



**Trinidad and Tobago
National Commission for UNESCO**

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**Director-General's Consultation with
National Commissions for UNESCO in Latin America
and the Caribbean on the Preparation of the
Draft Programme and Budget for 2012-2013 (36 C/5)**

REPORT

Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre
Port of Spain
Trinidad and Tobago



5-7 July 2010

Monday, 5 July 2010

I. Official opening of the Consultation (9 a.m.-10.30 a.m.)

The Secretary-General of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO Susan Shurland, briefly introduced the items on the agenda.

The Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Hart Edwards, delivered a welcome address.

Mr Davidson Hepburn (Bahamas), President of the General Conference of UNESCO, delivered a statement on behalf of the National Commissions for UNESCO, in which he thanked Trinidad and Tobago for holding the current meeting. He referred to previous consultations in other regions and spoke of his fascination with the National Commission model. He noted that many National Commissions lacked recognition and said he was convinced that they were the lifeblood for the Organization's survival. He warned against unilateral decision-making and called for greater interdependence and joint action. Lastly, he fully supported the agenda of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and said that, to that end, a special session of the Future Forum on SIDS would be held following the Consultation with the National Commissions (8 July 2010), with special emphasis on the Caribbean and with the participation of the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr Hans d'Orville, representative of Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, in a short address, apologized to the participants as the Director-General could not attend the consultation meeting. He then thanked the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for hosting the meeting, which he described as being held at a crossroads in view of the economic, social, food and environmental crises currently facing the world. He further stressed that the next C/5 document would be the last Programme and Budget under the Organization's current Medium-Term Strategy, and was being drawn up at a time when the new Director-General had taken over the reins of UNESCO.

In his introductory remarks, Dr Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education and President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, noted that the Commission was celebrating its fortieth anniversary. He stated that cultural diversity was a strength, not a weakness – a vital force for development conducive to the reduction and elimination of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development. In order to promote cultural diversity, the Ministry of Arts and Culture had been renamed the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, thus reflecting the broad diversity of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

He drew attention to the initiatives being undertaken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the area of education, such as increasing the number of early education centres, action taken in higher education, enhancing the quality of basic and secondary education systems, organizing science fairs at the secondary level to raise student awareness of the applications of science in everyday life, distributing laptops to each secondary school student and improving Internet access in the country.

He said that the National Commission was currently one of the most active National Commissions in the Caribbean and was strongly supported by the Government. He mentioned in particular its Associated Schools Project Network. Lastly, acknowledging the failure of Latin American and Caribbean countries to draw lessons from the common problems they faced and their piecemeal responses to such problems, he hoped that the deliberations of the present meeting would give rise to a consistent and effective programme and budget reflecting the needs of the Latin America and the Caribbean region and SIDS. He then officially declared open the consultation meeting. The official photograph was then taken.

II. Adoption of the Provisional Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure were adopted without amendments.

The following were elected as officers of the Bureau:

Chairperson:	Trinidad and Tobago
Vice-Chairpersons:	Cuba and Grenada
Chief Rapporteur:	Peru
Co-Rapporteurs:	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Mexico

The agenda was adopted with only one amendment.

Mr d'Orville then reviewed the preparatory process, which he described as a lengthy process, which lasted almost two years. He noted that the task was not Secretariat-specific but was performed on an intergovernmental basis. During an overview of UNESCO's most important programmes, he highlighted key areas that should be strengthened in each sector, stressing the importance of Member States' expectations of the programmes. One of the most significant examples for the region was post-conflict and post-disaster response – the latter, for instance, in the recent case of Haiti. Lastly, he recalled that the deadline for the submission of written replies to the questionnaire directly to Headquarters was 12 July 2010, after which a document would be prepared (mid-August) containing the draft proposals to be submitted to the Executive Board at its 185th session (5-21 October 2010).

Preliminary remarks by the National Commissions

Peru

The questionnaire was a very important exercise leading to the development of a significant programme and budget, but the activities eventually undertaken at the country level were very few, piecemeal and of little significance. There was no formal body that supported the process although it did dilute resources. Prior evaluation of the programme and budget was necessary to identify problems and make adjustments to agreed programmes – a process provided for in various agreements reached by the Executive Board over the years and could be supported by the National Commissions.

Cuba

There was no strategic vision of where UNESCO would be in the years ahead. How, then, could visibility and effectiveness be achieved? Cuba denounced systemic structural shortcomings such as the existing gap between sectors and programmes, noting that it was difficult to find the links between them, as they were separate fiefdoms that did not communicate with each other – something that Members wished to change. Cuba called for a specific forum in which to decide what further action would be taken in Haiti.

Paraguay

In accordance with the scale of the disaster, Paraguay called for the same treatment to be given to Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and the other countries severely affected by hurricanes and natural disasters as to Haiti.

Bolivia

The questionnaire did not afford an opportunity to formulate new programmes. It considered that the Commissions lacked the financial means and faced great difficulties in achieving goals set for 2015 and 2021.

Mexico

Mexico observed that each sector's own successful experiments and strategies were not identified for discussion at UNESCO with a view to their potential adoption by other sectors in the Organization. Nor did the consultation process take into account the findings of evaluations conducted in some sectors showing that some aspects had been neglected. Lastly, it called for greater importance to be ascribed to the situation in middle-income countries, since that term, applied to Latin America, concealed the fact that its societies were extremely unequal – the most unequal societies in the world – and, owing to the criteria currently in force, denied access to international development aid, resources and programmes, South-South cooperation and triangular North-South-South cooperation.

I. Consultation of cluster offices on the Draft Programme and Budget (36 C/5)

The Delegations formed working groups according to their respective cluster offices (Montevideo, Quito, Kingston, Havana and San José) to discuss and agree common positions on the consultation questionnaire.

Tuesday, 6 July 2010

I. Plenary address on the report submitted by the cluster offices

II. Plenary discussion based on the Questionnaire on the preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget

Pursuant to the agenda, the conclusions of the consultations held in the five cluster offices in the Latin America and the Caribbean region were presented and reviewed in the plenary meeting. Discussions were also held during the plenary meeting on the subject of the questionnaire, during which additional proposals were made and the most relevant common approaches reaffirmed.

The resulting answers and proposals for inclusion, theme by theme, in UNESCO's Programme and Budget for 2012-2013 are set out below.

UNESCO'S GLOBAL PRIORITIES

AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

- Latin America and the Caribbean support the response of the countries of this region to the questions at hand.
- In order to determine objectively whether Africa receives sufficient attention and funding, an evaluation of the results of the prioritization of Africa in UNESCO's Programme is necessary.
- Africa was designated a priority region because of the fight against poverty, and so the priority action needed in poor and conflict areas should be specified.
- Rather than be based on average income, the development aid paradigm must be redefined to target underprivileged populations inside countries for the direct benefit of vulnerable populations in Africa and in other regions with similar indicators.
- It is suggested that the same priority should be given to populations of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean as to Africa and that knowledge of the African roots of our population be promoted by developing regional histories.
- Strengthen the exchange of successful experiences within the Latin America and the Caribbean region.
- Develop a long-term action plan jointly with the African Union.

- Consider the possibility of including the Caribbean region as a global priority in the context of SIDS.

GENDER EQUALITY

- This subject should receive sufficient attention and funding from UNESCO.
- More training is needed from an early age with regard to gender-related issues, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups.
- The emphasis on gender must be concentrated in education and all UNESCO sectors to ensure that efforts are focused.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, inequality is most commonly expressed through violence. Gender equality must not be confined to education and enrolment but be addressed in society as a whole. In this regard, the region can offer its experience in programmes for preventive action (sex education for the prevention of teenage pregnancy); education for women for the world of work; female empowerment; scholarships; the elimination of stereotypes in textbooks and teaching; training and awareness-raising for teachers; the promotion of career choices traditionally associated with men; support for women engaged in scientific activities.
- UNESCO might evaluate the impact of national and international standard relating to gender equality and encourage studies and indicators on the subject.
- When addressing the topic of gender equality, reference should be made to men and women instead of only women.

LDCs, SIDS and INDIGENOUS GROUPS

- All programme sectors should have a social inclusion component.
- Each region must establish actions, programmes and budgets for the least developed countries (LDCs).
- Coordinated efforts by central and local governments for vulnerable groups must be promoted.
- For their empowerment, poor people require programmes based on their knowledge and skills; they should be involved in designing these programmes.
- Promote indigenous knowledge and languages to raise awareness in civil society about their value and importance, through an intercultural education programme.
- Need for greater participation by the countries in the region in the SIDS programme.

YOUTH

Young people are the largest population segment in the region; offering them constructive activities outside school and encouraging their participation in such activities are therefore essential in preventing serious problems affecting youth (violence, organized crime).

- The Youth Forum hosted by UNESCO prior to the General Conference has no equivalent in any other United Nations agency. While the Forum itself is beneficial, its impact remains limited as it does not involve the participation of young people in the development of youth programmes and initiatives.

- A regional youth strategy must be defined with young people, based on existing youth-related initiatives, particularly in the Latin America and the Caribbean region (e.g. Youth Parliaments and regional forums) and the recommendations made at the upcoming World Youth Conference in Mexico must be followed up).
- ICT use by young people should be harnessed for capacity-building in scientific and cultural exchange networks.
- Youth organizations should be strengthened through public policy decisions.
- The Associated Schools Project network, Youth Forum, and Regional Youth Forum should be strengthened.
- Increased funding.
- Professional skills certification for entry into the labour market and technical and production-oriented programmes should be encouraged.
- Existing positive aspects which support change should be promoted, to enhance skills and creativity.

EDUCATION

- Education is a fundamental human right. The region supports the four identified priority areas but believes that quality is key in education, particularly for vulnerable groups, and that the poor will not improve their condition if they continue to receive education of poor quality.
- UNESCO's leadership role in the area of education must be strengthened on the basis of the activities of the various United Nations agencies and international cooperation as established in international agreements including education for all (EFA) and the second Millennium Development Goal.
- The most important question is: what has prevented the achievement of the EFA goals? These objectives are clear and should not be changed, but full consideration has not been given to defining actions based on actual conditions in the region. As a result, programmes and actions specifically adapted to Latin America and the Caribbean in such areas as migration, natural disaster prevention and mitigation, post-conflict situations, adapting education to social needs and promoting life over violence should be developed, and their impact on education should be assessed. Because these problems are driven by poverty, we advocate a kind of education that provides an escape from poverty into wealth.
- The work of UNESCO Chairs and the ASP Network must be taken into consideration to meet the challenges involved in achieving the EFA goals through enhanced support for these networks.
- Similarly, a higher level of commitment to providing universal access to secondary education and post-literacy programmes exists in middle-income countries.
- In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, much experience has been gained in education for migrants which could be enriched and shared if included in UNESCO's programmes.

The region attaches special importance to initiatives in the following areas:

- Development of intercultural and bilingual education systems in indigenous languages through a main line of action;

- HIV/AIDS prevention through comprehensive sex and reproductive health education based on gender equality;
- Production-driven education to create wealth with an emphasis on secondary education;
- Accreditation and validation of higher education diplomas;
- Education for sustainable development;
- Experience in the use of communication technology in education in Latin America and the Caribbean not put to full use;
- Exchange of and support for successful initiatives in literacy programmes, such as “Yo, sí puedo” [Yes, I can] and “Yo, sí puedo más” [Yes, I can do better] methods (Cuba) and others;
- Equity in teacher training to include the male population;
- Early childhood care and education with emphasis on special learning needs and inclusive education;
- UNESCO could draw on the experience gained in ICT use in education in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, for instance through the “Educational connectivity and basic information technology for online learning – one computer per child” (CEIBAL) plan, completed in primary schools in Uruguay, and the Peruvian “One Laptop Per Child” programme, which received an award from UNESCO.

NATURAL SCIENCES

The following proposals were made:

- Give priority to science education as a means of developing a scientific turn of mind and not as the isolated study of scientific fields.
- Give priority to highlighting the value of scientific and technological development and innovation as factors of social inclusion and sustainable human development.
- Include the development of a scientific mindset as a new topic in the Associated Schools Project.
- Strengthen international science programmes (the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB) and the Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST)) and the link between them.
- Strengthen ties with science academies and faculties.
- Link scientific progress to the quality of life.
- Establish a special fund for science education and risk prevention.
- Enhance the value of traditional knowledge.
- Build site-management capacity.
- Encourage capacity-building for the sustainable use of natural resources and for natural-disaster prevention and mitigation.

- Promote greater technology exchange.
- Raise the visibility of the sector's activities.
- Water security and management.
- Ecological sciences and ecosystem in the Caribbean as it relates to MAB and biodiversity.
- Alternative sources of energy. Given the uncertainty of energy sources in the Caribbean, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that there are alternative and renewable sources available when it becomes necessary.
- More support for the Sandwatch project.
- Develop activities to address the effects of climate change on the region, especially on small island States.
- Include innovation components.
- Give greater importance to ethics in science by identifying the individual as the focus of action.

SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

- It is considered that all spheres of scientific action entail ethical dilemmas and that scientific knowledge is highly ethical. UNESCO must, therefore, pursue its endeavour to set standards and reflect on such issues through their dissemination and through support for national bioethics committees.
- Work conducted under the MOST programme and in regard to human rights and non-discrimination has been positively rated and should be strengthened.

The following proposals were also made.

- The MOST Programme should be deepened and used in tandem with other strategies in dealing with the problem of migration as a priority issue.
- Continued and increased support should be provided for Forums of Ministers of Social Development at the regional and subregional levels.
- The ideas promoted by the Buenos Aires Declaration adopted at the International Forum on the Social Science – Policy Nexus should be pursued.
- Stress the importance of establishing a category 2 centre on migration to be located in Ecuador.
- UNESCO should develop alliances with international sports federations (e.g. football, cricket, baseball, basketball and hockey) owing to their educational and formative role, in order to promote among children and youth the values of healthcare, the prevention of addiction and violence, teamwork, non-discrimination and proper use of leisure time.
- Publicize activities to be carried out in Guatemala, as world philosophy capital in 2012.
- Poverty eradication and improvement of the quality of life.
- Decentralization and local authorities.
- International cooperation through the promotion of professional networking strategies.

- Democracy as the catalyst of international cooperation.
- Continued support for the José Martí Project for International Solidarity.
- Social science research fund.
- Develop actions regarding the marginalization of young males at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean and youth violence.

CULTURE

The priority areas were considered appropriate, but the Latin America and the Caribbean region needs action with emphasis on three of these fields:

- community involvement in heritage conservation;
- promotion of cultural diversity;
- development of cultural and creative industries.
- Develop the concept of culture as a human right, vital to the achievement of all-round development.
- It was noted that culture and identity were not adequately reflected in the priority areas and it was accordingly urged that they be so reflected.
- Strengthen intercultural dialogue so that identity and respect for differences are expressed.
- Protect endangered indigenous languages through the promotion of intercultural dialogue.
- Museum participation in the safeguarding of languages.
- Promote the ratification of the cultural conventions by all Caribbean countries.
- Increase efforts to advise Member States on the submission of nomination files to ensure that the Lists are appropriately geographically representative.
- Conduct seminars on the implementation of each convention in order to facilitate monitoring of conventions by the national committees, including activities with civil servants and law-makers in regard to those conventions.
- Develop programmes to ensure community participation in heritage protection.
- Prevent and mitigate risks to the cultural heritage.
- Strengthen the secretariats that oversee implementation of cultural conventions currently in force.
- Highlight the ASPNet's work in regard to the publicity and ownership of the heritage and the need to continue to encourage these schools' work in carrying out activities included in this sector.
- Strengthen Ministries of Culture and cultural institutes, joint policy activities and training for their staff.

Promote national information systems that provide estimates on the input of culture to Member States' GDP and foster activities demonstrating the relationship and relevance of culture to the Millennium Development Goals.

- Continued funding of projects such as Youth Path.
- Promotion of culture and heritage as a key driver of sustainable development.
- Hold a seminar on copyright restrictions.
- Strengthen the Qhapaq Ñan project (the Inca Trail), under development in six countries of the Andean region.
- Promote and support the development of the UNESCO Award of Excellence for Handicrafts at the regional and interregional levels.
- Provide financial support for the Forum of Ministers of Culture to be held in Bolivia in 2011 (travel costs).

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

This sector's priority areas are relevant and the participants acknowledged the magnificent contribution and success of the Memory of the World Programme in particular. It was considered, however, that the sector was not taking into account the highly important topics below.

- Knowledge societies from the educational, rather than merely technological, standpoint.
- Citizenship education, without which the exercise of freedom of the press and of free access to information would be weakened.
- The media's role in natural disaster prevention and mitigation has not been sufficiently explored.
- Strengthen UNESCO's role as coordinator of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
- Support community radios for educational and social purposes.
- Community participation for sustainable development and fight against discrimination.
- Healthy ICT use.
- Study of and search for freeware.
- Proposed establishment of a world freedom of expression centre.
- Strengthening access to information and communication for persons with disabilities and disadvantaged people in our community.
- Partnering with media for sustainable development and increasing participation through community media.
- Promote monitoring bodies for the information society observatory.
- Raise awareness of ICT use for the purposes of human development and in order to narrow the digital divide.
- Consider inputs from the Ibero-American seminar on ICT use.
- Need to conduct a study on the impact of ICTs on the media (press) and on education (learning).

- Search for freeware alternatives such as LINUX in order to close the digital divide and broaden ICT access.

CULTURE OF PEACE

- The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World ends this year. It must be supplemented by specific content on ethical and citizenship education and on civic responsibility, in accordance with the conclusions of the Co-operation Seminars with Iberoamerica on Education for a Culture of Peace, spearheaded by UNESCO.
- Revitalize the subject by means of a culture of peace programme to consolidate the new humanism.
- Strengthen topics relating to education in values and inclusion.
- Establish national committees.
- Include the following topics in the main lines of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace: introducing and promoting values and migration and multicultural societies.

INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERSECTORAL ACTIVITIES

- The concept of intersectorality must not give rise to the formation of bureaucratic bodies.
- Intersectorality should be regarded as an approach to work between the sectors, so that they do not operate as isolated programmes; it should serve as a bridge between them.
- The Latin America and the Caribbean region reiterated the importance of the Organization's five sectors taking action on migration and non-discrimination, so that the two issues become an intersectoral theme.

UNESCO'S ROLE WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS.

- Strengthen UNESCO's representation in countries without a field office.
- Promote recognition of the National Commissions in the region as partners with the United Nations.
- Participate in the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for those countries without a UNESCO representation office.
- Draw on UNESCO's comparative advantages in the context of United Nations reform (UNDAF).
- Promote partnerships for national and regional cooperation.
- Disseminate and promote activities.
- Request information on the outcomes of the pilot training programme of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC).
- Strengthen cooperation with non-governmental organizations and greater involvement of civil society in the implementation of and contribution to UNESCO programmes and projects.

The National Commissions for UNESCO

- Place more emphasis on the Latin America and the Caribbean region and strengthen its participation in the interregional dialogues organized by UNESCO.
- Allocate more resources to – and increase the number of programmes in – the field, so that they address the local circumstances of each country.
- Strengthen cooperation with the Regional Centre for Book Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLALC) in following up the decision adopted at the 182nd session of the Executive Board regarding the importance of cooperation and intersectoral work with the Centre.
- Increase the budget allocated to programmes and reduce that devoted to administration and human resources.
- Raise awareness of National Commissions among partners.
- Encourage the exchange of best practices between National Commissions through South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.
- Foster the coordination of field offices and category 2 institutes with National Commissions.
- Develop synergies between field offices and governments, parliaments and universities.
- Invest in building the capacity of National Commissions and improve training and information systems. Urgently translate documents, in particular the Practical Guide for National Commissions for UNESCO.
- We demand that the efforts and proposals we made during this consultation be reflected in the next Programme and Budget.
- Strengthen the coordinating role of the National Commissions, keeping them informed of all the activities carried out by each UNESCO body in every country. This will also provide input for the governments' annual report.

UNESCO'S VISIBILITY

- Establish Spanish as a working language of UNESCO in all its publications and in the contents of the Organization's website. Spanish is the third most widely spoken language in the world and the second most studied language after English. Failure to generalize the use of this language at UNESCO restricts the Organization's impact on a potential population of 450 million to 500 million worldwide which has Spanish as its first or second language.
- Also adopt Portuguese as a UNESCO working language, in accordance with the request of the Portuguese-speaking countries at the 35th session of the General Conference. Portuguese is one of the five most widely spoken languages in the world, spoken by more than 250 million people in eight countries in Africa, South America, Asia and Europe. Establishing Portuguese as a working language would be consistent with the Organization's objective of strengthening multilingualism and cultural diversity.
- Develop partnerships with public and private communication media to disseminate UNESCO'S work (BBC, National Geographic Channel, and so on).
- Resume the publication of the *UNESCO Courier* in all the Organization's languages.
- Ensure that the Communication and Information Sector contributes to enhancing the visibility of the other programme sectors.

Other proposals:

- Request a simpler and clearer questionnaire in future.
- Include Haiti as a priority and develop a medium- and long-term strategic vision in that regard.
- Make a strong statement on the culture of peace programme.
- Caribbean visibility at Headquarters – start with it here.
- Advocate a more visible strategy in the context of the work carried out by the category 2 centres.
- Call for greater flexibility in approving Participation Programme projects and explain why they are rejected or discontinued.
- Encourage the evaluation and approval of the projects by the regional or cluster offices.
- Streamline the management of the Participation Programme funds, ensuring that this responsibility rests with the local, regional or cluster offices, so as to facilitate access to and assessment and timely completion of the evaluation reports.
- Call on UNESCO to continue channelling the Participation Programme funds through its local or regional offices to ensure the fulfilment by the National Commissions of their programme monitoring functions and the timely and effective completion of the technical and financial reports required by the programme. Failure to do so affects the level of funding available for the following biennium. The inability of the local offices to channel Participation Programme funds is inconsistent with the request made to countries to further manage programmes and government funds.
- Enable the National Commissions to participate in the evaluation of the Programme and Budget as provided for in the Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO and in various Executive Board agreements.
- Increase the funds received by the Caribbean under the Participation Programme and strengthen its cluster office, since the latter caters to many countries but lacks resources.
- Note Uruguay's request to host the next regional consultation meeting (2012).
- Thank the Division of Relations with Member States and National Commissions for providing the opportunity to participate in this consultation, which enabled the countries in the region to express their needs and priorities. Review the consultation process methods, particularly with regard to the questionnaire.
- **Wednesday, 7 July 2010**
 - I. **Plenary meeting on the role of the National Commissions in the United Nations common country programming process, on capacity-building of National Commissions and on improving the impact and effectiveness of future regional conferences and consultations on the Medium-Term Strategy and the Programme and Budget**

Mr Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, made a statement on the role of National Commissions in the common country programming process and on the challenges and opportunities of that process.

He stressed that there was no provision for the National Commissions to participate in the various integration and coordination processes relating to the common country programming exercises carried out by the United Nations' organizations, agencies, funds and programmes. As a result and in view of their importance, as no other organization in the United Nations system had a model similar to that of UNESCO's National Commissions, UNESCO and UNDP had signed a Memorandum of Understanding stipulating in Article III.2 that "The Resident Coordinator may invite a UNESCO National Commission's member(s) to attend certain United Nations Country Team (UNCT) meetings, especially in countries where UNESCO is a non-resident agency when relevant programming issues are being discussed and commission participation is deemed useful." UNDP's guidelines on the drafting of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) documents had been updated accordingly.

In view of the foregoing, Mr d'Orville was confident that the content of the presentation and the activities undertaken had helped to allay the concerns expressed by the representative of Nicaragua regarding an earlier answer on the participation of that country's National Commission in the drafting of a document by the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Nicaragua.

Mr Xiaolin Cheng then spoke of strategies that could be used to build the capacities of National Commissions and increase the impact and effectiveness of subsequent regional conferences and consultations on UNESCO's Mid-Term Strategy and Programme and Budget. He noted that the capacities of National Commissions were highly varied and heterogeneous. Some were very solid and had substantial financial and institutional resources, while others were weak, unstable, inactive or had no political support from their governments. He suggested that the following remedial measures be implemented:

- advocacy;
- strengthening of status and structure;
- personnel capacity-building;
- exchange of experiential data and best practices;
- partnerships with other National Commissions.

He then made the following recommendations:

- increase other ministries' and institutions' participation in the structure and activities of the National Commission;
- enhance the stability of Secretaries-General (a minimum four-year term was suggested);
- increase the full-time staff complement (at least four or five professionals).

He also argued in favour of North-South alliances among National Commissions (e.g. existing cooperation between Canada and the Caribbean in MAB) and the holding of regional conferences and regional and subregional consultations.

Lastly, Mr Everton Hannam and Mr Antonio Maynard, Secretaries-General of the National Commissions of Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis respectively, reported on the results of the working group on strengthening UNESCO National Commissions in the Caribbean. They had visited nine countries in the region between July 2009 and March 2010 for three purposes, namely:

- to promote cooperation among the National Commissions for UNESCO in the Caribbean;
- to help to strengthen relations among Caribbean States;

- to share experiential data and best practices.

The project, implemented owing to funds provided by the National Commission of the Republic of Bulgaria for UNESCO, had been valuable and constructive. Mr Hannam and Mr Maynard had met not only their counterparts, but also Ministers, Heads of State and members of civil society. They had concluded that there were operational weaknesses in most of the National Commissions in the Caribbean that could be attributed to the rapid turnover of Secretaries-General (at least five had been appointed in the last three or four years) and to the fragmented bilateral agreement between the National Commissions Section at Headquarters and National Commissions in the region.

In the light of the foregoing, they made the following recommendations:

- permanent supervision by the National Commissions Section at Headquarters, especially in the event of staff changes;
- better communication between Headquarters, the cluster office and regional National Commissions by using information and communication technologies;
- encouragement by the cluster office and its programme specialists of more frequent dialogue and interaction with National Commissions, various government ministries and senior officials;
- the cluster office must call meetings with National Commissions to provide follow-up on the projects and programmes implemented in the region;
- the National Commissions Section at Headquarters must facilitate implementation of the above recommendations;
- the contractual agreements used for Secretaries-General in the region must be reconsidered in order to foster longevity and continuity in the operation of National Commissions.

Lastly, they stressed that human capital was the principal asset of National Commissions.

The final statement at the meeting was made by Diego Gradis, from Traditions for Tomorrow, a civil society organization maintaining formal associate relations with UNESCO and based in Switzerland.

He explained that nine international NGOs had been selected for two years by the Committee of the General Conference and said that UNESCO was unique in that it promoted relations with civil society. Specifically, the Traditions for Tomorrow association, which assisted indigenous peoples and people of African descent in Latin America in asserting their cultural identities, was responsible for relations with National Commissions.

In that connection, he made a number of observations and comments in order to improve the consultations to make them more creative and vertically generated from the Field towards Headquarters, rather than from Headquarters to the Field. He concluded by saying that the time was right for enhanced relations between NGOs and UNESCO, as evidenced by his participation in the Consultation on the Programme and Budget convened by the Director-General and the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning.

Lastly, Ms Susan Shurland, Secretary-General of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO informed the meeting that the Director-General of the Organization, Ms Irina Bokova, apologised to all present for being unable to attend. Mr Hans D'Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, then read out a message of apology sent specially on account of her absence.

In that message, Ms Bokova apologised for not being able to attend owing to unforeseen circumstances. She said that she had been in contact with her colleagues to keep abreast of the work accomplished on the first two days of the consultation. She thanked the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for generously hosting the meeting and congratulated the country's National Commission on its 40th anniversary.

She noted that the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January and the subsequent one in Chile had placed the region at the centre of international attention and that UNESCO had been present in Haiti, working with United Nations partners to reactivate the education system, safeguard heritage, build the capacity of community media and integrate the cultural dimension into the recovery process.

She laid emphasis on three features that, she believed, would shape the long-term vision of cooperation with UNESCO.

Firstly, the region led all developing countries in the achievement of Education for All goals, but that masked significant diversity, both within and between countries. UNESCO's programmes must reach the most marginalized and vulnerable groups, promote multilingual education for indigenous peoples and ensure that young people and adults acquired the necessary skills and knowledge for the transition from education to the world of work.

Secondly, she stressed the importance of scientific cooperation to the achievement of sustainable development. Small Island Developing States were a UNESCO priority and would be discussed at the forthcoming UNESCO Future Forum. She stressed that the current year's tragic events in Haiti and Chile had demonstrated that a good warning system did not suffice if the system's efficiency was impaired by lack of knowledge of disaster preparedness at the local level.

Thirdly, she was determined to persuade countries and international institutions that culture had a central role to play in development and UNESCO would raise that point at the United Nations General Assembly's Summit on the Millennium Development Goals in September. She noted that cultural diversity paid development dividends to all society, created jobs and contributed to social cohesion, reconciliation and the construction of peace.

At the end of her message, she stressed that each and every National Commission was an outstanding UNESCO ally and she looked forward to visiting the region in the near future.

(a) Adoption of the Final Report of the Consultation

At the plenary meeting the Rapporteur read the draft final report of the consultation and noted suggestions and comments made by regional representatives for inclusion in the document as soon as possible. The report, as a whole, was adopted unanimously.

(b) Acknowledgements to the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Participants in the meeting unanimously acknowledged the efforts made by the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO and thanked it for holding the Consultation and for its warm welcome and hospitality during their stay in the country.

(c) Cultural Visit

A visit was organized to the Pointe-a-Pierre Wildfowl Trust, a reserve dedicated to saving Trinidad's endemic birds and unique on account of its location in an oil-refining complex. A cultural evening was held there by the National Commission for UNESCO to mark its 40th anniversary.