

## DELEGATION OF FINLAND

The 34th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO

Check against delivery

**Intervention by Mr Stefan Wallin**

**Minister of Culture and Sport, Head of Delegation**

18 October 2007, am

Mr. President

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board

Mr. Director-General

Distinguished Delegates,

Finland concurs with the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union and welcomes Singapore back to the fold of the Organization.

Finland places renewed emphasis on securing progress on the **management reform**. We welcome the establishment of the **Ethics Office** and acknowledge the work of **Internal Oversight**. We call for **cost-effectiveness** and improved **results based reporting** and **evaluation** practices. Effective, results-based management optimises the use of resources available, particularly for those who have the most to gain from the reform. I borrow Mr. Ban Ki-moon in saying that "we also need an internal climate change at the UN". Today's realities require that we keep on rationalising the **working methods** of the three organs, including the Executive Board. It is apparent that it has difficulties to live up to its tasks, partly due to the fact that it is simply too big.

With the Draft Programme and Budget and the Medium-Term Strategy at hand, it is obvious that we, as Member States, again ask UNESCO to do too much with too little resources. The drafts are ambitious. We need to be more **realistic** and narrow the gap between aspiration and achievement. We emphasize **quality results** and a stronger focus on **priorities** over rhetoric. We would like to see a **better balance between allocations for programme and administration**. Activities of less relevance need to be dropped. In balancing between normative and operational activities, UNESCO should focus its action on **policy advice and capacity building**. UNESCO should help countries to translate objectives into effective policy recommendations and action in the field.

Top priorities need proper allocations. Therefore, within the 631 million US dollar envelope, Finland would like to ensure increased funding for **EFA** (Education for All), for implementation and **follow-up of the science review** and the Oceanographic Commission **IOC** as well as for the implementation of and staffing for the **Cultural Diversity Convention**.

Mr President,

Just past the midpoint of the **MDG** (Millennium Development Goals) target date of 2015, it is of paramount importance that we focus on practical action steps. It is crucial to meet the **special needs of women and Africa**. To this end, Finland has co-submitted a number of resolutions to the benefit of UNESCO's education institutes, such as the Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, and the Institute of Statistics - this at the cost of some general services and travel costs. Distinguished delegates, we welcome your support on these initiatives.

Cross-cutting areas of **gender equality, sustainable development and human rights** need to be taken properly into account. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms should remain a priority for action. Finland underlines the rights based approach in the programmes.

**Gender equality** is a fundamental human right, a question of social justice and a core value. The promotion of gender equality and the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls are goals in their own right and instrumental to achieving internationally agreed development goals. There are close links between sustainable achievements in development, notably poverty reduction, and the empowerment of women.

Access to educational opportunities is a right, not a privilege. UNESCO should work further on its global mandate to coordinate and develop **quality education for all** (EFA). When saying all, we mean all, including marginal and vulnerable groups.

**Freedom of expression** and association are touchstones of human rights. Without freedom of expression, without access to information and ideas and freedom to spread them, even the most advanced ICT apparatus is irrelevant at best, and a potential tool for repression at worst.

Free and independent media are the lifeblood of a true knowledge society. UNESCO should continue to work for safety of journalists and develop capacities for communication. The Information for All programme should be discontinued in its present form.

A top priority of the Culture Programme is the implementation of the Convention on **Cultural Diversity**. The budget should ensure sufficient financial and human resources. We are encouraged by the fact that there are so many initiatives underway promoting **dialogue between cultures**. UNESCO is not tackling this agenda alone. We look forward to fruitful cooperation between UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilizations to ensure that the so called 'clash of civilizations' will never become more than the title of a book. UNESCO is well-positioned to work with the Alliance particularly in the key areas of education, media and the youth.

The Convention against Doping in **Sport** has given UNESCO a crucial role in the global fight against doping. The first great challenge is to respond to the new requirements of the revised WADA Anti-Doping Code. I am pleased to announce that Finland has committed to contributing annually to the voluntary Fund.

Mr President,

The UN's process of reforming its operational activities is a long-standing priority for us. It is crucial to agree on measures that will strengthen the **UN's capacity to deliver "as One"**. We acknowledge UNESCO's timely involvement in the process. We call for impact in the field, more unified approaches and enhanced cooperation, coherence and coordination among all relevant actors. This entails strengthening of the relationship with **civil society**.

UNESCO's future will be evaluated on its programme and efforts today. Facing these challenges is the "need of the hour" and demands a collective, **multidisciplinary approach**. We must ensure that in the coming years UNESCO provides expert analysis of the challenges and opportunities of globalisation, a forum for dialogue and consensus building and a programme and strategy focused on policy advice, capacity-building and harnessing knowledge for development.