

**Final report of the consultative meeting  
of the National Commissions of the Arab States on the preparation  
of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2012-2013**

**Rabat, Morocco (10-13 May 2010)**

Delegations from the National Commissions for UNESCO of 18 Member States from the Arab region participated in the consultations conducted by the Director-General on the preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2012-2013 (document 36 C/5). Observers from the following organizations were also present: ISESCO, ALECSO and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS).

Consultations on the preparation of document 36 C/5 began after amendment to the agenda. The session commenced with the address of Dr Abdullatif al-Baijan, Secretary-General of the Kuwait National Commission for UNESCO, who began by referring to the delay with the questionnaire on document 36 C/5. He then recalled the proposals he had submitted regarding document 35 C/5 during consultations held in Kuwait, particularly on the subject of giving priority to youth and calling upon Member States to take advantage of such efforts. He then dealt with strengthening the role of civil society, the need to promote climate and environmental sciences and the development of capacities for sustainable use of natural resources, especially water, in the Arab region.

**1. Presentation of the process of preparing the Draft Programme and Budget (36 C/5)**

This was presented by Mr Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Strategic Planning. He spoke about the process of formulating the questionnaire pertaining to document 36 C/5 and the attendant difficulties encountered by UNESCO, affirming UNESCO's wish to know the priorities on which Member States would like the document to focus. He noted that the subject of youth was a key concern of UNESCO in the current biennium, alongside the subjects of global warming and climate change and their link to education, affirming that the dialogue between cultures and civilizations was designed to enrich the culture of peoples through constructive dialogue.

The contributions of participants focused on the following points:

- The mechanism for amending document 36 C/5;
- The call for the document to be sent to National Commissions in good time to enable it to be circulated and studied;
- The call for the meeting to focus on the response to questions pertaining to National Commissions, bearing in mind that questions pertaining to the different sectors required reference to the priorities of the relevant bodies at the State level;
- The need to simplify the questions in the consultation questionnaire in order to obtain clear answers;
- The affirmation of the importance UNESCO attached to the issue of water in Sudan, in addition to continued cooperation with experts in that field since 2000.

## **2. Cluster office consultations**

As a result of the consultations which took place between groups of the National Commissions of UNESCO cluster offices (Beirut, Cairo, Rabat and Doha) and the directors/heads of the relevant field offices, it was possible to make the following observations and recommendations.

### **Major Programme I – Education**

The group agreed upon the four areas of priority included in the programme, stressing the following:

- Literacy, quality of education and the need to put in place a programme of work and a timetable (2015), taking into account existing commitments and facts;
- According appropriate attention to programmes of early childhood education and care, as well as general, vocational and technical education, by adopting pioneering stances and measures within national and regional efforts, in addition to undertaking studies, research and consultancy services involving national capacities in the areas of strategic planning, evaluation and follow-up and the formulation of competence-producing structures and structures providing care for the talented and creative;
- Emphasizing issues of women, youth and networking, and encouraging women to become involved in vocational and technical education (TVET) and academic specialization;
- Strengthening UNESCO's information policies and programmes by distributing publications, printed materials and brochures, translated into Arabic, and affirming the importance of the use of Arabic in various activities and events;
- Strengthening cooperation and coordination between UNESCO and relevant partners in order to integrate roles in the field of education, enabling UNESCO to perform its leadership and pioneering role;
- Increasing the number of joint projects in the field of education with relevant partners, particularly joint projects with United Nations agencies in education sector diagnosis;
- Focusing UNESCO efforts to obtain extrabudgetary resources, particularly in respect of programmes and projects relating to education and sustainable development;
- Emphasizing intersectoral projects to highlight the role of UNESCO, including projects designed to strengthen the culture of peace;
- Supporting education in the Golan and occupied Arab territories.

Several speakers proposed other priorities, relating to the need to strengthen national projects and take advantage of the experience offered by regional and international meetings and forums.

The focus in document 36 C/5 on the importance of UNESCO supporting education in States in urgent need of such support (Mauritania, Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan) was affirmed.

## **Major Programme II – Natural sciences**

- Affirmation of all stated priorities, with focus on water, climate change, prevention of disasters and pollution, conservation of the ecosystem, use of renewable energies and science and mathematics education in the Arab region, through capacity-building;
- Assisting developing countries to formulate national and regional policies on science and technology;
- Strengthening UNESCO programmes designating nature reserves and biosphere reserves, capacity-building, particularly of those who work in related fields, and providing information thereon through exhibitions, publications and different media;
- Calling upon UNESCO to strive to obtain external support and funding to enable inclusion of the largest possible number of schools as members in the environment-friendly schools project;
- Inviting partners and specialist, non-governmental organizations to prepare joint projects to attract the interest of partners and those with related competence.

## **Major Programme III – Social and human sciences**

The majority of participants were of the opinion that the social and human sciences should be strengthened in respect of the following priorities:

- Gender equality;
- Development of youth awareness, including their awareness of traffic dangers;
- Human rights in UNESCO's fields of competence;
- Development of philosophy education;
- Monitoring commitment to international declarations on the social and human sciences;
- Stressing support for the sector and providing the necessary funding to enable it to take on a greater number of and more inclusive activities and events;
- The need to foster applied research in the social and human sciences, in addition to making progress toward the adoption of a global declaration on climate change;
- Promoting international cooperation by participating in international events and activities such as the World Youth Forum.

## **Major Programme IV – Culture**

Participants agreed unanimously to maintain the sectoral priorities, particularly those relating to strengthening local community participation in the preservation and safeguarding of the tangible and intangible heritage and the link between culture and development, while focusing on the following priorities:

- Development of the cultural and creative industries;
- Dialogue, including dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations, and fostering the role of UNESCO Chairs in this sphere;

- Implementing joint activities between the Education Sector and the Culture Sector aimed at youth, through UNESCO Associated Schools and Clubs, in order to spread a culture of peace among the younger generation.

Several participants affirmed the need for UNESCO to accord proper attention to training the national elements who will contribute to strengthening the implementation of conventions in this field and the mobilization of partners in support of the work of UNESCO in the sphere of culture. Participants called upon UNESCO to create a strong and effective mechanism to oblige States to implement conventions pertaining to the protection of cultural property, particularly in the occupied Arab territories.

### **Major Programme V – Communication and information**

Participants affirmed the maintenance of sectoral priorities, with focus on:

- The establishment of partnerships with the media to achieve sustainable development, increasing participation through local community media and the preservation of the documentary heritage through the Memory of the World programme;
- The dissemination and codification of information ethics;
- The inclusion of media awareness programmes targeting youth and other programmes targeting teacher training;
- The strengthening of partnerships in the area of sustainable development and organization of joint meetings of media and communications actors as a prelude to formulating national policies and strategies in this sphere.

### **Intersectoral and interdisciplinary programme on the culture of peace**

Participants affirmed the need to incorporate the concepts of the culture of peace within the intersectoral programmes and to study cross-cultural influences in order to consolidate the foundations of rapprochement and peaceful coexistence. The need for peace to be based upon justice, liberty, equality and respect for the rights of all parties was further affirmed.

### **Within the framework of intersectoral activities**

Participants affirmed the thematic intersectoral platforms and coordinating intersectoral platforms, together with the need to support local languages and dialogue between civilizations and to provide support for States in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

Participants were of the opinion that the youth programmes should have priority and be intersectoral, with the focus on specific programmes appropriate to the capacities and resources of the sectors in order to achieve more effective and advantageous results.

### **Delivering the programme**

Participants noted the need to encourage cooperation between National Commissions by proposing joint action programmes between them within UNESCO's fields of competence at the bilateral, regional and international levels. In addition, they noted the need for field offices and certain specialized centres to play a greater role in providing technical support to institutions and sectors at the State level. They also noted that UNESCO needed to strengthen the role of the

National Committees in their respective countries and not go over their heads by communicating directly with government authorities and sectors in those countries.

Participants stressed the need to accord proper attention to the Arabic language to allow the greatest advantage to be obtained from UNESCO consultations, conferences and publications. They stressed the need to involve UNESCO centres, especially category 2 centres, in activities and programmes falling within their competence, and to charge them with conducting studies and research and forging links with category 1 centres operating in the same sphere.

### **Increasing UNESCO's visibility**

As regarded increasing the visibility of UNESCO in the Arab countries, the participants deemed it necessary to utilize the local media to provide information about UNESCO and its activities and to enable it to contribute to the Organization by producing information materials aimed at different sectors of society. They proposed modifying UNESCO's public information policy by:

- Enriching UNESCO's Internet portal with scientific information in all its working languages;
- Disseminating information materials more widely and more thoroughly;
- Strengthening UNESCO's information policies and programmes by the distribution of publications, printed materials and brochures, translated into Arabic, and affirming the importance of the use of Arabic in activities and events.

### **3. Other observations**

- Participants called for sufficient financial resources to be made available for the Natural Sciences Sector and Social and Human Sciences Sector to implement a greater number of and more comprehensive activities and programmes;
- The members of the group of National Commissions of States covered by the Rabat cluster office and others proposed the allocation of a budget for implementing natural science programmes in those States, in addition to regional programmes implemented by the regional bureau in Cairo;
- Participants agreed to reword the proposal of the Doha office group concerning the transfer of the Social and Human Sciences Sector within the framework of intersectoral activities, so that it would not be understood as a call for the abolition of the Sector;
- Participants affirmed the need for UNESCO to undertake capacity-building in the area of preparing projects to mobilize extrabudgetary resources and preparing reports pertaining thereto;
- Participants proposed that regional bureaux implement comprehensive programmes at the regional and subregional levels;
- Within the framework of concerns of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), several participants considered it to be necessary for UNESCO to play a significant and effective role in the dialogue between States sharing water sources and outlets to ensure the sound exploitation and management thereof and the right of access to the water necessary for life.

#### **4. General recommendations**

- To request special attention to be given to the situation in Iraq by the International Bureau of Education (IBE);
- To support cultural and educational institutions in occupied Arab territories (Palestine and the occupied Golan);
- The need for a regional programme for the teaching of science in the Arab region;
- To affirm appropriate concern in the Gulf region for the creation of early childhood centres;
- To allocate funds for the social and human sciences in the Arab region as a whole by agreement between UNESCO offices in the region to support project priorities;
- To invite UNESCO Headquarters and field offices to supply National Commissions with a list of activities to be implemented in Member States in cooperation with National Commissions in good time to allow them to be publicized, scheduled, properly prepared and coordinated with activities planned by other organizations and bodies;
- To produce a standard-setting instrument affirming respect for holy places, religious symbols and places of worship;
- To strengthen the culture of peace within the framework of sectoral priorities and intersectoral programmes by according special importance to the elaboration of interactive activities in this sphere.