensions of social interaction and transformation in a rapidly changing world with a view to ensuring the well-being of the societies and to enhancing global understanding of civilizational dynamics and processes;

16. Underline the importance of traditional and local knowledge systems as dynamic expressions of perceiving and understanding the world, and that this tangible and intangible cultural heritage and empirical knowledge need to be protected and preserved;
17. Affirm further that the information and communication revolution offers new and effective means of exchanging scientific knowledge and advancing education and research which promote the economic and social development of all people;
18. Further recognize that information and communication technologies can enhance intercultural communication and mutual understanding, especially through the promotion of cultural and linguistic pluralism, the generation of cross-cultural links, and the sharing of knowledge and information in various forms by networking communities and individuals;
19. Affirm therefore the need for enhanced intercultural dialogue through international cooperation in order for all peoples and nations to share with one another their knowledge and skills;
20. Stress the need to develop the various branches of knowledge side by side and, as far as possible, simultaneously, so as to establish a harmonious balance between technical progress and the intellectual and socio-economic advancement of mankind;
21. Affirm that the respect for diversity of cultures, including the protection and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, values of tolerance and mutual understanding are fostered through multi-civilizational discourse and are the best guarantors of peace in the world;
22. In the context of the above, the Conference:
  - (a) Enjoins all governments and civil society to support actively a dialogue within and among civilizations and cultures so that it will become an effective instrument of transformation, a yardstick for peace and tolerance, and a vehicle for diversity and pluralism;
  - (b) Calls upon governments and civil society to ensure the empowerment and full participation of women and youth in efforts to foster dialogue within and among civilizations and to generate equitable, inclusive societies where mutual understanding may flourish and people may learn to live together in peace;
  - (c) Recommends that UNESCO initiate a broad-based collaboration with Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, civil society, the scientific, academic and artistic communities, the private sector and other partners with a view to translating the various proposals contained in this Declaration into concrete action.

## ANNEX II

### Message from Ohrid

adopted by the Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilizations  
Ohrid, 29 and 30 August 2003

We, the participants in the Ohrid Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilizations – led by eight Heads of State of South-East Europe –, commit ourselves to a culture of dialogue, tolerance and peace in order to advance the prosperity, well-being and mutual cooperation among the peoples and countries of the South-East Europe region.

The region, which is the cradle of European culture and civilization, has witnessed wars, destruction and ethnic cleansing, not least over the past decade. Fear of the Other was always a step towards hatred and conflict. Now, a new era is dawning where dialogue, understanding and reconciliation are poised to replace the tribulations of history and where unity can be found in and nourished through the rich diversity and humanity of the peoples. Forgiveness will help rid the region from the biases and ignorances of the past. A new generation of democratically elected leaders in the region promises a more peaceful future given their dedication to dialogue and genuine cooperation.

We are determined to demonstrate that the region can turn itself, through its own strategies and effective means of dialogue and engagement, into a vibrant space where people can jointly rediscover the stimulating wealth of differences, cultural exchanges and interaction as well as their *multiple identities*. The recognition of multiple identities of each individual is indeed a precondition for a constructive, practical and forward-looking dialogue apt to deepen and intensify the process of regional cooperation and stability.

The peoples of South-East Europe know how to live together, cooperate and exchange their precious knowledge with a view to solidifying freedom and democracy and upholding human rights. Free societies can be created only upon the existence of free individuals, who are sovereign in choosing their political status and in following their own economic, social and cultural development. Only under such circumstances can spirituality, religion, cultural and civilizational affiliation fully develop, whereby people can live together in harmony and in the pursuit of prosperity.

The Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2001, sets forth a useful framework for action by States, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. It also calls for interaction and dialogue among individuals and institutions in the spirit of inclusion and a collective desire to learn and to question assumptions. Such dialogue occurs at local, national, regional and international levels.

There are no superior or inferior civilizations. Neither are there superior or inferior races, languages and religions. We stress the equality of each cultural tradition and recognize the value of each civilizing experience as an invaluable and integral part of the commonly shared human experience. Cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indeed, diversity is not a threat.

We are convinced that dialogue represents a new paradigm of security, especially in a globalizing world with its manifold new challenges to individuals, communities and countries. A commitment to dialogue among civilizations is also a commitment against terrorism. Pursuing reconciliation and seeking security through dialogue requires a dynamic and proactive civil society. It necessitates a mobilization of political leaders, parliamentarians, scholars, spiritual and religious leaders, media

and non-governmental organizations as well as women and youth who all must play their roles and assume their responsibilities.

We believe in an active role of the private sector in promoting economic development of the region, which in turn contributes to its stability. The international business community is called upon to engage itself in activities reflecting its corporate social responsibility. In this respect, we are encouraged by ongoing initiatives launched by the private sector.

We therefore consider it of paramount importance to work with vigour towards dialogue and cooperation in all spheres of life through joint projects in education, scientific cooperation, cultural heritage as well as media and communications. The dialogue of the future necessitates transformation from verbal commitment into moral action through a range of practical projects, building on the action taken since the High-level Conference on Strengthening Cooperation in South-East Europe (Paris, April 2002) convened by UNESCO.

*Peace and security* in the region are of utmost importance for its stability and prosperity based on a continuing dialogue, regional cooperation and integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

*Education* remains the most fundamental basis for promoting tolerance, understanding, dialogue, respect for diversity, human rights and democratic principles. These values and dimensions together make up what is called “quality education”, which often entails a revision of school curricula and textbooks – and should build upon initiatives already undertaken by some countries in the region to eliminate stereotypes and misrepresentations of other cultures and identities.

Mutual respect of traditions and people will be possible when the matrix of values and the underlying spiritual and ethical foundations can influence education systems in different societies. We are conscious of the positive role that religion should play in this regard.

Fostering cooperation in higher education needs therefore to comprise support to a new generation of teachers and policy-makers of modern education. Education for pluralism can thus become a solid partner of political action for pluralism.

Development is a key question for the region. In that regard, *scientific and technological cooperation* is an important domain where progress can and must be made, in particular through the rebuilding of scientific networks and infrastructures and the building of competent institutional capacities and human resources in different disciplines.

The Ohrid Forum welcomes the proposal and offer by President Boris Trajkovski to convene and host in mid-2004 a conference of Ministers of Education and Science with the purpose of developing criteria for a universal network that could provide through education a continued development and promotion of dialogue among civilizations throughout the region and with the participation of experts from other regions.

The challenge for South-East European countries lies in associating *cultural heritage* with development policies and demonstrating how much this powerful symbol of a people’s identity can become a unifying force for national and regional reconciliation. This may well serve as a foundation for a shared future.

Once respect for cultural heritage allows people to understand themselves, it will also be a key to understand others. Fifty-four cultural and natural sites from the region are currently inscribed in UNESCO’s World Heritage List, which attests to an enormous cultural richness and diversity. It is therefore imperative to develop a culture of conservation and preservation. This will help avoid that

cultural heritage becomes a symbolic target of aggression and intentional destruction. The Ohrid Forum therefore endorses the adoption of a Declaration against the intentional destruction of cultural heritage, as proposed by the UNESCO Director-General, which is before the 32nd session of UNESCO's General Conference.

The Ohrid Forum welcomes the project *Cultural Routes in South-East Europe* and endorses the proposal and offer by President Georgi Parvanov to convene and host in 2004 a meeting of Heads of State of all countries of South-East Europe to be devoted to the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region.

The Ohrid Forum equally endorses the suggestion by Chairman Dragan Covic that the Mostar Bridge be reopened in 2004 in the presence of the Heads of State of the region.

Channels of *communication* must remain open and flexible in order to allow fostering mutual understanding and cooperation among people. The new era of information society requires new generations with solid skills in information technology, which today plays an important role in bringing cultures and people together. The use of new techniques such as e-learning and distance education is contributing to wider access to knowledge and information. Educational systems need to be adapted to create a new computer-literate generation.

The *media* are called to play a particularly crucial role in helping tear down barriers in the minds of people. Strengthening independent media and its professionalism, upholding freedom of the press and of expression, and promoting the right of access to information and knowledge are major challenges for South-East Europe. Apart from serving as channels of information, the media constitute also forceful instruments through which new identities can be constructed and mediated.

Our common task transcends the need to rebuild the region and bolster its confidence, competence and trust after a period of conflict, as we move to a common and newly enlarged and united Europe. Civilizations and cultures will mutually enrich themselves and help shape a new world where justice, equal development and eliminating poverty will curb possibilities for future conflicts.

During the Ohrid Forum three panels developed recommendations on the themes of "Peace and Stability", "Democracy and Civil Society" and "Culture and Diversity". The results of their deliberations will be a valuable input for concrete action in the future.

We express our sincere appreciation to President Boris Trajkovski, the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, and Rabbi Arthur Schneier and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation for having convened this important Forum. Our gratitude also goes to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Honourable Kofi Annan, for his support and encouragement and for the participation of his Personal Representative for the Dialogue among Civilizations. We equally appreciate the participation of DaimlerChrysler and their valuable contributions to the Forum, along with those of the Governments of Austria, Liechtenstein, Norway, Qatar and San Marino, of UNESCO, UNDP, the United Nations, the European Union and the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

Drawing lessons from history, we agree that reconciliation is the path for our common future. Dialogue must become a new refrain that will echo throughout the region and the world at large.