

REPORT OF THE INFORMATION MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
“DAY OF DIALOGUE”
(Friday, 25 February 2000, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3 p.m.-6 p.m.)

1. In accordance with 155 EX/Decision 5.4, confirmed by the Executive Board at its 156th session, an information meeting between representatives of the States Members of the Executive Board and the Director-General was held at UNESCO Headquarters on 25 February 2000. All the Permanent Delegations to the Organization were invited to the meeting.

2. The **Chairperson**, welcoming the participants, said how pleased she was to see such a large gathering, which demonstrated the keen interest taken by the Member States in the life of UNESCO.

3. She then made an introductory statement, the full text of which is reproduced below as an annex.

4. The Chairperson went on to recall that, at her invitation, the representatives of the Member States had submitted questions and comments to the Director-General prior to the information meeting. After the statement by the Director-General, the participants could once again raise questions coming within the three main subject areas selected:

1. Implementation of the decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 157th session;
2. Progress in the execution of the programme adopted by the General Conference at its 30th session;
 - Preparation of the special session of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (Dakar, 26-28 April 2000);
3. Questions relating to the process of reform undertaken by the Director-General.

5. The **Director-General** delivered a statement, the full text of which is reproduced below as an annex.

6. A large number of representatives expressed their satisfaction with the organization and conduct of the information meeting and thanked the Director-General for the wealth of detail, transparency and clarity of his statement and replies, which had given a clear idea of what had already been achieved and an indication of the measures and reforms planned for the future.

Implementation of the decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 157th session

Progress in the execution of the programme adopted by the General Conference at its 30th session

7. The representative of **Greece**, noting that the Director-General had made no mention of the “Culture of Peace” project in his observations on action by UNESCO before and after conflicts, wondered whether that omission was an indication that the project was to be abandoned.

8. The representative of the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, recalling that 2001 had been proclaimed United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, wished to know what measures the Organization was planning to take to contribute to the celebration of that year, as follow-up to the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the General Conference of UNESCO.

9. The representative of **Oman**, expressing his support for most of the proposals put forward by the Director-General with regard to the structure of the Secretariat, transparency and decentralization, wished to call attention to the Renovation Plan for Headquarters Buildings, which had been the subject of a decision by the Board at its 157th session. As Chairperson of the Headquarters Committee, he had recently held talks with the Director-General and with those responsible for the management of the buildings. Those meetings had clearly revealed the generally poor state of the buildings, which required energetic measures to be taken in the interest of all the Member States. In that connection, the representative of Oman wondered whether it would not be advisable to set up a task force to monitor the implementation of the Renovation Plan for Headquarters Buildings.

10. The **Director-General** stated, for the information of the representative of Greece, that UNESCO would in fact be continuing its efforts to highlight the importance of the concept of the culture of peace. Accordingly, the Organization had set itself the objective of collecting 5 million signatures for Manifesto 2000 (at the moment, the number of signatories stood at just over 3 million). In addition, a number of actions were planned in order to mark the International Year for the Culture of Peace. However, the Director-General believed it to be imperative to give expression to that concept through concrete measures, in particular through action aimed at preventing conflicts or carried out after the cessation of conflicts.

- Replying to the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya he stated that UNESCO clearly had a major role to play in the celebration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and that a large number of activities and programmes were under consideration for that purpose. UNESCO was intending to carry out activities jointly with Member States, many of which had already submitted concrete proposals to that effect. In addition, action by the Organization needed to be closely coordinated with that of the United Nations. As he would be going to United Nations Headquarters the following week, he would raise that subject with the Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, and in greater detail with the Secretary-General's special representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

- The Director-General fully shared the alarming diagnosis of the representative of Oman, while expressing surprise that it had taken so long for the essential repair and renovation work to be initiated. The immediate task was to implement as soon as possible Phase 1 of the Renovation Plan. For such purposes, he had available about \$5 million, but needed to raise an additional \$16 million through outside funding negotiated at the most favourable conditions. He did not, however, believe there was any need to set up a task force. The maintenance and renovation of the Fontenoy, Miollis and Bonvin buildings came within the responsibilities of the Assistant Director-General for Management and Administration. The ADG/MA would be receiving instructions to initiate the repair and renovation work of the Fontenoy building and would be responding to the legitimate complaints of many delegations with regard to the Miollis building.

11. The representative of **Uruguay** emphasized that the role the Director-General ascribed to UNESCO before and after conflicts was fully in line with Article I of the Constitution. On

the other hand, there was no provision for intervention by the Organization in the course of a conflict. In that connection, he wished to know whether the Director-General envisaged taking any initiatives relating to conflict prevention and the culture of peace.

12. The representative of **France**, while agreeing that it would no doubt be premature to convene a major conference on communication, expressed his concern that the very rapid development of the information and communication technologies might effectively prevent the developing countries from gaining access to the knowledge disseminated by those technologies. In the view of his country, UNESCO needed to take a lead so as to bridge the ever-widening gap in that field, and also to introduce some form of regulation of the Internet. However, it seemed to him that the structures and the means employed by UNESCO were insufficient to meet the challenge.

13. The representative of the **United Kingdom** welcomed the contacts between the Director-General and the Secretary-General of the United Nations and with the executive heads of the other specialized agencies, particularly in view of the need for UNESCO to take part in the general process of reform of the United Nations system. In that context, cooperation with UNICEF was of the greatest importance. Under a decision adopted by the Executive Board at its 157th session, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Director of UNICEF had a responsibility to establish clear directives, in accordance with the recommendations of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education, so as to harmonize cooperation between the two organizations. In more general terms, the Secretariat and the Task Force on Decentralization needed to re-examine the ways in which the Organization participated in the decentralized activities of the United Nations system, by envisaging, for example, joint forms of representation rather than the establishment of separate offices.

14. Observing that the ambitions of Jomtien had not been realized in most regions of the world, he noted with satisfaction that the Director-General attached great importance to the World Education Forum to be held in Dakar. It was essential that the Organization should also play a major role in the follow-up to that conference. However, that would not happen by itself; the Organization had to prove that it had both the will and the capacity to carry out such action. Up to the present, UNESCO seemed to have a problem of visibility, in particular as compared with some NGOs, and that aspect needed to be addressed within the wider framework of reform of the Organization.

15. Referring to the statement of the representative of Uruguay, the **Director-General** observed that it was not always easy to define what activities would be likely to prevent conflicts. In a sense, almost all the activities carried out by UNESCO in its fields of competence contained an element of conflict prevention. Nevertheless, it was the responsibility of UNESCO to take concrete initiatives directed expressly towards that objective. Thus, with regard to water resources, there was an urgent need to mobilize efforts to prevent worldwide, regional and national water crises. Accordingly, UNESCO intended to play an active part in the World Water Forum, which was to be held in March in The Hague. For his part, he would be presiding over the activities organized to mark World Day for Water on 22 March. In another field, at the invitation of the President of Georgia, Mr Shevardnadze, UNESCO would be organizing a summit in 2001 in that country, with the participation of Azerbaijan and Armenia, to promote cooperation in that region.

- The Director-General said, for the information of the representative of France, that he was not giving up the idea of a communication summit, but that he had the feeling - also shared by

the Director-General of ITU - that there was not sufficient political will among Member States for such a meeting to be held. However, he intended to pursue actively the ongoing efforts and reflection on all aspects of the information society. In particular, pending the merger of the Intergovernmental Council for the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Committee for the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP), he was planning to establish an interim committee responsible for examining the most urgent problems.

- Responding to the observations of the representative of the United Kingdom, the Director-General said that he attached great importance to the role of UNESCO within the United Nations system, which included 35 organizations besides the United Nations itself. He was planning to make use of his visit to New York to discuss that matter with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and with UNFPA and UNICEF officials.

With regard to the Dakar Forum, he believed that UNESCO was playing a particularly active and visible role. It had held six regional preparatory meetings; he had attended two of them and had also addressed the Steering Committee of the EFA Forum during its meeting in Paris. Admittedly, criticisms had been made, particularly by NGOs. For instance, Oxfam had expressed the wish to withdraw from the Steering Committee of the EFA Forum, but that seemed to have more to do with a disagreement on the ways in which educational assistance was provided by international organizations to developing countries than with the organization of the Forum as such. The Director of the UNESCO Bangkok Office who was due to act as spokesperson in Dakar, would be going to London to talk to representatives of NGOs, in particular Oxfam.

With regard to the Organization's visibility, he had just set up a working group to carry out an initial assessment of the situation and propose a number of measures. Subsequently, as invited by the Executive Board at its 157th session, he would be establishing a group of experts that would help to formulate the policy and global strategy of the Organization with regard to information and communication. However, visibility was not solely the responsibility of the Secretariat. In addition to the Director-General, many representatives made a valuable contribution in that respect, in Paris and in their own countries. It would, however, be desirable to adopt a coordinated approach in that field.

16. The representative of the **Philippines** had noted, in an information bulletin of the Task Force on Secretariat Structure, Staffing and Management Systems, that the policies and systems introduced had been designed rather to overcome the many operational shortcomings than to help UNESCO to achieve its objectives. He wished to know whether the Director-General was planning to take measures to enable the Organization to carry out its mission more effectively.

17. The representative of **Côte d'Ivoire** called attention to long-term conflicts, which gave rise to mass population movements, including those involving many children, who thus had their schooling brutally interrupted. UNESCO clearly needed to take action in that kind of situation, in particular so as to meet the learning needs of children.

18. Pending the convening of a world conference on communication, which would be aimed in particular at establishing ethical regulatory mechanisms, UNESCO should take urgent steps to draw up a strategy aimed at giving all countries access to the new tools for the dissemination of knowledge. To that end, the Organization needed to redefine its missions

clearly in those fields in which it had a comparative advantage, given that it could no longer claim a monopoly in any one field.

19. The representative of **Egypt** stressed the importance of the communication technologies, including satellite broadcasting and the Internet, for the promotion of distance education, literacy and cultural programmes.

20. With reference to the point raised by the representative of the Philippines, the **Director-General** stressed the importance of the Young Professionals Programme. In general terms, the Organization needed to take advantage of the presence of the young staff members and seek to maintain their motivation. A number of them had taken part in the “brainstorming” sessions organized by one of the task forces. In his recent address to the staff, the Director-General had announced a series of measures to rejuvenate and reinvigorate the Secretariat.

- The Director-General agreed with the representative of Côte d’Ivoire that he had put forward a far too restrictive definition of conflicts. While UNESCO had no role to play in armed conflicts such as those in Kosovo or East Timor, it could not remain on the sidelines of protracted conflicts, and for that reason had established programmes of educational assistance in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Within the United Nations system, numerous agencies were operating in the same fields. However, he was optimistic for the future of UNESCO, since it had built up its own pool of expertise and know-how. The other institutions involved in the organization of the Dakar Forum recognized the leading role of UNESCO. Similarly, there was no conflict between UNESCO and ITU, whose mandates were complementary. With regard to communication, the Organization had an important part to play with regard to numerous aspects which did not come within the competence of ITU.

- The Director-General assured the representative of Egypt that he would endeavour to meet the needs of numerous Member States by involving UNESCO more actively in support for the “info-poor”.

21. The representative of **Chad** recalled that at the previous session of the Executive Board he had put forward a number of ideas to improve the Organization’s financial situation. In particular, he had proposed that a group of Members close to the oil-producing countries of OPEC should invite those countries to allocate to UNESCO a contribution of half a cent for each barrel of oil produced and sold.

22. The representative of **Romania** said that the celebrated words of Caesar “*Veni, vidi, vici*” could be applied to the Director-General, although in the reverse order, as suggested by the Spanish essayist Baltasar Gracián. The Director-General had conquered, and then he had come and he had seen. His efforts to ensure transparency in the very functioning of the Organization deserved to be saluted. However, much remained to be done with regard to public opinion. If it were not to be marginalized, UNESCO must endeavour to meet the tremendous expectations to which it gave rise, in particular among the NGOs. It also needed to recognize that, in order to solve some problems or intervene in particular areas, the vast network of NGOs was better equipped than governments or other institutions. Furthermore, UNESCO should undertake wide-ranging actions aimed at the broad public, taking advantage, for example, of such occasions as World Poetry Day or International Mother Language Day.

23. The representative of **Chile** recalled that at its previous session the General Conference had, at the proposal of his country, amended its Rules of Procedures so as to enable the Legal Committee to meet between sessions of the General Conference. That measure could be even more beneficial since the Organization was embarking upon a process of change which might give rise to problems of legal interpretation, not to mention the fact that the departure of the Legal Adviser had just been announced.

24. Referring to the statement by the representative of Chad, the **Director-General** said that the extremely rigorous budget adopted by the General Conference was fortunately supplemented by the voluntary contributions of certain Member States and private companies. In that connection, he hailed the generous contributions of one member of OPEC, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, for the benefit of the developing countries. If other members of OPEC wished to follow that example, it would be greatly appreciated.

- The Director-General fully endorsed the remarks of the representative of Romania. In addition, he would agree to reverse the order of Caesar's famous words, provided that "I" was replaced by "we". Clearly, the only way he could succeed was in partnership with all the Member States and the staff of the Organization.

- Responding to the observations of the representative of Chile, the Director-General said that he would welcome any meeting of the Legal Committee, if it were decided to convene it. As mentioned, the Legal Adviser had just submitted his resignation. An acting Legal Adviser had been appointed and the post would shortly be open to recruitment.

25. The representative of **Germany** said that his country supported the overall thrust of the measures taken or planned by the Director-General and encouraged him to persevere on the difficult path of reform. The challenge facing the Director-General consisted in reconciling the budgetary resources available with the programme activities to be undertaken. In that connection, the representative of Germany wished to know whether the Director-General had already identified fields of activity which might be entrusted to other organizations, as he had previously suggested.

26. The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** stressed that the Dakar Forum was of the utmost importance for the developing countries. Unlike the representative of the United Kingdom he considered that the objectives set at Jomtien were realistic but it had to be admitted that they had not been achieved, and it would be necessary to draw up a new timetable. The real challenge of the Dakar Forum would be to mobilize the political will of the international community and hence the financial resources needed for the achievement of those objectives. He asked what role UNESCO intended to play in that great task.

27. Referring to a project recently set up jointly by the World Bank and a private company for the purpose of giving the developing countries better access to the Internet, he expressed the hope that UNESCO would become involved in that project, which was fully in line with the Organization's mission.

28. The representative of **Saint Lucia** recalled one of the concerns raised at the 30th session of the General Conference, namely that a large number of draft resolutions had been adopted with no mention of what resources would be allocated to them in the C/5 document. She asked whether the Director-General could give an approximate figure for the budgetary implications of the draft resolutions adopted at the previous session of the General Conference.

29. The representative of **Nigeria** said that the Member States had high expectations of the Dakar Forum. It was important to analyse why the Jomtien objectives had not been achieved. A meeting of the nine high-population (E-9) countries recently held in Recife, Brazil, had helped to highlight certain weaknesses, in particular the insufficient attention paid to women and other marginalized groups. In addition, UNICEF and UNESCO should seek to harmonize their activities more closely. UNESCO should review its own mandate, and view itself more as an “ideas agency” than a “funding agency”.

30. The representative of **Benin** commended the excellent work accomplished by the Director-General during the first months of his term of office. With regard to UNESCO’s fields of competence, he said that it was practically inevitable that a certain amount of overlap and duplication should exist between the various United Nations agencies, particularly in the field of education. UNESCO must endeavour to preserve its specialization and insist on quality and even excellence. However, it was legitimate to ask how UNESCO could recover any ground it might have lost and ensure that there was real complementarity rather than the competition and turf wars that were now all too often the rule.

31. Finally, he wished to know what concrete actions were planned to follow up the Dakar Forum.

32. The **Director-General** said that he was encouraged by the support shown by many representatives for the measures that he had already taken and for the general direction of the reforms that he was envisaging.

- Referring to the statement by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he noted that the Jomtien Conference had set ambitious objectives (for example, to reduce illiteracy by one half between 1990 and 2000) using a top-down approach. At Dakar, the process would operate in the opposite direction, from the grass roots upwards. In all, 180 countries had submitted reports which had fuelled the debates at the regional conferences. The Dakar framework for action would thus reflect the concerns and objectives of the countries themselves. Naturally, particular attention should be paid to the follow-up to the meeting, in which UNESCO would have a major role to play.

- Responding to the representative of Benin, the Director-General stressed that the Dakar Forum should not only set quantitative objectives, but also propose concrete ways of reaching marginalized groups. Emphasis should also be laid on the quality of education, which should be geared to the changes that had taken place in the last ten years as well as to those that might be expected in the coming decade. In the field of basic education, UNESCO’s action had not always had great visibility because the Organization was chiefly involved upstream, unlike UNICEF, for example, which had a much greater presence in the field. Nevertheless, it was necessary to resolutely seek ways of enhancing the Organization’s visibility, particularly within the framework of the thorough examination that was to be carried out on decentralization.

- The Director-General said in response to the question put by the representative of Saint Lucia that it was not yet possible to evaluate all the financial implications of the draft resolutions. In any case, the instructions that the Executive Board would give on how to use the savings of \$10 million would have an impact on the work plans. The elimination of the Reserve for Draft Resolutions had further reduced the room for manoeuvre. Noting an apparent lack of consistency between the approved budget and the draft resolutions adopted,

the Director-General indicated that he would communicate the information requested by the representative of Saint Lucia to the Board at its autumn session.

- Like the representative of Nigeria, the Director-General considered that the Dakar Forum should focus particularly on marginalized groups, including women and girls, in the context of both formal and non-formal basic education. That was why the Dakar declaration and framework for action would draw the attention of the international community to the urgent need to give girls and women better access to high-quality formal and non-formal education.

With regard to inter-agency cooperation, he pointed out that UNESCO was a member of the UNICEF-headed Task Force on Girls' and Women's Education, which was preparing to launch a major world initiative on basic education for girls and women. In addition, on the eve of the official opening of the Dakar Forum, UNESCO was planning to hold a special event on education and the educational role of women.

- Regarding the question put by the representative of Germany, the Director-General firmly believed that at the present stage he did not have the necessary mandate to set aside activities that had been approved by the General Conference. In order to find \$10 million in the budget adopted, he hoped to make savings on various items of expenditure, reconsidering certain modalities of execution but without touching the substance of the programmes. On the other hand, preparation of the forthcoming Medium-Term Strategy should provide an opportunity to focus on a certain number of priority programmes, possibly dropping certain activities that other organizations were in a better position to implement.

Questions relating to the process of reform undertaken by the Director-General

33. The representative of **Malaysia** welcomed the reforms announced by the Director-General, which were firmly aimed at achieving action and results, and reflected a concern to rejuvenate and revitalize the Secretariat, while refocusing and redefining the tasks that should be entrusted to it. More specifically, he wished to know whether there were plans to evaluate the work of staff members in connection with the programme being implemented.

34. The representative of the **Russian Federation** expressed his satisfaction at the efforts made by the Director-General to impart new impetus to UNESCO. He was pleased to note that there was broad agreement between the intentions of the Director-General and the views of his country, as well as of the European Union. Within the framework of the reform process, the Russian Federation had submitted a set of proposals which might be summarized in the following manner:

It was important to avoid, as far as possible, any duplication of the work of the United Nations agencies to promote sustainable development. For its part, UNESCO needed to strengthen its role in the action of the United Nations system with regard to humanitarian disasters and post-conflict crises.

With regard to globalization, UNESCO should seek to preserve the diversity of national cultures. The Russian Federation was intending to have that item included in the agenda of the Executive Board at its forthcoming session.

There was a need to draw up a detailed inventory of the Organization's projects and programmes on the basis of identical criteria for all sectors. The definition of those

criteria should be entrusted to the Task Force on the Programmes and Priorities of UNESCO.

The structure of the Secretariat could be unified under a three-tier system both at Headquarters (sectors, divisions and sections) and in the field (regional, subregional and national levels). There could be eight sectors: five programme sectors, an external relations and information sector, an administrative and finance sector, and the Directorate.

When defining the objectives of the Medium-Term Strategy, the percentages for programme costs and staff costs should be set at 65% and 35% respectively.

Employment contracts should be fixed-term, with each staff member being assigned to a specific post or a project of limited duration, in accordance with the results expected.

There was a need to strengthen internal and external monitoring of budget execution.

All units having insufficient funding to operate independently should be reattached to the programme.

35. The representative of the Russian Federation drew the Director-General's attention to the growing linguistic imbalance within the Organization. On the pretext of achieving savings, English and French were being favoured in UNESCO's activities to the detriment of the other official languages. The Director-General should intervene personally to rectify that situation, which was contrary to the rules and objectives of the Organization.

36. He deplored the fact that the sessions of the Executive Board had an overloaded agenda as a result of the reduction in the length of the sessions, and therefore suggested that the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Board should meet in order to examine ways and means of lightening the agenda. He further expressed the wish that Board documents should be issued within the deadlines.

37. The representative of **Finland** asked how the Director-General might promote an interdisciplinary approach within the Secretariat and between the major programme sectors.

38. In previous biennia, the Director-General had established many advisory committees, study groups and other bodies whose fields of competence sometimes overlapped. Did the Director-General, she asked, plan to merge or eliminate some of them, or to keep them as they were? In any event, under a General Conference resolution, those bodies had to be taken into account in the list of conferences and meetings that the Director-General was to submit to the Board, with the corresponding budgetary resources, at its next three sessions.

39. With regard to decentralization, she was concerned about the number of institutes established in recent years, especially in the field of education. Finland had on several occasions asked for an external evaluation of the work of those institutes, absorbing as they did a significant part of the Education Sector's budget and among which there might be some overlapping.

40. Referring to the new information and communication technologies, about which a large number of States were rightly concerned, she mentioned an agreement concluded recently between the World Bank and a private firm, involving some \$500 million, to facilitate access

to the Internet for Third World countries. Was UNESCO associated or considering becoming associated with that initiative?

41. The representative of **Canada** assured the Director-General that his government fully supported him where increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the Organization's action was concerned. On the question of the culture of peace raised earlier by some representatives, Canada believed that the culture of peace was more a goal of the Organization than a programme as such, a way of giving tangible form to UNESCO's fundamental task. In that regard, the Organization's entire activity should be directed towards that goal. But the culture of peace was a matter as much for Member States as for the Secretariat. For that reason, it seemed to him fitting that the Director-General should ask the Permanent Delegations to inform him of the various activities undertaken or planned by the Member States as their contribution to the International Year for the Culture of Peace, before he submitted to the Executive Board an overview of all the activities concerned with the culture of peace. In that context, Canada had already proposed to UNESCO that it should stress the education of young people in democracy and ethics, having regard to human security and conflict prevention.

42. In response to the question put by the representative of Malaysia, the **Director-General** said that UNESCO's existing system of performance reports had numerous flaws and, furthermore, was not applied in a rigorous fashion. Within the Task Force on Secretariat Structure, Staffing and Management Systems, a working group had considered that question and had highlighted a number of shortcomings: the unsuitability of the evaluation criteria, which were not based on objectives; the lack of a link with the programme cycle; the lack of dialogue between the supervisor and the staff member being evaluated; and the lack of follow-up. Reform in that area should therefore follow a two-track approach: to design a new evaluation system which corrected the shortcomings identified, and to ensure the proper application of the system, so that deserving staff members were rewarded and those whose results were substandard were penalized.

- The Director-General expressed his appreciation to the Russian Federation for its contribution to the reform process and, in particular, for its very concrete suggestions regarding a number of problems facing the Organization. He agreed that cultural diversity was one of the fields in which the Organization should stamp its mark and make a specific contribution to the international community. One of his first initiatives after taking office had been to transmit to the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, before the Seattle meeting, the conclusions of the round table of ministers of culture. As the General Conference had invited him to do, he intended to establish without delay a group of experts on cultural diversity, and to request all the Member States to assist in the examination of the contribution that UNESCO might make in that field.

The budgetary constraints and delays in the production of documents might have given the impression that two languages enjoyed special status in the Organization to the detriment of the other four official languages. Those practices were contrary to the Organization's basic principles and the Director-General would do his utmost to respect them by placing UNESCO's six official languages on an equal footing.

- Referring to the statement by the representative of Finland, the Director-General stressed that interdisciplinarity was essential in an organization like UNESCO because there was no field that could be covered by a single sector. Rather than set up coordination units, as in the past, he considered it preferable to establish task forces for important issues. That had been

done, for instance, in the case of the Dakar Forum. Nevertheless, to be effective the application of such an approach had to be limited in time. Meanwhile, the most important thing was that all Assistant Directors-General and Directors should be convinced of the absolute need for an interdisciplinary approach and become accustomed to consulting the divisions and sectors concerned in their daily work.

There were, he believed, too many advisory committees, study groups and other bodies, so that streamlining was required in that area. Ahead of his report on the subject to the Executive Board, he would have a full list of those bodies compiled and examine possible improvements in that regard. Similarly, he would have an evaluation made of the activities of the institutes referred to by the representative of Finland, with special emphasis on the relations between the institutes and the Education Sector and among the institutes themselves.

With regard to the project set up by the World Bank to facilitate access to the Internet, he would be seeking more information on that initiative, which appeared to be of great interest for the Organization.

- The Director-General said he agreed with the representative of Canada that celebrating the International Year for the Culture of Peace should be a responsibility of all the Organization's Member States, and it would certainly be useful to have an overview of all the activities carried out or scheduled in that context. The Secretariat was planning some events, in particular for the closing of the International Year. What was most important, however, was to transform the concept of the culture of peace into real action and, for that reason, Canada's proposal regarding education in democracy and ethics was of particular interest to UNESCO.

43. The representative of **Spain** believed that the Director-General had been convincing about the need for reform and wished him every success in that undertaking. In that connection, it was important to harmonize the work of the task forces established by the Director-General and that of the Executive Board's Task Force on UNESCO in the Twenty-First Century. Similarly, for the purposes of replacing placing professional staff in the Secretariat, the Director-General should seek to shorten to the extent possible the process of candidate selection.

44. Because UNESCO's programmes and projects had a limited share of the budget, determining priorities was all-important. In that regard, Spain hoped that the priority going to basic education would not result in any overlooking of secondary and vocational or higher education, in which areas developing countries had pressing needs.

45. Without further elaboration since the issues had already been raised, he recalled the importance the Spanish Government attached to a balance between the Organization's official languages and to the rightful role of UNESCO in the field of communication.

46. Spain believed that the culture of peace should remain a priority for the Organization on the understanding that the focus should be on concrete activities in the Member States, for example on human rights education. Similarly, UNESCO needed to put substantial effort into celebrating the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

47. The representative of **Lithuania** said she welcomed the Director-General's concern for transparency and his determination to tackle the extensive reforms needed. To that end, it was important to have clear agreement on the criteria to govern programme readjustment and concentration. From that point of view, the role of UNESCO within the United Nations

system and its specific role in international cooperation should be carefully studied and defined. Beyond the obvious priorities (basic education, follow-up of major conferences, etc.), UNESCO had to amplify its constitutional task of intellectual and moral cooperation. It was for UNESCO to propose approaches and principles that might be of use to other organizations within the United Nations system and to other multilateral bodies. At the same time, as guardian of ethical values, UNESCO must demonstrate initiative and innovation in the context of globalization and scientific and technological progress.

48. She also wished to draw attention to two points. UNESCO was the only international organization in direct contact with civil society, which could be a distinct asset in some domains (such as the culture of peace and basic education). Furthermore, it should not neglect culture, and especially poetry, whose educational value could be made to serve the culture of peace.

49. The representative of the **Netherlands** commended the efforts being made by the Director-General to fulfil his pledges and assured him of his country's support in that regard. As the Chairperson of the Finance and Administrative Commission, he was glad to see that the Director-General shared the Executive Board's views on the reforms needed. He was also convinced that, in a climate of mutual trust, the difficulties raised by particular decisions and resolutions that the Director-General considered too restrictive could be ironed out.

50. In general, Member States were unstinting in their praise of the Director-General's decisions and plans for reform. He, the representative of the Netherlands, was nevertheless sure that some Member States would be seeking dispensations from the policies and rules established. He consequently urged the Director-General to resist any pressures since, while he might otherwise make a few friends, he could also be sure of losing others.

51. Responding to the representative of Spain, the **Director-General** said that his mention of emphasis on basic education in no way implied that the Organization would be financing field activities, which in any case it could not afford. UNESCO's mission was to help developing countries formulate programmes and projects in basic education, in accordance with their own vision, and to seek to mobilize multilateral and bilateral funding for that purpose.

Higher education and technical and vocational education were two other major pillars of UNESCO's mandate in education. In the first area, the Director-General suggested convening by the middle of 2000 the first follow-up meeting to the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education. With reference to technical and vocational education, an initiative was going to be launched, the date of which was to be determined, in connection with follow-up of the 1999 Seoul Congress.

- Like the representative of Lithuania, the Director-General considered that the Organization's close ties with civil society were a valuable asset in all its fields of activity. In basic education, for instance, UNESCO needed the cooperation of NGOs to reach marginalized groups outside the formal education system. While some NGOs, such as Oxfam, had expressed disagreement during the preparation of the Dakar Forum, many others had sided with UNESCO and were ready to back it in its action. He attached great importance to cooperation with NGOs. He had already had many personal meetings with their representatives and had addressed the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

- The Director-General assured the representative of the Netherlands of his determination to enforce the announced policies and reiterated his appeal to the Member States to respect his resolve. He was also encouraged by the prospect of dialogue on the forms of application of individual decisions and resolutions.

52. The representative of **China** expressed his country's support for the Director-General's reform efforts under way or planned. She sought clarification on two points. In the part of his statement on programme concentration, the Director-General had failed to mention culture and, in particular, protection of the cultural heritage. China believed that UNESCO should give the utmost attention to protecting the intangible heritage - it was, moreover, the only United Nations agency dealing with that matter. At its 30th session, the General Conference had authorized the Director-General to study the possibility of drawing up a standard-setting instrument in that domain. What were the Secretariat's plans in that regard and, should such an instrument be deemed necessary, could the process not be speeded up?

53. The representative of **Morocco** welcomed the efforts of the Director-General, in a very short period of time, to arrive at a diagnosis and initiate a series of reforms. She nevertheless hoped that that task, the necessity and urgency of which she recognized, would not affect implementation of the programme adopted in respect of UNESCO's essential missions. With regard to reform, she wished to ask the Director-General three specific questions. Did he already have an idea of the ideal structure of the Secretariat in relation to programme concentration? What was the proportion of women in the Secretariat and what measures were envisaged to increase it? What would be done about the institutes established in the field of education and whose utility seemed, to say the least, uneven?

54. Being new to the Organization, she had been struck by the proliferation of documents some of which were probably of interest only to a limited audience. It might be useful to reflect on their mode of distribution and also their possible recycling.

55. The representative of **Georgia**, briefly reviewing UNESCO's development over the past two decades, marked by a growing number of activities and increasingly top-heavy structures, said the challenge now facing the Organization was to reconcentrate on its mission of intellectual cooperation while helping to strengthen peace. In that spirit, UNESCO should renovate the Secretariat and, to achieve that, reduce central services, restore the programme sectors to their fundamental place, setting up intersectoral working groups as necessary, and bring in younger staff.

56. UNESCO should take advantage of the new Medium-Term Strategy to formulate biennial programmes comprising two major parts: a few lines of emphasis of a universal character (human rights, environment, safeguarding of the cultural heritage including languages, etc.); and programmes and projects to meet the specific needs of each region or subregion, which was the guiding principle of the "Caucasus" project presented at the 30th session of the General Conference. Referring to the 2001 Summit previously mentioned by the Director-General, the representative of Georgia confirmed that, like the leaders of the neighbouring countries, President Shevernadze wished to see UNESCO playing a key role in reviving cooperation in the region.

57. With regard to national-level activities, the Young Professionals Programme could be strengthened through the Participation Programme, which developing countries would use to send young specialists to UNESCO.

58. Management and monitoring procedures, he considered, could be improved by strengthening accountability mechanisms in regard to supervisors rather than installing expensive parallel systems (of the SISTER type).

59. Members States expected much of UNESCO in higher education and the development of the sciences. The new communication technologies, particularly the Internet, had great potential in nearly all human activities and at the same time made for greater imbalances between developed and developing countries. UNESCO should intercede with governments for the sake of broader access to world information networks, in particular to non-commercial educational and scientific institutions. UNESCO could also consider convening an international forum, with the participation of the main Internet access providers and network software designers.

60. The **Director-General**, thanking the representative of Georgia for his suggestions concerning the reform of UNESCO, said that he greatly appreciated the invitation extended by President Shevernadze and reaffirmed that the Organization and he himself were fully prepared to contribute actively to the initiative planned in the region.

- Addressing the representative of Morocco, the Director-General said that, while he had some ideas about the ideal structure of the Organization, he felt it was too early to discuss them at that point. He had expressly entrusted the study of that question to the task force chaired by Mr Yushkiavitshius. On the basis of the observations and suggestions of the task force, he would be putting clear-cut proposals on the matter to the Executive Board at its spring session.

In the Secretariat, women represented 41% of Professional staff (44% in the field offices), or a significantly higher proportion than in the other United Nations agencies. He himself had set an example by appointing more women than men to his Executive Office. He remained convinced, however, that more could be done to improve the situation of women in the Secretariat and he was awaiting precise proposals in that regard from the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities.

As he had said, he was planning to have an in-depth examination conducted of the responsibilities and functioning of UNESCO's various institutes, especially in the field of education.

He agreed with the representative of Morocco about the mass of documentation produced by UNESCO. In that connection, the Chairperson of the Executive Board had asked him to ensure that the documents for the next session of the Board were more concise and succinct and he had given instructions to that effect to his staff.

- Responding to the statement by the representative of China, the Director-General said UNESCO had already done much to protect the world heritage, an area in which its action was highly visible. A total of 630 cultural and natural sites were already on the World Heritage List and the Organization was implementing a global strategy to encourage the inclusion of sites located in countries which were unrepresented or under-represented on the List. Because the intangible heritage was not covered by the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Heritage, the General Conference had requested that the possibility be explored of drawing up a standard-setting instrument on oral and living traditions, a task that the Secretariat would endeavour to carry out as soon as possible. In that domain, an international jury had been formed to examine works that might be proclaimed masterpieces of the oral and

intangible heritage of humanity. In another domain, UNESCO had already organized several meetings with a view to finalizing a convention concerning the protection of the underwater cultural heritage. A further meeting would be held in July 2000 for the purpose of reaching agreement on the final text of that instrument. In addition, as had already been said, a group of experts on cultural diversity was going to be set up.

The Director-General also wished to draw attention to several conventions for the protection of the cultural heritage which many States had not yet ratified, including the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, reinforced by the 1995 Unidroit Convention and the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which had just been completed by the adoption of a second Protocol. All those legal instruments could help preserve cultural diversity but what was lacking was the political will to apply them. The Director-General therefore urged those Member States which had not yet done so to ratify those conventions.

61. The representative of **Saint Lucia** observed that the amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules adopted by the General Conference did not seek to tie the Director-General's hands; some of them were even likely to shield him from any pressures from Member States. Those provisions had been adopted as a result of numerous infringements of the rules in force, which had led to a staff cost deficit and been a factor in demoralizing staff.

62. A misunderstanding perhaps existed about the amendments to Staff Regulation 4.2. While transfers, promotions and renewals of appointments required the use of "a competitive process", that did not mean that the post in question had to be advertised. The procedure could consist of any internal arrangement that the Secretariat deemed appropriate (interviews or comparative evaluation of performance reports, for example). In any event, the question could be examined during the meetings of the Group of Experts on Administrative and Financial Matters and the FA Commission at the next session of the Board.

63. The representative of **Bangladesh** stressed that any organization's personnel policy should include the following ingredients: a sound recruitment policy, proper training, equitable appraisal, promotion on the basis of merit and assignment of staff to posts matching their profile. At UNESCO the Director-General should also take into account the criteria of geographical distribution and gender parity. Bangladesh was of the view that the Director-General should be allowed greater flexibility in implementing personnel policy. Quite clearly, a particular effort was needed to promote the Young Professionals Programme. It was necessary first to ask why that programme, which had yielded good results at the World Bank, had not been so effective at UNESCO. The large number of posts at the top of the pyramid certainly did put a damper on the promotion prospects of young people in the Secretariat. The problem could not be resolved at a stroke, but if the Organization wanted to recruit and retain young talent, it had to find the means of rewarding their merits.

64. The Director-General had taken a number of austerity measures that should enable the Organization to improve its budget situation considerably. In that connection, the representative of Bangladesh recalled that upon taking up his duties, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, had tried with a measure of success to obtain additional resources from organizations or Member States.

65. Bangladesh was convinced that a close link existed between the visibility and the viability of an organization. While UNESCO should be concerned with its visibility in the Member States, it should also give more attention to its relations with the other organizations of the United Nations system. The task was no doubt more difficult for UNESCO than for organizations based in New York or Geneva, which had regular exchanges with one another. In that regard, the Director-General's efforts to establish or strengthen his ties with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and executive heads of the specialized agencies should be praised. UNESCO should particularly endeavour to set up joint projects to which it would contribute its skills and seek the support of organizations with fewer funding problems, such as UNICEF or UNHCR. It could also profitably participate in a project such as that set up by the World Bank to facilitate member countries' access to the Internet. A relevant example was provided by the very good level of collaboration established between CIGEPS and the International Olympic Committee for the organization of meetings and other events. To improve its visibility, UNESCO could also follow the example of some organizations that had appointed a spokesperson to state their point of view from time to time on specific issues.

66. At the major meetings it organized, whether alone or with others, UNESCO should give equal importance to preparation and follow-up. For preparatory work, it could make better use of its network of field offices. As to major decisions adopted at those meetings, their only value lay in how they were followed up. The same went for the implementation of two major projects, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, which had been proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on UNESCO's initiative, and the United Nations Year for Dialogue among Civilizations (2001). UNESCO would be judged on how effectively it contributed to the activities marking the celebration of those two Years.

67. The representative of **India** was of the opinion that UNESCO's personnel policy was particularly deficient and required urgent measures. Without prejudging the recommendations to be put forward by the task force dealing with the matter, he would make a number of comments on what he considered to be the most important points. The recruitment policy should be established according to well-defined rules, with particular regard to the advertising of vacant posts and selection to those posts. The candidates should be chosen according to their skills, with due account taken moreover of the criteria of geographical distribution and gender balance. For its part, the Executive Board should ensure the policy was implemented correctly without having to decide on individual applications. There should be a ceiling on the number of high-level posts and the Director-General should have every latitude to recruit and promote within that ceiling. That would prevent abuses regarding personal promotions, end-of-career promotions and other promotions. Moreover, performance evaluation methods should be improved as should opportunities for staff promotion, for General Service staff as much as for staff in the Professional category. The Director-General had announced his intention of taking measures to that end and he should be encouraged in them, for if the staff felt that high-level posts were systematically provided for by outside recruitment and that there were no further possibilities of advancement, they could only feel frustrated and discouraged. Likewise, a minimum period should be set for all promotions to a higher grade.

68. He endorsed the comments made by other representatives on the institutes established in the field of education. In the first place, too many of them were located in Europe, when they would be far more useful in developing countries with their enormous needs regarding literacy and higher education. In the second place, there was too much duplication in the institutes' activities. Serious thought should be given to merging some of them, or redirecting some of their resources either to recently created institutes in developing countries or with a view to

reinforcing the Education Sector. The Education Sector itself should be wholly reorganized, if necessary with staff redeployment and the closure of some units. The reorganization should be part of the restructuring of the Secretariat. In that respect, he cited the example of the International Bureau of Education, which was supposed to develop curricula for the different countries. Was there a single Member State on the Board that had received IBE assistance in that field? If IBE had proposed to develop, in consultation with countries, study programmes for a particular education sector, its action would have been immediately visible. In that field as in others, visibility depended on substantive action.

69. The process of globalization was a threat to cultural diversity. UNESCO could not act against globalization but it could do a great deal to preserve cultures in their broadest sense, since it was true that standardization in that case was synonymous with impoverishment. UNESCO had to intensify its action in that field, where it already had a strong presence.

70. With regard to information technologies, the problem was not just one of accessibility, as many representatives had stressed. The information conveyed by those media included many harmful elements (pornography, paedophilia, and so on) over which control should be exerted. In conformity with its ethical mission, UNESCO had a leading role to play in developing an international mechanism, in the form of an agreement, convention or other form of provision governing those different aspects. That was why the Director-General should envisage convening, during the current or the subsequent biennium, an international conference on communication and information which would enable practical results to be obtained with a view to verifying the ethical content of information.

71. The **Director-General**, responding to the representative of India, said that document 30 C/5 set a ceiling for each category of high-level post in the Secretariat. For instance, the ceiling was 110 for all posts at grade D-1 and above. Had he implemented all the decisions on promotions and appointments taken by his predecessor, that figure would have stood at 200, way above the limit set by the General Conference. That was why he had temporarily suspended the decisions taken in that respect as of 1 October 1999. Moreover, a number of staff members had left the Organization at the end of 1999. For the moment, the number of posts at D-1 and above under the regular budget was 162, which showed the scale of the effort needed to come down to the ceiling set in document 30 C/5.

He fully endorsed the comments of the representative of India on personnel policy. After the abuses of the past, he hoped to establish a more transparent and more rational policy that should remotivate the dedicated staff who aspired to a career in the Organization.

As he had already stated, he intended addressing without further delay the problems of the information society. Even though he considered it to be premature to undertake a feasibility study on a global communication and information summit, he intended holding talks with the administration of the International Telecommunication Union, taking account of the many comments made on the issue by representatives of Member States.

- The Director-General agreed with the representative of Bangladesh that the Young Professionals Programme was limited in scope (only a few posts were allocated to it in the budget). Luckily, he would be able to reinforce it since the General Conference had authorized him to allocate to it part of the \$10 million released from the current budget. He was open to suggestions from Member States on any possible ways of making the Programme more attractive, as it was of crucial importance to the Organization's future. He had therefore been disappointed to learn that several young people of great merit had left the Organization or

were about to do so, in particular because they could see no prospect of satisfactory advancement in the Secretariat. It had to be acknowledged that in UNESCO and in other agencies of the system, there was a basic contradiction between career development and the fixed-term post system. While recruitment and promotion should be carried out in a transparent and rational way, on a competitive basis, ways should nevertheless be found of encouraging talented young people to remain in the service of the Organization. He intended to continue consideration of the issue.

- The Director-General was pleased to see that the representative of Saint Lucia, like the representative of the Netherlands, was willing to examine with the Secretariat ways of making more flexible the most restrictive measures adopted in relation to staff matters. Without wishing to belittle competition, he felt that the measures adopted by the General Conference were in fact a restraint intended for his predecessor whereas he himself sincerely desired to improve personnel policy. If those provisions really sought to tie his hands, he was ready to accept them, but he was sure they would be misconstrued by many capable and deserving staff members.

72. The representative of the **United Kingdom**, while expressing satisfaction at the progress achieved in developing the SISTER system, an essential ingredient of results-based management, was convinced of the need to go much further along the path to renovation by using, where appropriate, resources from the regular budget should it not be possible to raise sufficient voluntary contributions to that end. In any event, such a decision could not be put off until the next biennium.

73. The United Kingdom encouraged the Director-General to concentrate his efforts on priority programmes, as he had already said he would do, even if he did not have much room for manoeuvre during the current biennium. Nevertheless, a major effort would be needed to that end during the formulation of the next Medium-Term Strategy for the Organization. The Board would be looking at that issue at its autumn session, and he therefore urged the Task Force on UNESCO in the Twenty-First Century to complete the main part of its work during the summer if it wished to have a substantial impact on preparatory work for the new Strategy.

74. The representative of **Gabon** said that he endorsed the main thrust of the options and decisions of the Director-General, which attested to his concern to include much-needed austerity in his reform programme. Gabon wished to associate itself with the comments made by other representatives regarding assistance for the schooling of refugee children and the need to elaborate a mechanism to reduce the gap between developed and developing countries with regard to access to new information technologies. On a more general level, Gabon was pleased with the Director-General's efforts to ensure a closer match between resources and programme needs, and above all with his commitment to raise the profile of UNESCO in the United Nations system and the international community by making the Organization more visible.

75. As Chairperson of the French-speaking group of UNESCO, he regretted the fact that many documents, often on essential questions, were not published in French, a working language of an organization with some 50 wholly or partially French-speaking Member States. Furthermore, the French-speaking group would like to ensure that senior officials of the Organization had a good knowledge of French, like the Director-General himself; in particular, the use and mastery of French should be a criterion of competence, perhaps even a decisive one, in all recruitment and promotion to high-level Secretariat posts (at the level of Directors and Assistant Directors-General). Measures should be taken to ensure that the

question of the status of the French language as a working language was included in the reform of UNESCO.

76. The representative of **Peru**, endorsing the comments of several representatives, stressed that as one of its priorities, UNESCO should take an interest in the rapid development of information and communication technologies, which had the effect of excluding the poorest countries still further. The new technologies affected almost all fields of human life (access to knowledge, patterns of consumption, access to employment, and so on) and in one way or another touched on all the Organization's fields of competence. In coordination with the relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations system, UNESCO should devise a strategy aimed at finding solutions to that problem. As a first step, the Task Force on the Programme and Priorities of UNESCO might suggest a number of useful avenues to explore. In addition, it was the responsibility of the Organization to promote ethical standards for those technologies. She requested that the item should remain on the agenda of forthcoming meetings of the Executive Board.

77. Referring to observations of the representative of Peru, the **Director-General** stated that he had fully understood the message of the Member States regarding the importance to be attached to communication in the work of the Organization. Pending the recruitment of the new Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics, he intended to ask Mr Modoux, acting Assistant Director-General, to reflect upon a new information and informatics strategy. Moreover, as he had already stated, he hoped to carry out rapidly the merger of the Intergovernmental Council for the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Committee for the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP).

- The Director-General said that he shared the concerns of the representative of Gabon and was fully aware of the importance of French as a working language of the Secretariat. In vacancy announcements for high-level posts it was stated deliberately that candidates should have competent knowledge of both working languages of the Organization. Moreover, French was in practice the working language of his own Executive Office.

- For the information of the representative of the United Kingdom, the Director-General confirmed his intention to set up a new computer system, the total cost of which was estimated to be \$11 million. To that end, he had the sum of \$5 million under the regular budget, \$2.5 million of which would come from the \$10 million in savings to be made at the request of the General Conference. He would thus be addressing an appeal to Member States, by way of a circular letter, aimed at securing voluntary contributions of \$6 million in order to install the new computer system. If his appeal was not heard he would have no other choice than to return to the Board to obtain additional funds, as the representative of the United Kingdom had suggested to him. He intended to launch a second appeal to Member States for \$15 million to finance Phase 1 of the Renovation Plan for Headquarters Buildings, and a third appeal to raise funds for programme execution.

78. The representative of **Honduras** was of the view that the Organization's visibility was also connected to its universality, and asked whether the Director-General had plans to encourage the return of the United States and Singapore to the Organization.

79. The representative of **France** stressed that his country considered, as did the Director-General, that the Dakar Forum was of great moment, and had consequently made a particular effort to contribute to the organization of the meeting. The Forum was being organized by a consortium of institutions, which was to be welcomed, but he was not certain that all the

organizations viewed matters in the same way. For UNESCO, education was first and foremost a right, while for other organizations it was a service that could be bought and sold in the market. Education for all meant just that and not only for those who could afford it. In order for UNESCO to promote its values and objectives, it must mobilize all its resources, including those of the Education Sector and all its institutes.

80. France approved the bulk of the reforms envisaged by the Director-General. It was in particular in favour of each Assistant Director-General recovering full authority over the activities of his or her sector. However, it was worried that the current period of transition might lead to a period of uncertainty, since over half of the ADGs had either left or were in the process of leaving. Senior officials must be brought in rapidly so as to put the machine back to work and remotivate the staff. In that connection, he asked what the proposed timetable was for replacing or recruiting the various programme sector ADGs.

81. The representative of **Dominican Republic** wished to raise a few points before the substantive debate that would take place at the spring session of the Executive Board. With regard to the structure of the Secretariat and human resources management, many representatives had stressed the need to rejuvenate the Secretariat and correct the “upside-down pyramid” by cutting the number of high-level posts. The Director-General should also endeavour to strike a balance between Professional and General Service staff. He asked what measures the Director-General was considering for temporary staff, some of whom had their contracts renewed year after year because their services were judged to be necessary for the functioning of the Organization.

82. In the context of the decentralization reforms, he asked how the evaluation of field offices would be carried out in practice, given that for an intellectual organization like UNESCO, an office must not be judged solely in terms of its resources but also in terms of its impact. Surely evaluation must also be carried out in accordance with the provisions of General Conference resolution 30 C/Resolution 83.

83. The Participation Programme was very important for Member States, in particular for the developing countries. While UNESCO was naturally not a funding body, the small projects implemented under the Participation Programme helped to secure greater commitment from certain ministries, and to mobilize resources at the national level. However, better coordination should be sought between the Participation Programme and UNESCO’s priorities, so that the projects chosen by the Member States were in line with the Organization’s priority programmes.

84. The Dominican Republic expected a great deal from the reports that the three task forces would be submitting to the spring session of the Board. She hoped that those reports would provide the concrete information and analyses needed to formulate an overview of the situation as well as precise options.

85. The **Director-General** agreed with the representative of France that the appointment of the five programme sector ADGs was crucial for the Organization. The post of ADG for Culture was already open for recruitment, and that of ADG/CII soon would be. The three other posts would be opened for recruitment one after the other. As he had told the staff, he hoped that the five new ADGs would be appointed by the end of the year. The recruitment process would be open, transparent and widely publicized internationally, although that did not preclude the appointment of someone from inside the Organization. Once appointed, each ADG would have complete responsibility for his or her sector, and in particular for the budget

adopted by the General Conference. That did not mean, however, that they could do whatever they wanted, for they would have to take into account all the interdisciplinary and intersectoral aspects of each of the activities within their field of competence.

The Dakar Forum was a good exercise in coordination among the five organizations involved. If UNESCO had organized the Forum on its own, it would obviously have had greater room for manoeuvre and could have taken more initiatives. Since that was not the case, it would have to endeavour to secure a consensus on its own vision of education.

- In response to the question put by the representative of Honduras, the Director-General said that he had already had many unofficial contacts with the United States and Singapore. He was hopeful that the Organization's plans for reform, involving revitalization of the Secretariat, rationalization of working methods and programme concentration, would have an impact on the attitude of the United States to UNESCO. On his next visit to New York, he would meet high-ranking officials in the American administration, in particular its Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Moreover, he intended going to Washington shortly after the spring session of the Board for talks with leaders in the American administration. In view of the nature of the Organization's fields of competence it was important that UNESCO should include all the countries of the world community. While not underestimating the difficulty of the task, he was nevertheless both hopeful and convinced that the United States and Singapore would return to their place in UNESCO.

- Responding to the observations of the representative of the Dominican Republic, the Director-General recognized that many temporary staff members were devoted to the Organization. Nevertheless, such staff were by definition temporary. After the in-depth examination by the task force headed by Mr Yushkiavitshius, the Organization had decided to retain the services of 80 temporary staff members but had found it necessary to dismiss 11 others whose posts had not been considered essential by the sectors.

In his statement, the Director-General had set out some ideas on decentralization, but they were only intended to be provisional, pending the recommendations of the Task Force on Decentralization. The issue of decentralization raised numerous difficulties. No one doubted that the Organization needed to decentralize its activities to the Member States, especially the developing countries. UNESCO depended on the field offices in order to play a more useful role and to acquire a higher profile in those countries. All the field office directors complained of a lack of human and financial resources but, unfortunately, it was not possible to upgrade all of those offices. It would without doubt be necessary to reduce the number of offices, which would not be easy since the great majority of them were doing valuable work. The Director-General would like to have more contacts with the Member States, in particular in the context of regional meetings, before submitting his proposals to the Executive Board and taking decisions on that matter.

86. The representative of **Togo** wondered whether the Board had not been mistaken in adopting a budget that placed a veritable yoke on the new Director-General. The Director-General had reduced the staff costs deficit from \$17 million to \$2.5 million in a praiseworthy effort and had pledged to absorb it completely. In terms of programme priorities, the representative of Togo noted that the United Nations system had taken over from UNESCO in the implementation of the World Solar Programme, in accordance with a General Assembly resolution. The follow-up to the Dakar Forum was not programmed in the budget and that would mean additional expense. The Executive Board would surely be asked during the biennium to make adjustments to the programme. In any event it would be difficult to judge

the Director-General on the basis of the current biennium since he had not prepared the corresponding draft programme and budget.

87. The representative of **Greece** said that he was convinced there was sufficient political will to proclaim a world communication day. The preparation of a non-mandatory standard-setting instrument on communication also fell within the scope UNESCO's role. The Organization should use its INFOYOUTH programme to promote youth education in the field of communication.

88. In connection with UNESCO's ethical mission, the importance of which could not be overemphasized, Greece was in favour of convening a major world symposium on the human genome.

89. The Director-General had rightly emphasized the need to ratify the conventions concerning the protection of cultural property. In that regard, the representative of Greece recalled that the General Assembly of the United Nations had just adopted a resolution concerning the return of cultural property to its country of origin - a domain in which UNESCO and the United Nations could expand their cooperation.

90. Although he had asked the OECD countries not to make requests under the Participation Programme, the Director-General should not lose sight of the fact that, beyond the often modest resources allocated to such projects, UNESCO's sponsorship could help obtain support for some of the activities in the country concerned.

91. The representative of Greece was not sure that rational argument alone would convince the United States to end its absence from UNESCO, which was absolutely disgraceful.

92. The representative of **Italy** took pleasure in highlighting the general feeling of satisfaction expressed by the Board with regard to the efforts accomplished by the Director-General, whom it had encouraged to continue in that direction. Nevertheless, he wished to draw to the Director-General's personal attention an element that was vital to the Organization. While the Members of the Board had amply underscored the need for UNESCO to do more in the field of communication, it had to be recognized that the Organization must also use communication to serve its own mission. It was striking to see that UNESCO was virtually absent from the media and especially from television screens. The solution was not so much to find ways of selling UNESCO or improving its image but rather to reflect on its fundamental role. What was the true mission of UNESCO in the world today? What could the Organization bring to humanity today? The representative of Italy was not sure that the Task Force on UNESCO in the Twenty-First Century, by its very nature, could produce many answers to those questions. It was up to the Director-General himself to carry out that task, from his vantage point as a newcomer to the Organization. In addition to putting the house in order, the Director-General had to shape his own vision of UNESCO and imagine how the Organization might be more present in the world.

93. The representative of **Haiti** wondered how it was intended to cater for the various priority groups (Africa, women, least developed countries and island States) when implementing the programme. In his view, the projects and requirements of those groups were too thinly spread over the programme, and there was therefore a need to rethink strategies to ensure that the sectors took good account of the needs of those groups, in particular the least developed countries, within programme execution.

94. In order better to assert itself within the United Nations system, UNESCO should not present itself exclusively as an organization of experts, for that would bring it into direct competition with funding agencies capable of helping it, and which themselves had experts on the ground. Nor should it settle for the simplistic image of an intellectual organization. Rather, it should highlight the cooperation dimension of its activities and its own catalytic role, and draw attention to its specific activities on the ground. In his view, the question of a possible overlap between UNESCO and other specialized agencies was a false debate. If such overlapping did exist, it was for Member States to settle the matter within the framework of the United Nations. Financial problems could also be resolved within the framework of the United Nations, or else the G-8, which should be asked to launch a strong initiative in favour of UNESCO.

95. To improve its visibility, UNESCO should consider giving greater publicity in Paris and the host country to the numerous events which took place at Headquarters. The *UNESCO Courier* might also help to make UNESCO's various activities and events better known.

96. In the view of Haiti, a knowledge of French should be a criterion for recruitment to UNESCO.

97. The **Director-General** acknowledged that, as indicated by the representative of Togo, he had worked very hard to reduce the deficit in staff costs and that he would be obliged to do even more to keep within the ceiling adopted by the General Conference. That task would be even more difficult for him because, unlike his predecessor, he did not have a "kitty" and he was placing the entire budget that had been allocated to the sectors by the General Conference at their disposal.

- Stressing the interest of the proposal by the representative of Greece to establish a world communication day, he said that an INFOETHICS congress would be held in mid-November. With regard to the Participation Programme, he had simply asked the industrialized countries, and in particular the member countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), to refrain voluntarily from making requests under the Participation Programme, but there was no question of introducing a rule to prohibit them from doing so.

- The Director-General agreed with the representative of Haiti that the priority granted to certain groups, and in particular the least developed countries, should be reflected in the implementation of UNESCO's activities and projects. In tandem with its upstream action (framing of policies, project design, etc.), UNESCO should play a catalytic role and seek to mobilize funding for operational projects.

- With reference to the important point raised by the representative of Italy, the Director-General said that he had outlined his own vision of UNESCO in the address he had made to the General Conference after his election. He believed, however, that a common vision should be worked out reflecting the aspirations of all the Organization's Member States. The report of the Task Force on UNESCO in the Twenty-First Century would, he hoped, be very helpful in that regard.

98. The **Chairperson**, summing up the debate, welcomed the constructive dialogue that had been in evidence throughout the meeting, during which the Director-General had painted a lucid picture of the situation of the Organization and sketched out the broad directions he intended to impart to his action.

99. With regard to implementation of the decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 157th session, the Director-General had spelled out the adjustments that needed to be made to the budget and programme adopted by the General Conference. He had also made useful suggestions regarding implementation of the Participation Programme.

100. The Executive Board and the Director-General had similar views regarding the Dakar Forum, namely that it should redefine the objectives relating to basic education, particularly from the point of view of quality, and that UNESCO should reclaim its rightful place as a specialized agency.

101. With regard to the reform process, the Board was grateful to the Director-General for having expounded his analysis of the structure, staffing and management of the Secretariat, and for having indicated the sometimes difficult measures he intended to take to remedy the situation. By and large, the Board shared the Director-General's views on procedures for recruitment and appointment, the Young Professionals Programme, transparency and decentralization. The Board was keenly looking forward to the proposals the Director-General would be submitting to it at its 159th session. She reiterated her congratulations to the Director-General on the efforts he had made in a very short space of time, and expressed the hope that the harmonious cooperation between the Board and the Director-General would continue.

102. After thanking the representatives of the Member States for their active contributions, the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 7.25 p.m.

ANNEX

**Introductory remarks
by Ms Sonia Mendieta de Badaroux
Chairperson of the Executive Board**

MR DIRECTOR-GENERAL,
DEAR COLLEAGUES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT IS A PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO WELCOME YOU ALL AT OUR FIRST FORMAL GATHERING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM. WE HAVE ALL BEEN GEARED TOWARDS THIS PERIOD IN TIME, IN ORDER THAT WE WOULD RISE EQUAL TO THE CHALLENGES WE HAVE BEEN CALLED UPON TO MEET IN THE INTEREST OF OUR ORGANIZATION. I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ASK THAT YOU SHARE WITH ME THE DETERMINATION THAT DURING THE PERIOD AHEAD WE WILL STRIVE, ONE AND ALL, TO REALIZE OUR OBJECTIVES IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF HARMONIOUS COOPERATION AND SINCERITY BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, ON THE ONE HAND, AND AMONG THE BOARD MEMBERS THEMSELVES, ON THE OTHER.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DECISION OF THE BOARD, TODAY'S MEETING IS TO BE AN INFORMATION MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL. WE HAVE CALLED IT A "DAY OF DIALOGUE" INFORMATION MEETING, IN AN EFFORT TO HAVE AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, TO TRULY ENCOUNTER HIM AND OPEN UP FRESH POSSIBILITIES OF COOPERATION FOR THE YEARS AHEAD. AS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION, DIALOGUE HAS PROVED TO BE THE MOST PREFERRED APPROACH IN DEALING WITH ISSUES THAT AT TIMES MAY BE CONTROVERSIAL AND COMPLEX, AND IT IS THEREFORE PRE-EMINENTLY THE MEANS TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND CREATIVE COLLABORATION. A DIALOGUE IS BY NATURE OPEN-ENDED AND PERSUASIVE, THUS FORCING US TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPT DIFFERENCES.

I EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT TODAY'S MEETING WILL BY ITS OUTCOME MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE ATTAINMENT OF OUR ULTIMATE GOAL.

ANNEX

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

Address by
Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the
information and dialogue session with the Executive Board

UNESCO Headquarters, Room X
25 February 2000

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Board,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In mid-November, I outlined before the Board my intentions as I took office. Three months on, I would like to give you an informed diagnosis of the state of the Organization and its Secretariat. I shall then inform you of some of my early measures as Director-General and review the main lines of emphasis and calendar of the reforms to be carried out.

I have spent most of my time, during these three months, in dialogue with representatives of many Member States, and in discussions with the regional groups, with officials of international organizations, as well as with staff. My missions away from Headquarters have been limited mainly to a few regional or international meetings where I could dialogue with government authorities from many countries at once.

So where do we stand today?

I must admit that the real situation has turned out to be much worse than I imagined.

We have very serious budgetary constraints. Not only are we, for the first time in recent years, faced with a de facto reduction of UNESCO's budget, but we also have to cope with the "debts of the past" which have proved to be much heavier than expected. Thus, the initial assessment has brought to light a potential staff costs deficit for this biennium of some \$11 million, compounded by a severe mismatching of skills to actual needs.

The top-heaviness of the Secretariat is alarming. If all the decisions of my predecessor went through, we would have almost 200 directors and above. At the same time, we are understaffed in the middle-level professional categories and are short of expertise in certain specific fields. Not only does such a structure defy all management principles and even logic, but it weighs far too heavily on our modest budget.

As I am sure most of you have already read the statement I made to staff last Friday, I shall not go into too much detail about the mood of staff. Suffice it to say that it is at a worrying low - both at Headquarters and in the field - as a result of irregular staff management and decision-making that was far too heavily concentrated in a few hands.

Existing management practices are often questionable, lines of authority unclear and structures too rigid to be efficient.

Transparency as a rule is applied very unevenly. The House seems to run on a mixture of individual "circuits" and "networks", with little attempt at collegiality or team play.

We have a decentralization policy which is still in search of a rational and effective implementation strategy. And programmes that are too fragmented, lacking strategic vision or a holistic approach; little intersectorality; and not enough concrete and visible objectives and targets.

In short, an unpleasant picture has to be drawn. The “culture” of the Organization as a whole needs to be changed. I am aware that it will take time to put many of these wrongs right. We have made a good start however.

Madam Chairperson,

To address the different dimensions of the reform, the three Task Forces I announced are now at work: on the programme and priorities of UNESCO; on Secretariat structure, staffing and management systems; and on decentralization.

Of course, it would have made good sense to redesign our programme first and then adapt our structures and resources accordingly. But we are not in an ideal situation.

We have a house to live in and repair at the same time. First things first. Some of the repairs cannot wait. The leaky plumbing and faulty wiring has to be mended straight away if we are to continue living here safely. As for redesigning the layout of the rooms - or even building an extension - that can wait a while.

I shall now take up each of these points of diagnosis one by one and outline to you what is being done to tackle the problems.

First, then, let me come to the question of **matching staff skills with needs**.

In this regard, the first priority was to set up our staff establishment at the start of the biennium, seeking to strike the necessary balance between budget requirements and staffing. This looked next to impossible, given all the appointments, promotions and reclassifications that had been decided since the draft 30 C/5 came out last spring. The proposals received from the ADGs, reflecting the actual needs of the sectors and services, implied an even higher deficit than initially estimated, amounting to some \$17 million instead of \$11 million. After thorough review and intense negotiation, the potential staff costs deficit has now been reduced to \$2.5 million.

Nevertheless, I can assure you that the staff budget ceiling will not be exceeded. This was your requirement and that of the General Conference and it will be respected. However, we should realize that this would involve some severe measures, such as abolishing or freezing vacant posts and delaying recruitment, which hamper the needed renewal of expertise as well as the implementation of the approved programme.

Another important issue in this context is the use of temporary staff, which has of late blown up out of all proportion and become a sort of “back-door” recruitment channel that disregarded normal competitive entry procedures. I have ordered a return to normality in this regard. This, of course, has given rise to a certain number of difficulties which we have sought to resolve in the most humane manner possible.

A third urgent issue to be dealt with was to review the decisions relating to staff movements taken by my predecessor in the last months of his term of office, which I temporarily suspended. Many staff measures were taken between 1 October and

15 November: 55 reclassifications and personal promotions (mainly to Director level); 15 end-of-career promotions, and 50 appointments. None of them, save one, was in conformity with the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules and the relevant General Conference resolutions.

The Task Force on structure discussed the principles to be applied and concluded that no promotion, reclassification or appointment should be implemented without compliance with existing rules, procedures and criteria and compatibility with the staff establishment and staff costs for 2000-2001. It also suggested procedures to ensure such conformity. Both staff associations were consulted and agreed with the principles adopted by the Task Force, it being understood that the final decisions will not prejudice the right of appeal of the staff members concerned.

I have accepted the Task Force's recommendations and shall report to the Executive Board in May on their implementation, along with the results of the overall review of appointments, promotions and reclassifications made in 1998-1999, as requested by 30 C/Resolution 72.

In conclusion, let me repeat - and reassure you: the staff budget will be balanced. But this cannot be an objective in itself. What we have to look for is a better meshing between post structure, staff profiles and programme needs. That is still a long way off. In the meantime, so that I might have some flexibility in staff management, and can speed up staff renewal, I am considering various options, including incentive measures for agreed separations and early retirements.

This brings me to my second point, which concerns the vital need for an in-depth reform of **human resource management**.

The Secretariat staff are being very broadly consulted in this regard, including through brainstorming sessions the results of which can be consulted on Intranet. My report to the Board at the 159th session will present the main lines of emphasis of my plans.

It is opportune for me to reiterate at this juncture my commitment and determination to respect rules and procedures, particularly as concerns appointments, promotions and transfers. I shall be in a position to uphold this commitment all the more steadfastly with your support and cooperation. Allow me therefore to issue a solemn appeal to our Member States to respect my determination.

The Secretariat's rejuvenation and the improvement in geographical distribution are both, as I have said, high priorities for me in terms of personnel policy. We must make greater efforts to be proactive in "head-hunting". I count on Member States' active support in this respect. I also believe the Young Professionals Programme has much to offer and deserves to be strengthened and improved. At all events, it is my intention to give priority to candidatures from developing countries among those from under- or un-represented Member States.

Another of my priorities is the improvement of the system of staff promotion. At present, this is at the root of much of the pent-up frustration among staff and is clearly not functioning properly. I am convinced the way in which performance is assessed has to be reviewed.

Supervisory staff also need to be trained in staff management, since this is a responsibility which is incumbent on every supervisor, from the chief of the smallest unit to

the Director-General, and cannot be the sole responsibility of the Bureau of Personnel. That being said, I do see a new role for the Bureau of Personnel that goes far beyond the administrative tasks it has been accomplishing hitherto. Since the post of Director of this Bureau is now advertised and under recruitment, I have taken the opportunity to rename it "Office for Human Resources Management". This is to underline the more active role I expect it and its new Director to play in setting human resource policy and overseeing its efficient implementation.

As a matter of fact, the question of training as a whole needs to be raised. Funds allocated to training are at the moment derisory: 0.13% of the payroll, whereas they represent between 1% and 3% in the United Nations and other agencies of the system. UNDP has earmarked 5% in its 2002 budget because of the unquestionably positive results of such investment. Here too, we need a completely new approach. We must see "training for all throughout life" as a key investment and apply this principle to our own staff.

This drive for efficiency clearly calls for an **optimization of the Secretariat structure**, which is my third point.

I already reported to you on the very early measures I took to reintegrate into the relevant sectors and services a number of small units which were directly attached to the Director-General. In so doing, the message I sought to give was that the home for all substantive action of this Organization is in the programme sectors.

This was only one step in the right direction. Since then we have started a more future-oriented exercise - the design of an "ideal" structure of the Secretariat that would ensure the most effective implementation of UNESCO's programmes and the fulfilment of its mission. All sectors and services have been invited to make proposals, paying special attention to the eradication of top-heaviness, to the simplification of structures and to the streamlining of hierarchies. Such proposals will be reviewed and discussed with the different sectors and services next week.

Another imperative we have to address is the lack of intersectoral cooperation. This is first and foremost, to my mind, a problem of management, in that the "reflex" of consultation and cooperation has to be encouraged by the leaders of each sector and division. If UNESCO's "comparative advantage" - much of which stems from its unique combination of competencies - is to be fully exploited, the nonsense of "turf battles" has to give way to house-wide team play. The imperative of intersectoral cooperation is being written into the job descriptions of the new programme sector ADGs as a major responsibility.

So, as you can see, work is in full swing. I will present my preliminary proposals at the May session of the Executive Board. After that, during the summer, these proposals will be further refined and translated into a concrete plan of action including objectives, modalities and a timeframe.

This, of course, does not mean that, until then, no changes can be made. On the contrary, I shall in the immediate future do whatever I can and must within my power to lighten structures, streamline procedures, restore fair personnel policies and introduce sound management practices.

Transparency is in my view the prerequisite for sound management. It is my fourth subject.

Transparency implies first of all more active communication and dialogue with this Organization's governing bodies. Hence the very purpose of this meeting today. Allow me, in this regard, Madam Chairperson, to say how much I welcome the quality of the dialogue I have been able to establish with you, and the close contact maintained with the team of external auditors.

Transparency is also an imperative vis-à-vis the staff and its representative associations. The latter are closely involved in the debates and discussions on reform, where they have ample opportunity to voice their at times divergent views. More broadly speaking, I attach a great deal of importance to my meetings with staff, and I am visiting systematically all Secretariat units.

The modernization of computerized financial and human resource management tools will undoubtedly be most valuable in the application of this transparency. Following 30 C/Resolution 84 adopted by the General Conference at its last session, a Steering Committee has been set up within the Secretariat to guide the setting up of the new computer systems, which are in fact a natural extension of SISTER in financial, budgetary and human resource aspects. As I am requested to do by that resolution, I have just signed a circular letter to Member States seeking voluntary contributions without which this crucial plan is likely to stall. This is the right occasion for me to appeal to you, and through you to your countries, for generosity in enabling the Organization to operate more efficiently in the service of our Member States.

One other point which seems fundamental in the restoration of transparency is respect for sector budgetary provisions. There will be no more mysterious kitties set up by the Director-General at the outset of the biennium and topped up as the months go by with further haphazard raids into planned and supposedly earmarked funds. By this, I mean that, once the \$10 million reallocations to certain priority areas have been made, as requested by the General Conference, there will be no budget cuts and the sectors will be entirely responsible for the implementation of their share of the approved programme and budget.

The corollary of such transparency is clearly the development of better oversight tools. At the last Board session, I told you I was intending to set up an independent oversight mechanism under my direct authority. I have had a number of studies carried out in this connection and, in application of 157 EX/Decision 9.7.2, shall be submitting to the next session of the Board a preliminary report on UNESCO policy in matters of internal oversight. This report will take into account the experience of other United Nations agencies. I also intend to seek the advice of external experts, particularly from the Florida-based Institute of Internal Auditors, so that I can be sure we use all available "best practice" in this area.

Similarly, upon taking office I have placed direct and effective responsibility for the Participation Programme back with the Assistant Director-General for External Relations. The Director-General's own involvement will henceforth be in the last instance, at the time of approving requests in the light of the recommendations of the different services concerned. I have also asked the Auditor to make an urgent audit of the Programme. In accordance with 30 C/Resolution 50, I shall present to the next session of the Board a report on steps taken or planned in order to render the system for assessing and approving requests more straightforward and transparent.

While on this subject, I should like to ask the better-off States - those that are part of the OECD's Development Aid Committee, for example - to limit, to the extent possible and on a

voluntary basis, the number of applications they make to the Participation Programme, or even to refrain altogether from making requests. This would make it possible to release more funds for countries that have the most pressing needs.

Finally, in this section on transparency, I would like to express an idea that seems to me to be vital: transparency should be reflected in a frank, healthy and constructive *rapport* between the Secretariat and the governing bodies. In this regard, allow me to refer to two concerns of mine.

Several recent meetings of the Directorate have been devoted to the examination of follow-up to the recent decisions and resolutions adopted by the governing bodies. I am struck by the impressive number of reports requested of the Secretariat. This is surely an area calling for some joint attention. While reporting to the governing bodies is indeed an essential function, care has to be taken to ensure that too great a volume of reports is not imposed upon the Secretariat, lest this impair its capacity for action.

I have also noted that some provisions recently adopted by the Board and the General Conference - particularly in staff policy matters - impose exceedingly tight constraints upon the Secretariat. We should doubtless take another look at these together, presumably in the Expert Group of the Finance and Administrative Commission (FA) and in the Commission itself, to see what further adjustments could be made in a spirit of mutual understanding.

Madam Chairperson,

The fifth area in which I wish to undertake reform is that of the **rationalization of decentralization**.

I met a great many officials from field offices at the last General Conference session and I have visited some of those offices. The complaints I heard were always the same, namely the inadequacy of financial and human resources, the lack of a clear vision of the respective tasks and functions of field and Headquarters units, and inappropriate arrangements for interaction and coordination of administrative procedures.

I have instructed the Task Force on Decentralization to reflect on these matters, for the activities of Headquarters and of field offices must clearly form a consistent whole. It seems quite obvious to me at this point that we shall have to cut our coat according to our cloth. It will be impossible to satisfy all demands, often amply justified as they are. A choice will have to be made in order to give some the operational means they need. It is therefore reasonable to envisage, as a focus for reflection, a reduction in the total number of field offices and the consolidation of regional and subregional structures. True, countries on the scale of a continent, like Brazil or China, can legitimately claim to retain such offices as national entities. However that may be, flexibility and pragmatism must be the watchwords. Various arrangements may be envisaged, such as the establishment of national outposts or temporary missions on an ad hoc basis. Nothing will be done, in any case, without close and continuing consultation with the national authorities, regional groups and the Executive Board.

On the basis of the Task Force's recommendations, I shall submit a preliminary report following the basic principles for implementation of the decentralization policy at the May session of the Executive Board. At the 160th session I shall be able to submit an operational plan seeking to apply these principles, together with a transition timetable.

I now come to the sixth and most important of my objectives, which is the **need for programme concentration**.

Our efforts must be directed towards adjusting structures and staff to the programme, and not the other way round. But the programme itself must be recast on the basis of a clear view of UNESCO's specific role in international cooperation.

It is clear - from the work plans drawn up for the first six months of the biennium - that much effort is needed in this respect. The General Conference, you will remember, called for adjustments to document 30 C/5. We have consequently drawn up our work plans for the first six months, while outlining activities for the ensuing 18 months.

The adjustments I shall be submitting to the Executive Board, at its Spring session, will be of two kinds. The first are budgetary adjustments. Savings of at least \$10 million, as I have just mentioned, are needed for what are regarded by the General Conference as priority areas. In this area I have been mindful of the indications supplied by the Executive Board itself, taking care not to touch the major budgetary equilibria between the programmes, which was anyway something outside my brief. I have therefore essentially sought to streamline our means of action and to optimize their cost effectiveness by asking for a downward revision of, for example, staff travel, temporary assistance, operating costs, meetings, publications, subventions to various institutions or centres, the number of advisory committees or other expert groups, and so on.

I have also asked for our action to be refocused in a number of programmes I look on as priorities. Among these programmes, I could mention for instance basic education (with a view to organizing as of now follow-up to the Dakar Conference), science education, follow-up to the Budapest World Conference, water resources management, poverty alleviation and the intangible heritage.

Follow-up to major international conferences is, as I see it, a high priority. If we are unable to turn the recommendations made by those conferences into actual projects and real results, then we must seriously question their utility! I am for my part convinced of the potentially fundamental importance of such conferences, for they are central to our task of devising innovative strategies for coping with present and emerging problems. But we must make the idea of follow-up part and parcel of the actual planning for such conferences, just as we must be quite clear about their results and consequences.

We have a fast-approaching challenge in this respect that will be crucial for UNESCO. I refer to the Dakar Conference due to meet next April in order to take stock of progress 10 years after Jomtien. It is a unique opportunity for the Organization to put across its own views and demonstrate its competence in the promotion of new approaches. I am aware of the multiple challenges of that Conference for our Organization and I have therefore set up an intersectoral working group to clarify the strategies that UNESCO will defend on its own account in Dakar and to outline the new programmes that the Organization will be launching to embody those strategies. A huge amount of effort has gone into preparing the Conference. Six regional conferences were held between December 1999 and February 2000 that assessed the progress achieved and the difficulties encountered. With an input of some 180 national reports, they have led to regional action plans and will for the first time provide a highly accurate chart of the situation of basic education in the world.

The Dakar Conference will present a global Framework for Action drafted by a steering committee made up of representatives of United Nations organizations sponsoring the Conference, Member States, NGOs, and so on. This Framework for Action is of very special importance to UNESCO, which will need to leave its impress upon it. This might take the form of promotion of alternative strategies, drawing on all the resources of non-formal education, in order to get through to those “excluded” from education systems; a new definition of the quality of education, suited in particular to the requirements of cultural diversity; and the finalization of gauges and indicators providing a more reliable picture of progress made towards the objectives of education for all. Our new Institute for Statistics has a crucial part to play in this respect.

As to the possibility, raised by UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union, of holding a world conference on communication, you have asked me to submit to the Executive Board at its next session a detailed feasibility study. After exploration of the matter with ITU, it seems that there is as yet no consensus among Member States, particularly with regard to the general framework of the conference, its agenda and even possible dates. This being so, it seems unreasonable to undertake such a study. For no feasibility study can take the place of what is still lacking for the time being, namely political will.

The work ahead of us in the next two years to reform our programme and methods of action is crucial. It is my ambition to restore UNESCO to its rightful place as a Specialized Agency of the United Nations system. We can no longer lay claim to a monopoly over our fields of competence. It is by exercising specific expertise and know-how in fields shared by many other agencies that we will demonstrate our comparative advantage.

UNESCO’s particular competence surely lies in its role of guidance, the identification of innovative approaches, trying out new solutions and gathering and disseminating successful experience. It is thus linked to a requirement for quality, not to say excellence. It must be present in the formulation of approaches and solutions far more than in the practical implementation of projects. That was what prompted me to say that it does not seem to me the Organization should or can intervene in times of conflict or emergency. UNESCO can only act effectively before and after conflicts, before and after disasters, to help in prevention, in the identification of needs and in the establishment of development plans during the reconstruction phase. That is what we have been doing recently in Kosovo, in East Timor and in Venezuela. Let those with the resources write the cheques! And let us concentrate our efforts on what constitutes our wealth: our know-how and expertise.

I do not want to dwell further on this issue which is at the heart of the reform of UNESCO. The reflection process is under way, in particular in the Executive Board’s Task Force and in the Secretariat.

In this connection I should like to clarify a point: the Secretariat’s Task Force and the Task Force of the Executive Board are not in competition, nor do they run on parallel lines, since parallels never meet. On the contrary, they complement each other. They should support and feed into each other in order to enable the Executive Board to formulate, in October, clear guidelines for the preparation of the forthcoming Medium-Term Strategy and the next Programme and Budget, document 31 C/5. The same applies to the process of consulting the Member States, which, as in the previous biennium, will unfold in the next few months, in particular through five regional meetings of National Commissions, whose conclusions will also be submitted to the Executive Board at its October session.

All these reforms, implemented in a consistent way, should notably **improve the Organization's visibility**.

This is a question that has already been the subject of wide-ranging debate by the governing bodies, and I was invited by 30 C/Resolution 51 to formulate a comprehensive strategy in that respect. The internal debate which has begun on the subject will be enhanced by a group of experts which will hand me its recommendations by the month of June. I will be in a position to present my preliminary proposals to the Executive Board at its 160th session, in October, so that they may be included in the framework of the preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2002-2003.

Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The task ahead of us is enormous. It demands the mobilization of all our strength and our shared convictions. Yet, it is also exciting. I know now that the deliberate choice I made not to come to UNESCO with a picked team and ready-made reforms was the right choice. It would indeed have been contradictory to impose an outside model of reform on this Organization, which has been working for so many years for endogenous development!

On my own initiative, I have requested an audit from the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit to add to my own diagnosis of the Organization and to provide me with advice on the reform process. The Joint Inspection Unit has lengthy experience in this field and has already carried out this sort of exercise in many international agencies of the United Nations system. In the middle of February I met its Chairman, Mr Ouedraogo, and some of his colleagues. What they had to say, at this stage in their work, was very encouraging. The experiment being carried out by UNESCO is a world first which could, in the future, serve as a model for other agencies. Reform from within is, in fact, one of the conditions for the success of this undertaking and, even if the pace is slower, only ownership by all those involved can ensure its long-term viability.

Ladies and gentlemen, as representatives of the Members of the Executive Board, you are among those involved. That is why I consider it to be of the utmost importance that we hold such meetings of dialogue on a regular basis, so that we may build together, through our joint efforts, the edifice of reform. By proposing my appointment to the post of Director-General, you gave me your confidence. I now count on your support in the reform process to which I committed myself, before you, and also on your active participation. Let me assure you that you can count on my unreserved commitment, at your side, to restoring to the Organization all the nobility and relevance of its action.

Thank you.