

**Hundred and seventy-fourth session**

174 EX/8  
PARIS, 10 February 2006  
Original: English

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**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 2004 to December 2005.<sup>1</sup>

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 2004-2005.

Decision proposed: paragraph 13.

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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 mission of the United Nations University is “to contribute, through research and capacity-building, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems that are the concern of the United Nations, its peoples and Members States”. Five main roles are central to this mission; UNU strives to foster intellectual cooperation among scholars, scientists and practitioners worldwide (and especially those in the developing world) by serving as:

- an international community of scholars;
- a bridge between the United Nations and the international academic community;
- a think-tank for the United Nations system;
- a builder of capacity, particularly in developing countries; and
- a platform for dialogue and new and creative ideas.

2. The University functions as a decentralized “network of networks” with a truly interdisciplinary and global perspective. The UNU system comprises the UNU Centre in Tokyo and a worldwide network of Research and Training Centres and Programmes assisted by numerous associated and cooperating institutions. Mention may be made of five centres in particular: (i) the World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) in Helsinki, Finland, set up in 1985; (ii) the Maastricht Economic and Social Research and Training Centre on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT) in Maastricht, Netherlands, established in 1990; (iii) the International Institute for Software Technology (UNU-IIST) in Macao, China, created in 1992; (iv) the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA) in Accra, Ghana, established in 1990 and which now has operating units in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Namibia and Zambia; and (v) the Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) in Yokohama, Japan, which inaugurated its activities in April 1996 and whose mission is focused on the development of original, forward-looking solutions to problems at the interface of societal and natural systems.

3. The University has two specialized programmes: (i) the Programme on Biotechnology for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNU-BIOLAC), based in Caracas, Venezuela, and founded in 1988; and (ii) the International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), based in Hamilton, Canada, and set up in 1996. It also has: (i) the International Leadership Institute (UNU-ILI), based in Amman, Jordan, and created in 1995; (ii) the Food and Nutrition Programme for Human and Social Development, coordinated from Cornell University, United States of America; (iii) the Geothermal Training Programme (UNU-GTP) based in Iceland and established in 1979; and (iv) the Fisheries Training Programme (UNU-FTP) created in Iceland in 1998. Recently, the following new research and training programmes have been inaugurated: (i) the UNU Programme on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) established in Bruges, Belgium, in 2001; and (ii) the UNU Institute on Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), established in Bonn, Germany, in 2003.

### Major themes and programmes

4. Activities within the University’s academic programme are clustered within two broad programme areas:

- (i) **Peace and governance** focuses on organizing and supporting research that generates policy-oriented recommendations for addressing current problems, and identifies long-term trends and patterns that may affect global peace, security and governance. Among the significant accomplishments were a series of major international research workshops

on “The Iraq Crisis and World Order”; a conference in Ireland on international justice and accountability; and the publication of a book that explores the role of the United Nations in promoting and facilitating democracy.

- (ii) **Environment and development** focuses on the interactions between human activities and the natural environment, and their implications for human development and welfare. The programme adopts a multidisciplinary approach that combines natural and social sciences, and makes special efforts to include global perspectives, in particular those of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Important achievements during 2004-2005 included initiatives on the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains; the inauguration of the UNU Summer School for Bird’s-eye View Experts on Environment as a new initiative to facilitate UNU’s role as a focal point in knowledge exchange to enhance holistic perspectives of global environmental issues; finalization of a global scientific review intended to lead to the harmonization of approaches for developing nutrient-based dietary standards; and development of a biotechnology and artworks preservation network to assist researchers and art restorers from developing countries in using modern biotechnology tools to conserve their cultural heritage.

5. **Cross-cutting issues.** While many UNU research projects focus on specific, well-designed issues or fields of study, much of the work of UNU is cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary in nature. Cross-cutting initiatives during 2004-2005 included the third in a series of conferences on globalization jointly organized by UNU and UNESCO which was held in August 2004, in Tokyo, under the theme of “Globalization and intangible cultural heritage: Opportunities, threats and challenges”. Leading experts on globalization and cultural diversity discussed ways in which the forces of globalization can be used to enhance mutual understanding and respect for intangible heritage among and within groups and communities, as well as to raise awareness worldwide about the importance of intangible cultural heritage and to celebrate that heritage. The fourth such conference – on the theme of “Sustaining the future: Globalization and education for sustainable development” – was held in June 2005 in Nagoya, Japan, during which experts discussed the role of education in preparing a new generation of people to contribute to sustainable development, peace and human security, and the roles of e-learning, regional initiatives and higher education. In activities in one important cross-cutting issue – gender – the University’s work focused on issues of migration and improving the quality of research and policy formulation in gender-related areas.

6. **Capacity-building.** UNU offers three types of specialized advanced training: short-duration training courses and workshops (of one week to two months); long-duration training programmes (of three to 12 months) for postgraduate academics and professionals; and degree-oriented study programmes for M.Sc. and Ph.D. candidates, mainly from developing countries. The courses cover a wide range of areas: conflict-resolution, human rights, international cooperation and development, leadership, biodiversity, sustainable development, fisheries, food technology, remote sensing and software technology. Fellowships are also granted for the preparation of doctorates and for universities in developing countries.

7. **Relations with the United Nations system.** With intellectual independence guaranteed by its charter, UNU is uniquely positioned to contribute to the advancement of knowledge relevant to the role and work of the United Nations, and to the application of that knowledge in formulating sound policies, strategies and programmes for action. During 2004-2005, UNU continued to work with more than 30 United Nations system partners. The University maintains a regular dialogue with sister United Nations organizations to determine specific research and capacity-development needs and seeks to enhance the level of cooperation through complementary activities and initiatives.

8. **Dissemination of results and public information.** Of crucial importance to the overall success of UNU is the capacity to disseminate the results of its work in an effective and focused manner: getting the “right” knowledge to those that need it most, in a timely manner and in a useful form. UNU does this by utilizing traditional print media (including books, journal articles, discussion and working papers, policy briefs, brochures and newsletters), new digital media (such as websites, online learning initiatives and CD-ROMs) and public forums (for example, 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 2005, for example, UNU produced 38 books, 106 articles in peer-reviewed journals, 34 policy briefs, 183 discussion/working papers and numerous other publications such as chapters in edited volumes, articles in magazines and newspapers, lectures and conference proceedings. The University also organized numerous public lectures, conferences, symposia 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 seven locations in Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States.

9. **UNU funding and staff.** In 2004 and 2005, UNU employed 277 people worldwide, coordinated and worked with 458 institutional partners, hosted or co-hosted almost 300 public events, both in Japan and abroad, and welcomed more than 3.6 million visitors to its website. For the 2004-2005 biennium, the University had a budget of \$81,342 million.

10. **Recruitment of the new Rector.** The UNU Rector, Hans Van Ginkel, will retire from his position on 1 September 2006 one year prior to the end of his appointment. The recruitment process for his replacement is currently under way. A shortlist of candidates has been established and a nomination is expected before September 2006.

11. **Cooperation between UNESCO and the UNU.** In addition to the annual joint conferences on issues related to globalization mentioned above, the UNU and UNESCO have cooperated on a major study on the state of higher education in Iraq. The study received extensive coverage in the international media in 2005. The UNU also launched a series of activities related to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, including the designation of the first eight “regional centres of expertise” which are networks of existing formal, non-formal and informal education organizations aimed at delivering education for sustainable development in the context of the local/regional community in which they operate. The regional centres are meant to build innovative platforms for sharing information and experiences, promoting dialogue among relevant stakeholders, and creating a local/regional knowledge base. The two organizations have continued to foster cooperation among several regional networks in follow-up of the World Conference on Higher Education in the form of the Global Network for Innovation in Higher Education (GUNI). Cooperation continues in the area of UNITWIN/UNESCO-UNU Chairs in specific areas such as the concept and practice of zero emissions environmental research in Africa, leadership studies, plant technology, water resources, sustainable development and peace, and global economics for sustainable development. The University and UNESCO have also continued a modest academic staff exchange programme initiated in 2001.

12. Continued cooperation with the University is of utmost importance because of the intellectual role both organizations play in this globalized world. The pursuit of peace and security must continue to be sought and the UNU will continue to play an important role in the DESD.

**Proposed draft decision**

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

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 129 EX/Decision 5.2.1,
2. Having examined document 174 EX/8,
3. Recognizing the key role of the United Nations University 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 UNU and UNESCO over the years,
5. Expresses its satisfaction at the development of UNU's programme and activities and its appreciation of UNU's active participation in the programme and activities of UNESCO;
6. Also expresses its gratitude to the Government of Japan for the financial and intellectual support that it provides to UNU;
7. Further expresses its gratitude to the Member States in which the research and training centres (RTCs) are located for their financial and intellectual support;
8. 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;
9. Invites the University to pursue its efforts in support of activities in developing countries;
10. Further invites the Director-General to ensure the appropriate and timely recruitment of the new Rector and communicate to her/him his support and the terms of this decision.