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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
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Организация
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вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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**2nd Meeting of the Task Force
of National Commissions for UNESCO
for Euro-Arab Dialogue
23 January 2011
Muscat, Oman**

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2nd Meeting of the Task Force of National Commissions for UNESCO for Euro-Arab Dialogue

Muscat, Oman, 23 January 2011

Summary Report

1. The Task Force of National Commissions for Euro-Arab Dialogue met for the second time in Muscat, Oman on 23 January 2011, on the occasion of the International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Support of Cultural Diversity and Biodiversity, hosted by the Ministry of Education of Oman.
2. The meeting was opened by **Mrs Irina Bokova**, Director-General of UNESCO and **H.E. Dr Muna Salim Al Jardani**, Under-Secretary of Education and Curriculum in the Ministry of Education and Vice-President of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.
3. The participants included 12 members of the Task Force (Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Finland, France, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia), representatives of ISESCO, ABEGS, MBI Al Jaber Foundation and other observers, namely European Wergeland Centre, UNESCO Catalonia Centre (the complete list of participants is attached in annexes).
4. Dr Muna Salim Al Jardani welcomed the National Commissions' Task Force members and thanked them for choosing Oman to host their meeting. She emphasized that the Euro-Arab Dialogue is an essential element to strengthen the dialogue for peace. She also noted that the process must be sustained and lead to tangible results. In this regard, the Task Force could count on the full support of Oman government. The large coverage by the media of this meeting was a token of the general public interest in this key initiative and its relevance to peace and stability.
5. In her opening statement, Mrs Bokova underlined the importance of Euro-Arab Dialogue in the promotion of peace, intercultural understanding, dialogue among civilizations, rapprochement of cultures and human values. In the current international context, she was confident that the work undertaken by the National Commissions and supported by their partners within this framework would enhance UNESCO's mission and outreach. She emphasized that it is not enough to simply express ideas, but more importantly to share them with others for mutual enrichment. She would follow this process closely and assured the participants of her full support.
6. The meeting nominated Mr Mohammed Al Yaqoubi, Acting Secretary-General of Oman National Commission as Chairperson, Mr William Fabvre, Secretary-General of French National

Commission and Dr Bashir A. Said Lagaa,, Secretary-General of the Libyan National Commission as rapporteurs.

7. In his intervention, Mr Jacques Rao, Director of the Division of Relations with Member States and International Organizations (ERI/MISO), on behalf of Mr Eric Falt, Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Public Information (ADG/ERI), outlined the work of National Commissions during the past decade in promoting UNESCO's mission through the Euro-Arab Dialogue initiative. He mentioned that an evaluation of UNESCO Secretariat's cooperation with National Commissions is being launched. This assessment should enable UNESCO Secretariat and the Member States to enhance the National Commissions' role and capacities. The Euro-Arab Dialogue should prove to be a useful model for strengthened cooperation, visibility and result-oriented initiatives.

8. Mrs Katérina Stenou, Director of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue (CLT/CPD) and UNESCO Focal Point for 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (IYRC) informed the participants of the outcomes of the celebration of the Year, for which the Organization has been designated to play a leading role. She thanked the National Commissions for their contribution to the rapprochement of cultures via different initiatives and activities which have highlighted exchanges and mutual influences among the Arab-Muslim world and Europe. UNESCO aims at correcting erroneous collective representations and encouraging better understanding between the Arab-Muslim world and the rest of the world.

Mrs Stenou referred to the Guidebook for History Textbook Authors – entitled “*On a Common Path – New Approaches to Writing History Textbooks in Europe and the Arab and Islamic Worlds: The case of the Mediterranean*”, which was designed to limit misconceptions and misinterpretations on the topics of “The Image of Arab-Islamic Culture in European Textbooks and of European Culture in Arab textbooks”. It is an exemplary partnership initiative by UNESCO, the League Arab States, ISESCO, ALECSO, the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, in cooperation with the Georg Eckert for International Textbook Research. She invited the participants to consider this project in the framework of the “Comparative study of history textbooks in the two regions” (mentioned para 12.) and proposed to establish a mapping of ongoing projects on this topic.

9. Mr Abdoullatif Al-Baijan, Secretary-General of Kuwait National Commission and Coordinator for Arab region, apprised the Task Force on the working progress of the Euro-Arab Dialogue, particularly the Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) document prepared by some members of the Task Force for future work of National Commissions within this framework. He noted however the need to continue the impulsion to advance in the agreed projects and enhance the interactivity of National Commissions in the two regions.

10. Mrs Marjutka Hafner, Secretary-General of Slovenia National Commission and Coordinator for Europe region, congratulated the Task Force for its work in spite of their members' heavy workload and other constraints. In the light of the past experience, she proposed two possibilities for enhancing the Task Force's contribution: 1) serve as an information platform for encouraging

countries to implement projects with tangible results; 2) continue exploring openings for enlarging the field of cooperation.

11. In the ensuing discussions, the following points were highlighted by the participants:

- Strong commitment and enthusiasm continued to drive the initiative;
- Various activities and projects were reportedly carried out in individual countries in both regions as contribution to Euro-Arab Dialogue;
- General consensus was noted for enabling different projects to be completed with tangible results;
- Need was underlined to consolidate the exchanges between the two regions.

12. Progress in the projects agreed upon at the 1st meeting of the Task Force held in January 2010 was reviewed and follow up actions proposed:

- Comparative study of history textbooks in the two regions is near to completion, following the evaluation meeting jointly organized by UNESCO's National Commissions and the technical department concerned at the Council of Europe in March 2010 in Strasbourg. The French and Moroccan National Commissions undertook to present an analysis of comparative studies that were complete.
- Production of the Education Kit in the line of the one on "World Heritage in Young Hands" and devoted to the concept of Identity: to this end, it was agreed that a group of experts would meet at the UNESCO Catalonia Centre in Barcelona before end of 2011 to prepare an action plan and updated time line for producing such a kit.
- Engaging university students and teachers for Euro-Arab Dialogue: in this regard, it was proposed that an outline for a survey is to be prepared shortly to collect information on activities in this field in individual countries.
- Consolidating and encouraging joint projects between Arab and European ASPnet and UNESCO Chairs: the Task Force will consider an action plan for undertaking a survey and supporting mechanism for implementing the activities proposed.
- Inclusion of the Euro-Arab Dialogue initiative in 36 C/5 document of UNESCO via a Draft Resolution (DR) to be prepared and jointly supported by Member States of the both regions could be considered at the 36th session of the General Conference

13. Finalization of a TOR for Euro-Arab Dialogue activities undertaken by the National Commissions of the two regions

Following the recommendation of the previous meetings on Euro-Arab Dialogue, the Secretaries-General of the Libyan, Lebanese and Tunisian National Commissions had drafted a working document for the proposed Terms of Reference framework. The working paper was discussed and revised in function of the various observations and suggestions. It was agreed that this paper would be finalized only after the endorsement by all National Commissions at a joint meeting to be convened in one of the Member States before the end of 2011.

14. Consolidation of the work of the Euro-Arab Dialogue

In line with proposal to enhance the participation of larger group of National Commissions in the Euro-Arab Dialogue initiative and open out to other partners, it was recommended that a stock-taking meeting should be convened with all National Commissions from the two regions as well as major relevant organizations and committed civil society and private partners. In this context, Dr Mir Asghar Husain, representative of MBI Al Jaber Foundation, informed the participants that the Sheikh Al Jaber, Chairman of the Foundation, has been fully supportive of Euro-Arab initiative at UNESCO through his different contributions, networks and leadership training programmes, and that he proposed to provide logistics and other assistance for holding the recommended conference. This international conference would be carefully prepared with a view to take stock of progress, learn from past experience and adopt the draft terms of reference for implementing the future activities under the framework of Euro-Arab Dialogue. Mr Xiaolin Cheng, Chief of Section of National Commissions and Related Networks (ERI/NCS/NAC) ensured the participants of the Secretariat commitment to liaise with all parties concerned and prepare for this important event.

15. Closing of the meeting

Mr Rao made closing remarks by thanking the two regional coordinators, participating National Commissions and observers for their valuable inputs and active contribution to this meeting. He paid special homage to the Oman government and National Commission for their successful hosting the 2nd Meeting of the National Commissions' Task Force for Euro-Arab Dialogue. He ensured that the UNESCO Secretariat looked forward to working closely with all parties concerned to advance in this endeavor.

On behalf of the Government of Oman, Mr Al Yaqoubi thanked the participants for their contribution to the successful outcome of this important meeting. He reminded them of his country's commitment and continued support for sustaining the Euro-Arab Dialogue initiative. To this end, the Oman National Commission will spare no effort to ensure the future success of the Task Force mission and advancement of this vital interregional dialogue and cooperation.



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2nd Meeting of the Task Force of National Commissions for UNESCO for Euro-Arab Dialogue

Muscat, Oman, 23 January 2011

Agenda

Sunday, 23 January 2011

09:00 Opening of the meeting

Welcoming remarks by Mr Mohammed Saleem Al Yaqoubi, Acting Secretary-General of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

Opening speeches by:

- Deputy Minister of Education
- Mrs Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

9:30 Coffee break

10:00 Start of the Meeting

- Nomination of the chairperson and rapporteurs
- Adoption of the Agenda
- UNESCO Secretariat introduction
 - o Ms Katerina Stenou, Director of Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue (CLT/CPD)
 - o Mr Xiaolin Cheng, Chief of National Commissions Section (ERI/NAC)

- Mr Abdullatif Al-Baijan, Secretary-General of the Kuwait National Commission for UNESCO and Co-ordinator for the Arab Region
- Ms Marjutka Hafner, Secretary-General of the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO and Co-ordinator for the Europe Region

11:00 Achievements and progress made within the Euro-Arab Dialogue:

- Finalisation of the project on Comparative Study of History Textbooks (March 2010). Meeting of Strasbourg at the Council of Europe Headquarters.
- Interventions from National Commissions and institutions participating in the Arab – Euro Dialogue.
- Production of an educational kit inspired by ‘World Heritage in Young Hands’ and devoted to Identity.
- Engaging universities students and teachers in the Euro-Arab dialogue.
- Encouraging projects between Arab and European ASPnet Schools and Universities.

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 Euro-Arab Dialogue: Terms of Reference Project for the National Commissions

15:00 Establishing the action plan and working modalities of the Euro-Arab Dialogue Task Force



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Muscat, Oman, 23 January 2011

List of Participants

1. Mr. Gazi Isa Almarzoq , Secretary-General	Bahrain
2. Mr. Mohammed Safwat, Secretary-General	Egypt
3. Mr. Tuomo Melasuo, Director	Finland
4. Mr. William FABVRE, Secretary-General	France
5. Dr. Abdullatef Ahmed, Secretary-General	Kuwait
6. Ms. Salwa AL Sanyora , Secretary-General	Lebanon
7. Dr. Basheer Ahmed Saeed Secretary-General	Libya
8. Ms. Thuraya Magdolin, Secretary-General	Morocco
9. Mr. Mohammed AlYaqoubi , Acting Secretary-General	Oman
10. Mr. Ahmed AlAzri, Programme Officer	Oman
11. Slawomir Wojciech Ratajski, Secretary-General	Poland
12. Ms. Ilona Morzol Ogorek, Education officer	Poland
13. Mme Manuela Galhardo, Executive Secretary-General	Portugal
14. Ms. Marjutka Hafner, Secretary-General	Slovenia
15. Mr. Mir Moazam Husain , Advisor, European Affairs	MBI Al Jaber Foundation
16. Mr. Miguel Angel Essomba, Director	UNESCO Catalonia Centre
17. Dr. Gassan Saleh	Iseco
18. Mr Jacques Rao, Director, Division of Member States and International Organizations	Unesco
19. Ms. Katerina Stenou , Director, Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue	Unesco
20. Mr. Xiaolin Cheng, Chief, Section of National Commissions and Related Networks	Unesco



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Address by

**Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the 2nd Meeting of the Task Force of
National**

Commissions for UNESCO for Euro-Arab Dialogue

Muscat, Oman, 23 January 2011

Your Excellency Dr Muna bint Salim al Jardania, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Curricula and

Vice-President of the Oman National Commission for Education,

Your Excellency Dr Madiha Bint Ahmed Al-Shaibaniya,

Permanent Delegate of Oman to UNESCO,

Mr Mohammed Saleem Al Yaqoub, Acting Secretary-General of the Oman National

Commission for Education, Culture and Science,

Secretaries-General of National Commissions for UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is an honour to be here today. It is also a pleasure, as my meeting with the National Commissions for UNESCO occurred with you, one year ago, in Paris.

Our meeting is a reminder of the importance of the National Commissions to the UNESCO family and to building cooperation through education, science, culture, communication and information.

National Commissions have an important place in my vision of UNESCO for the 21st century – as indispensable sources of expertise, as vital channels of advice and as unique links to civil society.

I am deeply committed to strengthening our cooperation with National Commissions. Working with national ministries, this will start with an evaluation of the Secretariat's cooperation with National Commissions. This will provide the basis for recommendations to enhance interaction and define better the role of the National Commissions within the UNESCO family.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Oman Ministry of Education and the National Commission of Oman for UNESCO for hosting this 2nd meeting of the Task Force of National Commissions for the Euro-Arab Dialogue in Muscat.

The importance of the Euro-Arab Dialogue Project is reflected in the wide representation we have today from National Commissions and from the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Council of Europe and the Al Jaber Foundation.

I thank all of you for your engagement. The significance of this project lies with your efforts and dedication.

The dialogue between cultures needs such a wide platform. Fostering the understanding that can lead to rapprochement and reconciliation needs our concerted collective efforts. Learning to live together is our common task.

One year has passed since the first meeting of the Task Force, and much has been achieved.

The comparative study of history textbooks, launched initially in 2005, is set to be a key project for inter-regional cooperation between European and Arab National Commissions over the next two years. The meeting organized by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 30-31 March 2010, with UNESCO participation, catalysed this new energy.

This is an important project. It will highlight stereotypes that exist and seek to improve teaching in order to deepen understanding and intercultural dialogue among young people.

This project embodies the complexity of the task we face.

Dialogue is vital, but it is not enough. We have to develop better understanding between cultures. We have to work together to challenge myths and stereotypes. We have to teach cultural literacy to young people and adults. Through these actions, we can move from dialogue to understanding, from knowledge to reconciliation.

I see this as the agenda for the century ahead.

The stakes are high, because the dangers are there – of misunderstanding, prejudice, and fear.

We cannot retreat into cultures of exclusion. We must tackle these dangers at the root.

These objectives guided UNESCO as lead agency for the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. In this capacity, UNESCO led over 1000 initiatives across the globe to raise awareness and reach out to new audiences for intercultural dialogue.

The same spirit is reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding between UNESCO and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations that I signed last May with the High Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Jorge Sampaio.

To these ends, UNESCO launched a High Panel on Peace and Dialogue among Cultures last February. The High Panel has been created to explore how to build peace and reconciliation through education, the sciences and culture.

The next meeting will occur in March at the United Nations in New York. We will take stock of the end of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and look to future action to foster dialogue and understanding between cultures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The importance of the Euro-Arab Dialogue Project lies in this wider context.

Globalization is an opportunity but it is also a challenge. Greater connections between people do not necessarily translate into deeper understanding. More exchanges do not always entail more meaningful dialogue.

Every day tells us the story that it is not enough to communicate, we must connect. It is not enough to exchange, we must share.

The Task Force of National Commissions for the Euro-Arab Dialogue has my full support and UNESCO's backing.

I wish you success in your deliberations and especially in your undertakings together.

National Commissions for UNESCO for Euro-Arab Dialogue

Terms of Reference Project

First: Overview:

The Arab – Euro Dialogue project was launched within the framework of the Arab and European national commissions' initiative during the 46th session of the World Conference for Education that was held in Geneva on September 2001. The project was led under the slogan “learn to live together” and was assigned to the German National Commission and the Tunisian National Commission.

Since emergence, the Arab – Euro Dialogue team consisted of nine Arab countries (Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Morocco, Oman, Syria, UAE and Tunisia) and nine European countries (France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, UK and Canada). The participating organizations are UNESCO, ALESCO, and the European Council and then the Libyan National Commission and ISESCO joined in later.

The team has conducted a number of meetings and activities in various participating countries (Tunisia, Tripoli, UAE, Morocco, Cairo, Paris, Strasbourg and Bonn).

The team has been supported by: UNESCO, ALESCO, and ISESCO, which are organizations concerned with Education, Culture, Science and Civilizations Dialogue. This support came through many decisions and procedures among which are the following:

- UNESCO Executive Board approval of the project in the 165th session in October 2002.
- The General Conference's decision in its 31st session to incorporate the activities of the team in the organization's regular program and budget.
- The decision of the Executive Board of ALESCO in its 75th session in Ribat in April 2002.
- The decision of the Executive Board of ALESCO in its 76th session in Tunisia in December 2002.

Second: Within the framework of organizing the team tasks, we propose the following internal regulations for the Arab Euro Dialogue:

Article One: Objectives:

- Facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the Arab and European regions.
- Discover the possibilities of cooperation and experience exchange in the areas of education, culture and sciences in order to promote dialogue between Arab and European civilizations.
- Encourage the exchange of experts and encourage discussions in areas of mutual concern.
- Use UNESCO networks and particularly national commissions, associated schools and UNESCO university chairs to prepare and implement joint projects.
- Conduct workshops on education with regards to nationalism and human rights.

- Mutual production of new educational materials that are worked on by the teachers and students of both regions.
- Implement the projects that are in the area of analyzing and reviewing texts books as well as educational books that are specialized in promoting the importance of heritage in both cultures.
- Encourage, develop and protect creativity and productivity and publish diverse cultural materials in several languages via the internet.
- Promote exchange, partnership, cultural dialogue and mutual understanding between people.
- Promote partnership between national commissions, governmental and non government institutions relevant to the areas of education, culture, sciences and communication.

Article Two: Membership

- All Arab and European UNESCO national commissions are natural members of the Arab Euro Dialogue.
- Both regions shall select a small team that consists of no more than 20 members on equal basis.
- The small team works for a two years term according to a rotation system i.e. each region will change commissions according to the alphabetical order. This process is to be executed on the margin of UNESCO General Conference.

Article Three: Coordinators

- A coordinator is selected from each region (Arab and European) for one financial year.
- The coordinators are selected on the margin of the General Conference of UNESCO.

Article Four: Sponsors:

- The Arab Euro Dialogue team is supported by international and regional organizations, authorities and other parties who share the objectives and priorities of the team. Among the organizations which embraced this project since its launch are UNESCO, ALESCO, ISESCO, European Council, MBI Al Jaber Foundation and other sponsoring organizations.
- Sponsors provide moral and financial support for the team's activities according to a specific work plan and budget created by the team.

Article Five: Work System

- Commissions of both regions shall discuss the work strategies and executive plans that are considered of a priority.
- The team shall work according to a strategy agreed upon by both regions.
- The team shall work on the executive plans for one financial term. The plan shall be presented on the beginning of the term and shall be evaluated by the end of the term.
- Coordinators present a report on the executive procedures that were done during the financial year.