

**Hundred and fifty-ninth Session**

159 EX/7  
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Item 3.2.1 of the provisional agenda

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

**SUMMARY**

In accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations University (Article IV, para. 4(h)) whereby the Council shall “report annually to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and to the Executive Board of UNESCO, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO, respectively, on the work of the University”, and in accordance with the provision of paragraph 10 of decision 5.2.1 adopted by the Executive Board at its 129th session (whereby the Director-General is invited to submit to the Executive Board after 1989 “(a) every second year, for its consideration, the United Nations University Council’s report on the second year of the University’s biennial budgetary period, and his own report on the progress made by the University and the University’s cooperation with UNESCO; (b) in the intervening years, for its information and possible consideration, the United Nations University Council’s annual report”), the Director-General communicates to the Executive Board for its information the annual reports of the Council of the United Nations University covering the period January-December 1998 and January-December 1999.<sup>1</sup>

The present document contains the Director-General’s comments on the work of the University and on cooperation between UNESCO and the University during 1998-1999.

Decision required: paragraph 27.

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

## **Introduction**

1. The United Nations University was established in 1973 by the General Assembly of the United Nations as an international community of scholars geared to research, postgraduate training and the dissemination of knowledge. Its main aim is to contribute to the promotion of peace and progress throughout the world in accordance with the objectives of the United Nations. Under the terms of its Charter, the University operates as an autonomous institution under the joint auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO. In addition to its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, the University has a network of five research and postgraduate training centres (RTCs) and seven research and training programmes (RTPs). The system as a whole makes a notable contribution to meeting the main challenges facing the modern world - in particular, peace, good governance and sustainable development - while at the same time helping to reduce the isolation in which researchers in the developing countries find themselves.

2. The United Nations University (UNU) was the subject of a report by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), on the basis of which the Executive Board at its 156th session took 156 EX/Decision 9.6.3.

3. By that decision, the Executive Board invited the Director-General:

- (i) to explore ways and means of strengthening cooperation between UNESCO and the United Nations University (UNU), in particular through joint programming of activities of mutual interest and reinforcing the role of the University in the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme;
- (ii) to inform the Board of the measures taken to implement the recommendations of JIU, taking note of the comments made by the United Nations Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO.

4. The period covered by this report (1998-1999) saw the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit with a view to improving the effectiveness of the University. Efforts were directed towards streamlining the management of the institution and strengthening its links with UNESCO and the other Specialized Agencies of the United Nations system, in particular through participation in the follow-up committees of the world conferences on higher education and on science that were held, respectively, in Paris in October 1998 and in Budapest in July 1999.

## **Institutional development and structure of UNU**

5. Under the terms of its Charter, UNU has a central coordinating and programming unit based at its headquarters in Tokyo and a network of research and postgraduate training centres (RTCs) and programmes (RTPs), some of which are based in developing countries. The institution thus operates as a network of networks, each of its units being linked to researchers and research institutions and also to partners in higher education and policy-makers. They include:

- (i) the World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER) in Helsinki (Finland);
- (ii) the Institute for New Technologies (UNU/INTECH) in Maastricht (Netherlands);
- (iii) the International Institute for Software Technology (UNU/IIST) in Macao (China);

- (iv) the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU/INRA) in Accra (Ghana); and
  - (v) the Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU/IAS) in Tokyo (Japan), which inaugurated its activities in April 1996. Its mission is focused on the development of original, forward-looking solutions to problems at the interface of societal and natural systems.
6. The research programmes are:
- (i) the Programme on Environment and Sustainable Development at headquarters in Tokyo (Japan);
  - (ii) the Programme on Peace and Governance in Tokyo (Japan);
  - (iii) the UNU Programme on Biotechnology for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNU/BIOLAC) in Caracas (Venezuela);
  - (iv) the UNU International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA) in Amman (Jordan);
  - (v) the UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH) in Ontario (Canada);
  - (vi) the UNU Geothermal Training Programme (UNU/GTP) in Iceland;
  - (vii) the Fisheries Training Programme (UNU/FTP) in Iceland.
7. These centres and programmes all share a common fourfold objective:
- (i) to develop an international community of scientists;
  - (ii) to build a bridge between the United Nations system and the international academic community;
  - (iii) to act as a think-tank for the United Nations system;
  - (iv) to contribute to capacity-building, particularly in the developing countries.

### **Main themes/programmes developed by UNU**

8. The UNU programme focuses on the following main themes:

#### **Peace and security**

- (i) International relations and the world order: changing standards and institutions and their influence on international relations;
- (ii) The United Nations system and its role, particularly with regard to conflict-prevention and peace-building through the proper management of conflicts and post-conflict situations;
- (iii) Human security: examination of the trend marking a shift of emphasis from the concept of “national security”, with the emphasis on military defence, to that of “human security”, with the emphasis on individual well-being;

- (iv) Major armed conflicts (internal or inter-State) and conflict management: the emphasis is on the causes and consequences and also on the role to be played by the community, in particular by international actors.

### **Governance**

The emphasis is on the following topics:

- (i) Human rights and ethical problems: the importance of respect for human rights in the field of international governance and the increasing role thereof in both stable societies and societies in crisis;
- (ii) Democracy and civil society: the importance of democracy - both its procedures and methods and its substance - particularly in relation to civil society, good governance and the achievement of peaceful international relations;
- (iii) Leadership: capacity-building as a means of providing support for the development of essential qualities in the sphere of good governance;
- (iv) Policy and institutional frameworks: the principle of governance is the foundation of sustainable development.

### **Development**

The emphasis is on the following aspects:

- (i) Globalization and development: the dominant forces and their social, economic and political impact, the political responses to globalization, and the search for an alternative to current anarchic patterns of globalization;
- (ii) Growth and employment: identification of the approaches that may help the developing countries to achieve broader and rapid growth;
- (iii) Poverty and inequality: the aim is to find new strategies in response to current plans to eradicate “structural poverty” and “new poverty”;
- (iv) Urbanization: the implications of rapid population growth in the urban areas of developing countries.

### **Science, technology and society**

- (i) Innovation: the impact of the new technologies on efficiency and competitiveness and the implications for the developing countries;
- (ii) Information and biotechnology: the task is to measure the impact of the information technologies and of biotechnology on society;
- (iii) Software technology: emphasis is placed on the methods of developing software. How can the developing countries be helped to become self-sufficient in this field?;
- (iv) Food and nutrition: development of research and capacity-building relating to the problems of food production and nutrition.

## **The environment**

- (i) Management of natural resources: how best to use human resources while minimizing wastage and pollution;
- (ii) Industrial development and urban development: the impact of ways of life and consumption patterns on urban planning and industrial development;
- (iii) Water: capacity-building in such areas as water, the environment and health;
- (iv) Climate change and world governance: approaches to understanding and managing complex problems such as the relationship between the environment and economic and social development.

## **Circulation of findings and public information**

### **Publication**

9. With a view to increasing the impact of the University's work, UNU is at particular pains to circulate its research findings to policy-makers and the general public.

10. UNU's printed material included 15 new books published in 1999, most of which derived from research undertaken within the institution itself. Twenty-four other publications dealt with studies linked to its projects. Most of these books were distributed free of charge or donated to libraries in the developing countries. Five titles were translated into other languages, including Japanese.

### **Public information**

11. The UNU studies were widely circulated by means of brochures, newsletters, catalogues and the creation of Internet sites.

12. The organization of scientific awareness days contributed to the duty to provide information: World Day for Water, World Environment Day, World Food Day.

13. Information was also provided through the organization of conferences and the use of the new communication technologies.

### **Funding of UNU**

#### **UNU income, expenditure and staff**

14. In 1999 UNU received financial assistance from donor funds and numerous financial contributions in support of its programmes and postgraduate training and research centres. In addition, numerous activities were carried out on a partnership basis.

15. In 1998-1999 the UNU budget totalled \$59 million. Expenditure for the same biennium amounted to \$54,549 million, including \$22,252 million for expenditure of an academic nature and \$21,642 million for staff costs.

### **Strengthening of its international dimension and staff**

16. UNU has sought to continue to strengthen its international character. Its headquarters and its institutes are located in 11 different countries.

17. As regards the staff, 95 out of a total of 211 staff members are women, and 60 come from developing countries.

### **Cooperation between the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations system and UNESCO**

18. As the Rector of UNU has indicated, the nature of the institution obliges him to have “one foot in the academic world and the other in the United Nations system”.

19. Thus, while performing its role of providing intellectual analysis for the system, UNU must act as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations.

20. The Rector attends the meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), and in 1999 the University collaborated with 38 agencies of the United Nations system.

21. Cooperation with UNESCO has been strengthened. UNU is collaborating closely on the follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education, and it participated in the World Conference on Science. Collaboration is continuing with the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme and the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, as well as with many other programmes, such as the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), and with the Communication, Information and Informatics Sector.

22. In 1999, 379 officials of the agencies of the United Nations system and of the Bretton Woods institutions attended meetings organized by UNU.

### **Implementation by UNU of the recommendations of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit**

23. Several recommendations have been effectively implemented:

- (i) Collaboration between UNU and UNESCO is continuing to gain strength: as mentioned above, UNU is participating, in particular, in the follow-up committee of the World Conference on Higher Education and in the establishment of a World Network for Innovation in Higher Education (WNIHE) whose secretariat is located at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in Barcelona, Spain. UNESCO/UNU Chairs have been established and further requests are now being evaluated. In addition, UNU is collaborating with the MOST Programme and the UNESCO Communication Information and Informatics Sector;
- (ii) The recommendations made with regard to the membership of the UNU Council will be taken into account at the time of the Council’s renewal, which will take place in 2001, although in fact the process has already begun;
- (iii) The UNU Centre (in Tokyo) submitted to the Council at its session in December 1999, through its Rector, Professor H. van Ginkel, a strategic development plan for the institution for the year 2000;

- (iv) Supervision by the Centre in Tokyo of administration, the budget and staff is continuing to be strengthened;
- (v) In addition, UNU is more and more effectively taking up its role as a think-tank in the United Nations system and is strengthening its links with most of the Specialized Agencies of the system;
- (vi) Collaboration and coordination between the Centre and the Institute of Advanced Studies of UNU are proceeding harmoniously;
- (vii) The UNU/BIOLAC programme based in Latin America is now being redefined;
- (viii) It should be emphasized, however, with regard to the centres and the programmes that, despite the improvements registered, the situation of those located in developing countries would benefit from continuing to receive sustained attention;
- (ix) The policy of having the cost of the establishment of the research centres and programmes borne by the States in which they are located may well prolong the current imbalances in capacity between the different parts of the system.

### **Capacity-building**

24. In other fields such as capacity-building and fellowships, clear priority is given to the developing countries. A new approach to integrated capacity-building has been proposed and tried out by the UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU/INWEH).

### **Diversification of funding**

25. The Rector of UNU is continuing his efforts to encourage fund-raising, in particular from many partners in the private sector.

### **Conclusion**

26. This brief description of UNU, its place on the world stage and its relations with the United Nations system prompt the following observations:

- (i) As an institution unique of its kind in the United Nations system, it is playing its role to the full as a think-tank of the United Nations;
- (ii) Through its research and postgraduate training activities and its global approach to problems, it is making a very valuable contribution to capacity-building and to solving the problems faced by Member States and by the developing countries in particular;
- (iii) Considerable efforts have been made to streamline its management and give it a higher profile and stronger academic role, particularly in the key areas of peace studies, governance, the environment and sustainable development. Its expertise is appreciated by the world academic community, with which it is developing mutually beneficial links;
- (iv) Its closer partnership with UNESCO, in particular through the follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs

Programme, the MOST Programme and the International Hydrological Programme, deserves to be continued and stepped up.

27. Having regard to the foregoing, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 159 EX/7,
2. Recognizing the efforts made by the Council and the Rector of UNU to renew the structures and programmes of the institution and reinvigorate its management in line with the recommendations put forward by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/98/3),
3. Expresses its appreciation of the active participation of UNU in UNESCO's activities and programmes;
4. Expresses its satisfaction at the development of the programme and activities of UNU;
5. Expresses its gratitude to the Government of Japan for the financial and intellectual support that it gives to UNU, particularly through its funds-in-trust;
6. Expresses its gratitude to the Member States in which the research and training centres (RTCs) and programmes (RTPs) are located for their financial and intellectual support;
7. 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;
8. Expresses its renewed support to the Rector of UNU, Professor Hans van Ginkel;
9. Reaffirms its previous recommendations for the continuation of cooperation between UNESCO and the United Nations University, mainly through the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education and the World Conference on Science, the programmes for the promotion of human rights, peace, conflict resolution, the environment and the social and human sciences;
10. Urges the University to continue to implement the recommendations of the report of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, in particular by increasing its activities in the developing countries;
11. Invites the Director-General to communicate to the Chair of the Council of the United Nations University and to the Rector the terms of this decision.



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**ADDENDUM**

**SUMMARY**

This document provides additional information on the contributions of the programme sectors to cooperation between the United Nations University and UNESCO during 1998-1999.

## UNESCO-UNU cooperation during the 1998-1999 biennium

### (a) Education Sector

1. Within the **Steering Committee of the World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO, Paris**, 5-9 October 1998, and for the following thematic debates of the same Conference: (i) "Preparing for a sustainable future: Higher education and sustainable human development; (ii) "From traditional to virtual: The new information technologies".

2. For the **creation of the Global Network for Innovation in Higher Education (GUINI)**, established within the Polytechnic University of Barcelona, Spain (joint Agreement signed in October 1999 by UNESCO-UNU-Polytechnic University of Barcelona).

### 3. Contribution to the development of the following joint UNESCO-UNU Chairs:

**UNESCO-UNU Mobile Chair in university history and future** (established in January 1997), University of Palermo, Argentina;

**UNESCO-UNU Chair/Network on global economics and sustainable development** (January 1996), Colegio do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil;

**Réseau méditerranéen UNITWIN et chaires, UNESCO-UNU-Ville de Cannes sur les ressources en eau, le développement durable et la paix: Participation des universités, des villes et des acteurs** (April 1999), University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, France;

**UNESCO-UNU Chair in leadership studies** (June 1997), The United Nations University of Amman, Jordan;

**UNESCO-UNU Chair on the concept and practice of zero emission in Africa** (October 1996), University of Namibia.

### (b) Natural Sciences Sector

1. **"South-South cooperation on environmentally sound socio-economic development in the humid tropics"**: UNESCO via its Man and the Biosphere programme (MAB) and UNU have been cooperating closely since 1992 within this programme.

2. **UNU workshop on "Water management in arid zones"**, Tunisia, October 1999: UNESCO's programme specialist from the UNESCO Tunis Office participated in it.

3. The International Network on Water, Environment and Health of the UNU has been closely coordinating its efforts with SC/HYD **for the preparation of a global programme on water resources assessment**, including the publication of an ACC/SWR biennial report, the "World water development report".

### (c) Social Sciences Sector

1. **"Universities and the health of the disadvantaged"**: A global conference was co-convened by WHO, UNESCO and the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, July 1999.

2. **UNU international seminar on "Human rights and future generations"**, Kobe, Japan, October 1998: The DIR/SHS/PHD attended the seminar where he presented a paper on

“Scientific and technological progress, academic freedom and the responsibilities of scientists”.

**(d) Communication, Information and Informatics Sector**

Since 1999, UNESCO has been collaborating with the United Nations University International Institute for Software Technology, Macao, China (**UNU/IIST**) in implementing projects in the field of information and informatics.

1. **Two-week advanced training course on formal methods of software development** in Azerbaijan under the UNDP project “Establishment of Sumgait Computer Centre for Training and Information and Telecommunication Services”, May 1999. The UNU/IIST covered the total cost of the course (\$6,000).

2. **Two-week training course on “creating websites”** in Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan, September 1999. The costs involved were shared between UNESCO (\$4,500) and UNU/IIST (\$1,500).