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**UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY:
REPORT BY THE COUNCIL OF THE UNIVERSITY
AND THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S COMMENTS THEREON**

SUMMARY

In accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations University (Article IV, para. 4(h)) whereby the Council shall “report annually to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and to the Executive Board of UNESCO, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO, respectively, on the work of the University”, and in accordance with the provision of paragraph 10 of decision 5.2.1 adopted by the Executive Board at its 129th session whereby the Director-General is invited to “submit to the Executive Board [...] (a) every second year, for its consideration, the United Nations University Council’s report on the second year of the University’s biennial budgetary period, and his own report on the progress made by the University and the University’s cooperation with UNESCO; (b) in the intervening years, for its information and possible consideration, the United Nations University Council’s annual report”, the Director-General communicates to the Executive Board for its information the annual reports of the Council of the United Nations University covering the periods January-December 2002 and January-December 2003.¹

The present document contains the observations of the Director-General on the work of the University and on cooperation between UNESCO and the University during 2002-2003.

Decision proposed: paragraph 15.

¹ For technical reasons, these reports will be available during the session in English and French only.

Introduction

1. The United Nations University is an international community of scholars, engaged in research, postgraduate training and the dissemination of knowledge. In application of its Charter, it aims to contribute to furthering peace and progress at the international level in accordance with the purposes of the United Nations. The University was proposed in 1969 by the then United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, and it opened in September 1975 as an autonomous organ of the United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO.

2. The specific mission of the University is to strengthen cooperation among the members of the world scientific community in order to improve their working conditions and promote the creation of networks to alleviate the isolation of some researchers, largely those in developing countries. To this end, the University has three key roles as: (i) an international community of scholars; (ii) a think-tank for the United Nations system; and (iii) a builder of capacities, particularly in developing countries, whilst serving as a platform for dialogue to promote innovation and creativity.

3. The United Nations University comprises: (i) a central unit based at its Headquarters in Tokyo; (ii) a network of research and postgraduate training centres and programmes, some of which are established in developing countries; (iii) affiliated institutions. As a whole, it operates as a network of networks whose component parts are linked to researchers and research institutions and partners in higher education and policy-makers. Mention may be made of five centres in particular: (i) the World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER) in Helsinki, Finland, set up in 1985; (ii) the Institute for New Technologies (UNU/INTECH) in Maastricht, Netherlands, established in 1990; (iii) the International Institute for Software Technology (UNU/IIST) in Macao, China, created in 1992; (iv) the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU/INRA) in Accra, Ghana, with a Mineral Resources Unit in Lusaka, Zambia, set up in 1990; and (v) the Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU/IAS) in Tokyo, Japan, which inaugurated its activities in April 1996. Its mission is focused on the development of original, forward-looking solutions to problems at the interface of societal and natural systems.

4. The University has two specialist programmes: (i) the Programme on Biotechnology for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNU/BIOLAC), based in Caracas, Venezuela, and founded in 1988; and (ii) the International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH), based in Hamilton, Canada, and set up in 1996. It also has: (i) the International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA), based in Amman, Jordan, and created in 1995; (ii) the Food and Nutrition Programme for Human and Social Development, coordinated from Cornell University; (iii) the Geothermal Training Programme (UNU/GTP) based in Iceland and established in 1979; and (iv) the Fisheries Training Programme (UNU/FTP) created in Iceland in 1998. Recently, the following new research and training programmes have been inaugurated: (i) the UNU Programme on Comparative Regional Integration Studies; (ii) the UNU Programme on Environment and Human Security (UNU/EHS), established in Bonn, Germany.

Major themes and programmes

5. The University programme is based on the following major themes:

Peace and governance. The stress is on the complex relations between the sustainability of peace, security and governance. Projects focus on the following main areas: the United Nations and the international order; conflict resolution and security; human rights and ethics; promotion of democracy; problems of governance; policy and institutional framework. The development of partnerships with other research institutions worldwide is also emphasized, which allows for a greater return on investments and ensures the sustainability of the networks established. Given the

breadth of the University's mandate in this field and its lack of available resources, UNU will stress projects where it has a comparative advantage and offers added value. Critical problems, such as multilateralism and relations between HIV/AIDS and security problems, will be emphasized, as will the extension of cooperation with non-English-speaking developing countries, and the development of training tools.

6. **Environment and sustainable development.** The stress here is on interactions between human activities and the natural environment and their implications for the sustainable management of natural resources: (i) development; (ii) science, technology and society; (iii) the environment. The main partners in the University's work are United Nations system agencies, developing countries and the international academic community. The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development marked a key moment in the University's work as it took an active part in all the Summit's preparatory meetings and submitted a report on the theme "Making Integrated Solutions Work for Sustainable Development". Together with UNESCO it launched the idea of creating a global alliance to promote sustainable development, stressing all levels of the education system (the Ubuntu Declaration). The Organization also made a significant contribution to the United Nations Programme on the International Year of Mountains in 2002. Under its programme on the environment and sustainable development, stress has also been laid on evaluating the impact of technological innovations, in particular their application to developing countries, and support for the dissemination of technology that might contribute to the welfare of communities and to sustainable development. The People, Land Management and Environmental Change project (PLEC) represents a participatory approach to the conservation of biodiversity and the conservation of agricultural systems in the market. UNU played the role of facilitator in activities related to the Zero Emission Forum with a view to continuing research, capacity-building and the establishment of a network in this field. The University will continue its work by strengthening cooperation among United Nations system agencies. The creation of a UNU environment and sustainable development centre has been proposed. Generally speaking, the achievements of existing programmes will be consolidated while continuing to innovate with a view to initiating new activities. UNU will build capacities in the field of human resources and improve the dissemination of research findings by ensuring that they are accessible in terms of copyright management.

7. **Cross-cutting issues.** The University's action also includes multidisciplinary projects covering globalization, global public goods, human rights, ethics, gender, water and food security. In the field of gender, work is no longer focused on isolated projects but, instead, on approaches encompassing several crucial aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action. For instance, gender and poverty reduction; conservation and management of natural resources, and efforts to promote policies and action to reduce gender inequalities. Activities have also been organized to follow up the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Another cross-cutting project concerns the evaluation of urban ecosystems and the water crisis.

8. **Capacity-building.** The emphasis is on capacity-building for academic staff as well as academic institutions with the priority on the postgraduate level and young professionals. Projects enable the level of knowledge of individuals, groups and institutions to be raised through participation in UNU activities and projects.

The courses cover highly varied areas: conflict resolution, human rights, international cooperation and development, leadership, biodiversity, sustainable development, fisheries, food technology, remote sensing and software technology. Fellowships are also granted for the preparation of doctorates and for universities in developing countries.

9. **Relations with the United Nations system.** The University organizes policy panels to make its research findings available to decision-makers in the United Nations system. The panels have

dealt with education, capacity-building, environmental management and group behaviour in response to development. During 2002, UNU worked with 30 agencies of the United Nations system. Various agreements have been signed with partners in several regions of the world.

10. **Dissemination of results and public information.** With a view to enhancing the impact of UNU's work, particular stress is laid on the dissemination of its research findings among political decision-makers and the international academic community as a whole. Book fairs have been held worldwide, notably at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. The results of activities are disseminated through the media (radio and television), in particular through CNN International. Many articles have been published by the researchers of the centres and programmes in scientific journals and popular science journals (250 scientific articles and 300 articles for the general public in 2002). The use of the Internet is playing a growing role in the dissemination of all such information. To this end, UNU also makes the most of its own activities such as the U Thant Distinguished Lecture Series, the Global Seminar Series for students and young professionals and the series of round tables organized by UNU/IAS.

11. **University funding and staff.** From endowment funds and with the considerable support it received for its training and postgraduate research centres and programmes, the University had a budget of \$73.6 million for the 2002-2003 biennium. The number of staff members rose in 2002 to 247, including 122 professionals. Of the staff, 76 are from developing countries and 116 are women.

12. **Cooperation between UNESCO and the United Nations University.** Cooperation between UNESCO and the United Nations University is conducted on the same basis of excellent relations that the University maintains with all the agencies of the United Nations system. They work together closely in the field of higher education where the University has taken a full part in activities to follow up the World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE). The two organizations run the Global Network for Innovation in Higher Education (GUNI) and the University took a very active part in the organization of the "WCHE+5" meeting organized by UNESCO and held in Paris in June 2003. They also work together under the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme. Furthermore, UNU played a substantial role in the activities of United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. There has been a staff exchange programme between UNESCO's Natural Sciences Sector and UNU for many years now. The partnership also operates smoothly for the purposes of many other programmes, such as the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST). The same applies to the Communication and Information Sector regarding the use of information and communication technologies.

13. As the Rector of the University has stated in his report, the nature of the institution requires it to have one foot in the academic world and the other in the United Nations system. Thus, while playing its role of think-tank for the system, it serves as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations. The University acquits itself of this complex task to the satisfaction of all its partners. It is continuing to develop, taking account of the concern to see its presence and work strengthened in developing countries. Recent initiatives in the Republic of Korea, the state of Mato Grosso in Brazil and in Malaysia form part of this trend (creation of a training and research centre on global health).

14. Cooperation with UNESCO is necessary because of the natural complementarity of the two organizations in many fields. It must therefore be pursued and reinforced. Significant efforts have been made to rationalize the University's management and strengthen its academic nature and function, in particular in the key areas of peace, governance, the environment and sustainable

development. The University will be required to play an active role in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

Draft decision

15. In view of the foregoing, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 169 EX/8,
2. Recognizing the key role of the United Nations University as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations,
3. Considering the efforts made to rationalize the management of the university and the constant improvement in its operation,
4. Recognizing the excellent quality of the relationship that has developed between UNU and UNESCO over the years,
5. Expresses its satisfaction at the development of the programme and activities of UNU;
6. Expresses its appreciation of the active participation of UNU in the programme and activities of UNESCO;
7. Expresses its gratitude to the Government of Japan for the financial and intellectual support that it gives to UNU;
8. Further expresses its gratitude to the Member States in which the research and training centres (RTCs) are located for their financial and intellectual support;
9. Thanks the governments and organizations that have contributed to the University's funds-in-trust and have provided support for the research and training centres and programmes;
10. Renews its support to the Rector of the United Nations University, Professor Hans van Ginkel;
11. Invites the University to pursue its efforts in support of activities in developing countries;
12. Invites the Director-General to communicate to the Chair of the Council of the United Nations University and to the Rector the terms of this decision.