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**STATUS REPORT ON UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION
TO INTERNATIONAL ACTION AGAINST TERRORISM
THROUGH EDUCATION, THE SCIENCES, CULTURE AND
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

SUMMARY

The present document contains a status report by the Director-General on UNESCO's contribution to international action against terrorism through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information.

Decision proposed: paragraph 30.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the conclusion of its 171st session, the Executive Board decided, upon recommendation of its Bureau, to include an item entitled “Status report on UNESCO’s contribution to international action against terrorism through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information”. The present document contains a status report by the Director-General on the subject, drawing largely on contents already provided in document 171 EX/40, discussed by the Executive Board at its 171st session. This document retains its validity for the consideration of the item by the Board at its 172nd session.
2. Having considered document 171 EX/40, the Executive Board adopted 171 EX/Decision 52, which requested the Director-General to improve, by drawing up a plan of action, the coordination between the activities of the various sectors of UNESCO aimed at promoting dialogue among peoples through a better reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, to promote peace and understanding among peoples. The Director-General was invited, to that end, to consult with other partners and organizations, as appropriate, and to report thereon to the Executive Board at its 174th session.
3. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 had led to a renewed focus on the potential and role of dialogue among civilizations and cultures and the quest for mutual understanding in the global context. Increasingly, governments and political leaders called for the launch of effective activities, with concrete results, to counter the terrible cycle of extremism-fanaticism-terrorism. For its part, UNESCO redefined and sharpened its own contribution and framework of action in the fight against terrorism by adopting General Conference resolution 31 C/Resolution 39, “Call for international cooperation to prevent and eradicate acts of terrorism”.
4. Since 2000, UNESCO has held a series of international conferences to raise awareness among decision-makers and civil society stakeholders with a view to promoting the principles underlying an effective dialogue, strengthening international cooperation and adopting principles of constructive pluralism. There is a widely shared assessment that in order to generate results, activities in the context of international cooperation must move beyond agreement about general principles and support for the value underlying a dialogue among cultures and civilizations towards concrete and programmatic activities that can transform the dialogue from the conference hall into policies and practices with consequences for how people live together, interact with each other and understand one another. Only then can the dialogue be transformed into a genuine tool for bolstering peace and security and advancing sustainable development.
5. In 2003, General Conference resolution 32 C/Resolution 30 recognized that the world was confronted with tremendous challenges to its security when the stability of States was undermined by terrorism, extremism and aggressive separatism, and when emerging conflicts frequently led to overt and armed confrontation on the part of the State. It further recalled that true dialogue among civilizations, which was a prerequisite for the harmonious development of the world, was only possible in an atmosphere of absolute respect in which the fundamental and universal values of human existence were put into practice.
6. The thematic debate of the Executive Board in October 2004, devoted to “New approaches and concrete actions in the dialogue among civilizations” underlined the growing importance attached by all Members to ensuring a tangible impact and perceptible, if not measurable outcomes of a dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples. A shared understanding evolved in the process that all civilizations ought to become learning civilizations enabling the development of a broad dialogue and a better understanding among civilizations. Tolerance and respect for the Other

are key values and dimensions in this process of dialogue, which ought to include also observance of women's rights and activities aimed at women's empowerment and gender equality as well as a meaningful integration of youth. This implies the need for both women and men and for young people to participate in dialogue-related activities, strengthening in the process a culture of peace and peace-building. Recent terrorist acts in Europe and the Middle East have further underlined the pertinence and urgency of defining and designing concrete and relevant actions to help counter a perpetuation of pernicious trends that can only be condemned in the most forceful terms. As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in March 2005, the United Nations "has a sacred responsibility to combat hatred and intolerance" wherever it occurs.

II. UNESCO AND THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

7. UNESCO's contribution to the fight against terrorism has been described earlier in 2005 in the report by the Director-General concerning the dialogue among peoples, contained in document 171 EX/40, specifically paragraphs 14-22. The following text draws on this document and expands it with additional information and developments.

8. Terrorism is the **new scourge of our times** – more insidious, more accentuated, more indiscriminate than ever. Recent events have provided renewed evidence in that regard. The General Conference, at its 31st session, adopted a landmark resolution, 31 C/Resolution 39 "Call for International Cooperation to Prevent and Eradicate Acts of Terrorism", which outlined UNESCO's potential contribution to the fight against terrorism. This resolution affirmed that dialogue "constitutes a fundamental challenge based on the unity of humankind and commonly shared values, the recognition of cultural diversity and the equal dignity of each civilization and each culture. While acts of terrorism can never be justified whatever the motives, the world community requires a global and inclusive vision of development based on the observance of human rights, mutual respect, intercultural dialogue and the alleviation of poverty".

9. There exists a **complementarity between UNESCO's activities in support of a dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples and those seen as contributing to the overall fight against terrorism**. Terrorism is a form of violence with strong symbolic or communicative elements, drawing on images and myths. The principal aims of terrorists are to kill and do damage as well as to impress people emotionally and send a specific message. Today, in political and academic debates on terrorism, efforts to reach a common definition of terrorism appear to be overtaken by a focus on terrorist movements and underlying motivations for terrorist behaviour. If terrorism is to be countered and prevented, one needs to know about its causes and the special motives underlying it. Terrorist groups also operate in a social milieu which surrounds and supports them and from which they recruit members. Any attempt to counter terrorism needs also to focus efforts on this supporting infrastructure.

10. UNESCO's senior management has also engaged in a detailed reflection about the causes and specificities of current terrorist threats with a view to identifying possible future action. The challenge is enormous – and UNESCO's contribution can but be modest in a longer-term and global perspective, as humankind addresses the threats emanating from a cascading line leading from **extremism to fanaticism and, ultimately, terrorism**. The earlier the Organization's impact can be brought to bear, the more effective it may well be in any **dissuasion strategy**.

11. Clearly, **maintaining and reinforcing the dialogue among civilizations and rendering the Organization's diverse activities in that regard more effective through concrete and sustained action** – as was discussed at the 171st session of the Executive Board and emphasized by Executive Board decision 171 EX/Decision 52 – **will continue to be a central challenge for the**

Organization in future. It should be noted that, in this field, UNESCO has played over the past years and is playing a lead role among the organizations and programmes of the United Nations system. This will again be evident from the forthcoming report by the United Nations Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly at its 60th session concerning the implementation of the Global Agenda on the Dialogue among Civilizations. UNESCO is also ready to contribute to and collaborate with the emerging mechanism and activities in the context of the Alliance of Civilizations, proposed by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey and launched in early August 2005 by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In this, UNESCO's strategy will be guided by the resolution of the UNESCO General Conference, adopted at its 32nd session, emphasizing the need to pursue – on the basis of commonly shared values – regional and subregional approaches, to include a broad range of stakeholders, including political decision-makers at all levels, civil society, religious and spiritual leaders as well as the private sector, and to focus on the potential of specific domains or thematic issues within the Organization's overall mission for dialogue-relevant initiatives. Directly and indirectly, the Organization has been responding in manifold ways to various areas and activities identified and launched by Member States.

12. In April 2005, the Director-General convened a special event dedicated to the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, with the participation of the **Presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Algeria.**

13. From 14 to 16 June 2005, UNESCO organized together with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), the Danish Centre for Culture and Development and the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures a broad-based expert level "Conference on Fostering Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations through Concrete and Sustained Initiatives". The Conference adopted the **Rabat Commitment** which sets out detailed action proposals in education, culture and communication (see 172 EX/INF.10). The text of the Rabat Commitment can be accessed in English, French and Arabic at the following website: <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue/rabat/commitment.html>.

14. **Education, at all levels and in all its forms, has always been a principal modality by which UNESCO has sought to create and strengthen awareness of the issues of the maintenance and consolidation of peace and of promoting dialogue.** Dialogue-relevant activities by the Education Sector have included the promotion of quality education integrating dialogue-oriented values – such as tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for the other, learning to live together, promoting cultural diversity, respect for human rights, promotion of democratic governance, and peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes – as well as support to Member States in the revision of the content of textbooks, learning materials and curricula. In many education systems, textbook authors tend to focus on knowledge-based outcomes, often resulting in a top-down style which fails to take into account the diverse learning styles, life experiences, and the cultural and linguistic diversity of all members of the communities they serve, resulting in materials that sometimes, indeed often, reinforce patterns of exclusion. UNESCO is working towards textbooks for the twenty-first century which need to reflect more inclusive pedagogies and diversified content which not only impart academic knowledge, but also engage learners in interactions leading to the acquisition of life skills and universally shared values within a human rights perspective. Textbooks present an opportunity for engaged dialogue between students, between teachers, and by extension between students and their families and ultimately between cultures. Textbook revisions need to focus on the portrayal of gender stereotypes, the portrayal of other cultures and other nations and the role of the teacher in interpreting and developing textbook materials that are unbiased and free from stereotypes. Activities of the Education Sector therefore also include the introduction of dialogue components into teacher training and into non-formal education activities.

15. **Education has a key role to play in the immediate and long-term process of building peace, tolerance, justice and intercultural and interfaith understanding.** To that end, in December 2004, a conference was held in Adelaide, Australia, on “Education for Values for Intercultural and Interfaith Understanding”, organized by the Australian National Commission for UNESCO and National Commissions and other agencies of the Asia and the Pacific region. It is intended that the issues addressed at this conference be deepened at subsequent conferences in the region.

16. UNESCO’s Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has initiated a project on “Educational Roots and Multilateral Responses to Asia-Pacific Terrorism: A Human Security Approach”, running from 2004 to the end of March 2006. It consists of two elements: one, an innovative policy research initiative and the other, a dialogue process beginning with a small regional conference. It aims at a better understanding of key **Asia-Pacific educational issues linked to terrorism and broader violent conflict prevention challenges**. The ultimate aim is to develop an Asia-Pacific regional framework for human security.

17. In general, special emphasis needs to be given in future to the **design and implementation of educational approaches** that will be able to influence the values of young people and their perceptions and knowledge about other civilizations, cultures and peoples, cutting across all regions. A more influential, effective and visible role in that regard will need to be assigned to quality education at all levels, beginning with basic, secondary, tertiary and lifelong education. This shall require a focus on:

- commonly shared values and ethical principles;
- the development and renewal of model curricula that all countries could embrace;
- the related revision of the content of textbooks and educational and learning materials or the production of new such material, reoriented to and capable of promoting intercultural and interfaith understanding;
- effective learning and teaching networks, learning processes and conducive learning environments; as well as
- the raising of awareness in teacher training of the potential impact of educational approaches in promoting a dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples as well as in the fight against violence, extremism and terrorism.

18. This will require both national efforts as well as international cooperation and coalitions of countries and peoples committed to dialogue and mutual cooperation for enhancing peace and human security.

19. In the area of sciences, UNESCO, through COMEST, prepared for the drafting of a **code of conduct for scientists**, aimed at avoiding the use of scientific exploits for untoward and terrorist purposes.

20. An analysis of **contemporary forms of violence**, including terrorism, is being carried out by SHS. A group of experts was established in 2003 to reflect on “new forms” of violence and to contribute to a methodological and semantic clarification of the various notions involved. On the basis of the recommendations of the committee, which laid particular emphasis on the need for reflection on the causes of violence today, an international seminar entitled “Violence and its

causes: a stocktaking” was held in collaboration with the Institute of Higher Studies in National Defence (IHEDN, Paris) on 3 November 2003. This seminar was marked by several thematic meetings dealing with “new forms of violence”, the “causes and sources of violence” and the links between “extreme violence, terrorism and the crisis of politics”, “violence, fanaticism and sacrifice” and “violence and corruption”. The proceedings of this colloquium are being published.

21. In the area of **culture**, numerous relevant activities are being undertaken by UNESCO, including those related to intercultural and interreligious dialogue. They have been described in detail in document 171 EX/40. The promotion of and respect for cultural diversity and cultural heritage is increasingly being seen as an important factor in multi-ethnic and multicultural settings, thus helping to avoid disillusionment, disaffection or a sense of exclusion, if not disenfranchisement among particular groups of citizens. It could be argued that political differences become more manageable if a cultural dialogue is under way, thus representing a parameter to foster peaceful coexistence.

22. Efforts in the field of **communications, information and the media** may have a tangible impact in dissuading violent and extremist propensities. In 2002, World Press Freedom Day (3 May) was devoted to the theme “Media – violence and terrorism”. An international conference on the subject, opened by the Director-General, was held in Manila, bringing together some 150 media professionals and representatives of NGOs from different regions. The purpose of the conference was to provide a platform to exchange ideas and experiences on various issues related to **media and terrorism**, including how the media spotlight terrorism as a political, ideological, religious and military weapon against civilians and how terrorism affects the media and the safety of media professionals. The conference adopted a declaration, contained in the conference proceedings, which were published and distributed widely. In this context, it should also be recalled that the Director-General always issues statements, communications and public condemnations in relation to violent attacks committed against journalists and media personnel, as well as terrorist acts.

23. Furthermore, the Organization has cooperated with the Council of Europe on the issue of media and terrorism, which led to the adoption of recommendation 1706 (2005) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE): it asks the PACE Committee of Ministers to prepare, under the guidance of and in close cooperation with media professionals and their professional organizations, and UNESCO and other organizations working in the same field, a handbook for journalists reporting on terrorist acts and violence.

24. In the area of internal administration and related procedures, UNESCO is also taking precautionary measures to ensure that no contractual or financial relationships be maintained or entered into with individuals or organizations identified as supporting terrorism, in line with the list published by the Sanctions Committee established under Security Council resolution 1267.

Inter-agency cooperation led by UNESCO

25. It may be recalled that since 2003 UNESCO has been active in promoting **inter-agency cooperation** on the subject. The Director-General convened in February 2003 a meeting with representatives of United Nations agencies and programmes to identify a common United Nations system approach against terrorism by promoting peace and security through education and science, in response to a suggestion contained in a report to the United Nations Secretary-General by his Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism, which was shared with the Security Council and the General Assembly. The outcomes of this meeting were presented to the Secretary-General and the members of the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) in April 2003. UNESCO’s contribution focused on the following five major areas of action:

- revision and development of textbooks and teaching materials, and related teacher training;
- ethics of science and technology;
- culture of peace, human rights education and education for non-violence and peaceful conflict resolution;
- media education and freedom of expression; and
- dialogue among cultures and civilizations and protection of cultural diversity: a programme on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which includes the modality of cultural roads and routes.

26. The proposals by the United Nations Secretary-General's Policy Working Group called, *inter alia*, for a code of conduct for scientists engaged in weapons technologies as part of an overall dissuasion strategy. This might well be seen as an element that would also be relevant for the feasibility study of a general code of conduct for scientists, currently undertaken by SHS in connection with COMEST in fulfilment of its overall and broader mandate with respect to ethical principles and responsibilities in the practice of science, as called for by the 1999 World Conference on Science. The "Science Agenda – A Framework for Action" emphasized the need for ethics in science education and practice, stating "the ethics and responsibility of science should be an integral part of the education and training of all scientists. ... UNESCO's World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), in cooperation with ICSU's Standing Committee on Responsibility and Ethics of Science (SCRES), have a special responsibility to follow up on this issue".

27. Furthermore, the recent report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2 December 2004) contains a host of recommendations on how the multilateral response to terrorism can be sharpened and made more effective, including a new definition of terrorism. Among the recommendations is also a recognition of the pivotal role of education. The response to terrorism is cast in the context of the overarching quest to secure and ensure a new framework and system of collective human security in the twenty-first century. The challenge for UNESCO is to define its contribution to strengthening human security and to engender and encourage non-violent responses among many stakeholders, building upon the essence of the Delors Commission's "learning to live together". Equally, there is a need to point to the danger of intangible threats to peace and security, such as intolerance, discrimination, xenophobia or new forms of ignorance.

28. It is expected that the Outcome Document to be adopted by the high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005 will, among others, also address the issue of terrorism.

III. DRAFT DECISION

29. The **Draft Programme and Budget for 2006-2007 (33 C/5)** contains a number of activities and entry points which are of significant importance for a results-oriented dialogue among peoples – both in the sense of an intensification of the dialogue among cultures and civilizations and in addressing issues and situations that may give rise to terrorist proclivities. These proposals were highlighted in document 33 C/5 so as to allow the reader a quick overview of actions envisaged. Based thereon effective multi-thematic actions will need to be designed and translated into concrete and sustained programmes, subprogrammes, main lines of action and work plans with specific budgetary allocations so as to ensure implementation during the biennium. Thus, the adoption of

document 33 C/5 by the General Conference will already define specific actions to be carried out during 2006-2007.

30. Furthermore, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a draft decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling General Conference resolutions 31 C/Resolution 39, 32 C/Resolution 30 and 32 C/Resolution 47,
2. Further recalling Executive Board decisions 170 EX/Decision 4.1, section II and 171 EX/Decision 52,
3. Having examined document 172 EX/49,
4. Taking note of document 172 EX/INF.10 on the “Rabat Commitment”,
5. Desirous to enhance UNESCO’s contribution to international action against terrorism through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information,
6. Expresses its appreciation to the Director-General for document 172 EX/49;
7. Recognizes the relationship between activities in support of a dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples and efforts to discourage and dissuade extremism and fanaticism;
8. Underlines the importance of implementing concrete and sustained action in the various domains of UNESCO aimed at fostering a dialogue among peoples and countering extremism and fanaticism;
9. Requests the Director-General to include concrete activities towards that end in the work plans for the Programme and Budget for 2006-2007, once approved by the General Conference, and to report thereon to the Executive Board at its 174th session.