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

SUMMARY

In accordance with 129 EX/Decision 5.2.1, the Director-General communicates to the Executive Board for its information the annual reports of the Council of the United Nations University covering the period from January 2006 to December 2007.¹

The present document contains the observations of the Director-General on the work of the University and on cooperation between UNESCO and the University during the period 2006 and 2007.

Decision proposed: paragraph 21.

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

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. The United Nations University (UNU) undertakes research and capacity-building aimed at supporting “efforts to resolve the pressing global problems that are the concern of the United Nations, its peoples and Member States”. In this regard, it fosters intellectual cooperation among scholars and practitioners across the world, and particularly in developing countries, by functioning as: an international community of scholars; a bridge between the United Nations and the international academic community; a thinktank for the United Nations system; a capacity builder, particularly in developing countries; and a platform for dialogue and new and creative ideas.

2. Operating as a decentralized and interdisciplinary “network of networks”, the UNU Centre in Tokyo coordinates a global network of 13 research and training centres and programmes, assisted by 14 associated institutions and a network of 48 Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development. Hundreds of other institutions also cooperate in one or several UNU activities.

3. The University works closely with over 40 United Nations system partners and undertakes joint activities on issues such as water, drylands management, forests and mountains, dialogue among civilizations and world trade. Ongoing discussions on continuing initiatives and on new UNU research and training centres or programmes include the future of the UNU – Global Virtual University in Norway; the proposal for a new UNU institute on the alliance of civilizations, to be established in Spain; the proposal for a new UNU research and training programme on landscape and ecosystem health, to be located in the Slovak Republic; a new initiative for a UNU institute or UNU-IAS operating unit on traditional knowledge, to be based in Australia; and a possible new initiative on sustainable development, to be located in Algeria.

Major themes and programmes in 2006 and 2007

4. The UNU brings together its activities into two programme areas. The **Environment and Sustainable Development Programme** looks at the implications for sustainable human development of the interactions between human activities and the natural environment. The **Peace and Governance Programme** contributes to the promotion of sustainable peace and good governance. Making full use of its networking potential, research in both programmes is carried out with a view to stimulating policy orientations and identifying long-term developments with the potential to impinge on peace, security and governance throughout the world. Particular attention is also paid to capacity development, particularly in developing countries.

5. Within these programmes, five thematic areas have been defined: peace and security; good governance – from local to global; development and poverty reduction; environment and sustainability; and science, technology and society. These themes are addressed in an interdisciplinary manner.

6. In 2006-2007, on the question of **peace and security**, the UNU published research on the shift of focus from States to individuals and communities in achieving peace and stability. Constructive policy recommendations emerged from studies on the role of justice and accountability, the side-effects of peacekeeping operations, the erosion of a sense of international community and links between women and peace-building. Research on conflict intervention by African regional organizations is also ongoing.

7. On the issue of **good governance**, research and capacity-building on strengthened regional integration were ongoing. A publicly available and web-based Regional Integration Knowledge System (RIKS) is being developed, with quantitative and qualitative data on the different regional integration processes around the world. Training focused particularly on the impacts of economic integration and partnerships on African employment and labour market policies.

8. Within the **development and poverty reduction** theme, research was undertaken into the causes of increasing inequality, the effects of moves to a market economy, the social impacts of globalization and technological development, and income and wealth generation. Education for sustainable development, which is placed under this theme, played a major role in this, with the significant expansion of the numbers of Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) on Education for Sustainable Development from 12 to 48 in 2007. The corporate sector and civil society further benefited from capacity development in this area through training on business strategies for sustainable development. Case studies were also undertaken on the creation of better economic development institutions. Taking a broader approach to development, research and/or capacity-building activities were also carried out on measuring human well-being, on food security and nutrition, and on women's roles in the judiciary.

9. Under the theme of **environment and sustainability**, projects were undertaken aimed at optimizing the assessment, management and monitoring of natural resources, including drylands, deserts, land, agrodiversity, basin water cycle, coastal zone, water, extreme floods, medicinal plants such as Namibia's Devil's Claw, and natural disasters.

10. Finally, the theme of **science, technology and society** mainly involved specific projects aimed at ensuring that increased scientific information is transformed into practical, ethical tools for the benefit of all. A strong focus is placed on the role and impact of technological development within a sustainable development perspective. Examples of these projects were support to the First Session of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resource for Food and Agriculture, and collaboration on reducing environmental risks through the Solving the E-Waste Problem (StEP) initiative and 2008 review of European Community legislation on waste electric and electronic equipment. Other activities were aimed at improving electronic governance, healthcare management and software development methodology.

11. **Capacity-building.** The University provides three types of specialized advanced training: short training courses and workshops (1 week-2 months); longer training programmes (3-12 months) for postgraduate academics and professionals; and degree-oriented study programmes for M.Sc. and Ph.D. candidates, mainly from developing countries. The broad range of courses offered include: conflict resolution, human rights, international cooperation and development, leadership, biodiversity, sustainable development, fisheries, food technology, remote sensing and software technology. Fellowships are also granted to doctoral students and developing countries universities.

12. **Relations with the United Nations system.** Intellectual independence is guaranteed by the UNU's Charter. It is therefore able to make a unique contribution to advancing knowledge relevant to the role and work of the United Nations, as well as to applying that knowledge in policy, strategy and programme development. During 2006 and 2007, the UNU continued to work with more than 40 United Nations system partners. It engages in regular dialogue with sister United Nations organizations with the aim of determining specific research and capacity development needs, also enhancing cooperation through complementary activities and initiatives.

13. Dissemination of results and public information. It is essential that the UNU disseminate its results in an effective, useful, well-timed and focused manner. Dissemination is undertaken through traditional print media (including books, journal articles, discussion and working papers, policy briefs, brochures and newsletters), new digital media (for example websites, online learning initiatives and CD-ROMs) and public forums (such as conferences, symposiums, workshops, presentations and guest lectures). Promoting the dissemination of current scientific information and best practice to the developing world, and publicizing UNU activities in host countries, are particular priorities. During 2006 and 2007, for example, the UNU produced 84 new titles, 111 articles in peer-reviewed journals, some 100 policy briefs, 281 discussion/working papers and numerous other publications, such as chapters in edited volumes, articles in magazines and newspapers, lectures and conference proceedings. In 2006 and 2007, the University also organized numerous public lectures, conferences, symposiums and other events, including the

U Thant Distinguished Lecture Series, an annual lecture series in Tokyo, Maastricht, Addis Ababa and Helsinki, and other annual events including the joint UNU-EU Tokyo Global Forum, the Africa Day Symposium and a series of global seminars which foster a better understanding among university students and young professionals of important global issues and the role of the United Nations in addressing them, in different locations.

14. **UNU funding and staff.** In 2006 and 2007, UNU employed approximately 350 people worldwide, coordinated and worked with over 450 institutional partners, hosted or co-hosted more than 300 public events, both in Japan and abroad, and welcomed more than five million visitors to its website. For the 2006-2007 biennium, the University had a budget of \$88 million, with a supplementary \$1.2 million voted for 2007.

15. **Cooperation between UNESCO and the UNU.** Since it became operational in 1975, the UNU has had a vigorous working relationship with UNESCO in all of the Organization's areas of activity. In particular, in 2006 and 2007, the UNU has continued a series of activities related to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), for which UNESCO is the lead agency. One particularly interesting facet of this work are the Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) on Education for Sustainable Development, whose number quadrupled in 2007 to a total of 48. These centres are networks of existing formal, non-formal and "information" education organizations delivering education for sustainable development within their local community and/or region. The network of RCEs will make up the Global Learning Space for Sustainable Development. They involve a wide range of stakeholders and situate themselves firmly within the goals of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. UNESCO and the UNU also cooperate on varied activities and programmes within different Sectors of the Organization, including the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and Programme for the Management of Social Transformations (MOST). The UNU and UNESCO also continued their series of conferences on Globalization, with the 2006 Conference on Challenges and Opportunities for Science and Technology, and the 2007 Conference on Globalization and the Role of Higher Education, both held in Japan. In the framework of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, joint projects were carried out in areas as varied as cultural rights, management of natural resources, science and technology, and peace and sustainable development. During the period under review, cooperation through the Global Network for Innovation in Higher Education (GUNI) set up by UNESCO and the UNU following the first World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 led to two publications on the social commitment of universities.

16. **Strategic orientations announced by the new UNU Rector.** Following an extensive recruitment process, Professor Dr Konrad Osterwalder of Switzerland assumed the position of the UNU Rector in September 2007, succeeding Professor Dr Hans van Ginkel. In his first presentation to the UNU Council, the new Rector, who assumed his position in September 2007, introduced new strategic orientations for the next five years. He stressed the need to reinforce the UNU's training, research and programme activities as well as his support for a better and more equitable distribution of the UNU institutes and research and training centres in developing regions, particularly Africa. Enhancing relations between the UNU and Member States will also be a priority, as will reinforcing joint action with United Nations agencies, civil society and the private sector. The Rector also expressed his intention to strengthen UNESCO/UNU cooperation, such as through the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme, the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, and the 2009 world conference on science.

17. UNESCO and the UNU both play an essential intellectual role in today's globalized world. It is therefore crucial that cooperation between the two organizations be reinforced, in particular in support of the Millennium Development Goals and other United Nations priority programmes.

Director-General's comments

18. The Director-General takes note with satisfaction of the activities carried out by the UNU during the 2006-2007 biennium, particularly in view of building a knowledge society based on

international cooperation and solidarity. Recognizing the wide contributions of the UNU's institutes and research and training centres, the Director-General welcomes the proposals of the new Rector of the UNU to ensure that they are more equitably distributed, in particular by reinforcing their presence in developing regions and especially in Africa.

19. The Director-General particularly appreciates the cooperation between the UNU and UNESCO described in the reports. He notes that the establishment of joint Chairs has provided an excellent opportunity for UNESCO to expand the reach of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme in key areas pertaining to the mission and goals of the United Nations, particularly in the field of sustainable development. The Director-General looks forward to reinforced cooperation over the next biennium, particularly in the preparation and implementation of the forthcoming world conferences organized by UNESCO on higher education, science, adult education, and sustainable development.

20. Finally, the Director-General wishes to thank Mr Hans Van Ginkel, the former Rector, for his commitment to the UNU and for the excellent relations he maintained with UNESCO and expresses the hope that the new Rector will continue to develop this fruitful cooperation between the UNU and UNESCO.

Proposed decision

21. In view of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 129 EX/Decision 5.2.1,
2. Having examined document 179 EX/6 Rev.,
3. Recognizing the key role of the United Nations University (UNU) as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations,
4. Further recognizing the excellent quality of the relationship that has developed between the United Nations University and UNESCO over the years,
5. Expresses its satisfaction at the development of the programme and activities of the United Nations University;
6. Expresses its appreciation of the increased active participation of the United Nations University in the programme and activities of UNESCO, particularly the UNESCO-UNU Chair and UNITWIN programmes and world conferences on higher education and research and the sciences;
7. Expresses its gratitude to the Government of Japan for the financial and intellectual support that it gives to the United Nations University;
8. Also expresses its gratitude to the Member States in which the research and training centres (RTCs) are located for their financial and intellectual support;
9. Thanks the governments and organizations that have contributed to the University's funds-in-trust and have provided support for the research and training centres and programmes;
10. Congratulates the former Rector, Hans Van Ginkel, on his exceptional dedication and leadership during his term of office;

11. Expresses its full support to the newly appointed Rector of the United Nations University, Professor Dr Konrad Osterwalder;
12. Stresses the need for continued collaboration between UNESCO and the United Nations University on areas of joint expertise and capacity;
13. Invites the University to support a more equitable distribution of the United Nations University institutes and research and training centres in developing countries, in particular in Africa;
14. Further invites the Director-General to communicate to the Chair of the Council of the United Nations University and to the new Rector the terms of this decision.