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Division of Ethics of Science and Technology

ETHICS AROUND THE WORLD

Rotating Conferences

The Division of Ethics of Science and Technology (EST) of UNESCO is planning to organize a series of ethics conferences in various countries. Through these conferences information about the programme of ethics of science and technology of UNESCO can be disseminated. The conferences can also provide a platform to establish intensive contacts with experts and interested parties in the countries. The series of conferences is planned in co-operation with the National Commissions for UNESCO, so that a joint venture will be established to the benefit of all participating institutions.

With this document, the Division EST invites the Member States to participate in this program of rotating conferences. The document explains the relevant issues and activities in planning a conference.

OBJECTIVES

A rotating conference has two objectives:

1. To provide information about the activities of UNESCO in the area of ethics, and disseminate materials produced;
2. To interact with professionals and experts from the country in exchanging information, having input into UNESCO activities, and create a network with interested target audiences.

DELIVERABLE

Minimum of 10 rotating conferences in various countries in 2004 and 2005.

FORMAT

Generally, the conference will be organized on a one-day basis. The basic idea is that every conference has a similar format with the same programme during the morning session and a variable programme during the afternoon session, and possibly the following morning session. The variable programme will be adapted to the local needs and requirements. It will be discussed with the interested parties, how the programme can be made as attractive as possible within the country, involving experts, professionals, policy makers and other relevant groups in the country. Annex I provides some examples of possible programmes.

Given the priorities of UNESCO in the current biennium, several options for the programme can be offered. Activities during this biennium will focus on establishing and implementing ethics teaching programs, with a priority in two regions: Latin America and East and Central Europe. Conferences in these regions will primarily focus on ethics teaching.

A major effort during this biennium will be the drafting of a Declaration on universal norms on bioethics. The development of this instrument requires an extensive consultation process on international, regional and national levels. The rotating conference can be used for the purpose of a consultation session with national or regional experts on the various drafts of the Declaration.

The conference could also be an opportunity to discuss ways and means of implementing the international instruments and their incorporation into national legislation.

PROGRAMME

- Overview of UNESCO activities
 - Member of the Division EST, explaining the planned activities in the context of the work plans with emphasis on the following three elements: global ethics observatory (database of names of ethics experts and institutes, examples of teaching programs, and examples of legal regulations and laws), ethics education (establishing and implementing ethics teaching programs, first in East and Central Europe and Latin America, and later in other regions of the world) and rotating conferences
(Annex II provides information about the Division EST)
 - Member of IBC explaining the work in the area of bioethics, such as the new work regarding the declaration on universal norms on bioethics
(Annex III provides information about IBC and Annex IV and V provide information about other relevant committees, respectively the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC) and the Inter-Agency Committee of the United Nations on Bioethics)
 - Member of COMEST, explaining the work in the area of ethics of science and technology, specifically focusing on the planned activities of COMEST (developing a Code of Conduct for Scientists, exploring the possibility of a Declaration of Ethical Principles regarding the use of outer space, and environmental ethics with the possibility of developing a Declaration of Ethical Principles for the Environment)
(Annex VI provides information about COMEST)

- Interaction with national representatives and professionals

Different scenarios are possible:

- **Focus on bioethics committees**
Here we can provide information and expertise on bioethics committees, giving advice how to establish them, giving examples of statutes and arrangements, exchanging experiences and literature.
- **Focus on ethics teaching**
Here we can provide information and examples of teaching programmes, discuss with experts what need to be done in this area, exchange information and create networks.
- **Focus on the elaboration of the declaration on universal norms on bioethics**
In this context, we can have a consultation with experts from the country (or the region), discussing the approach that has been chosen, the scope, and contents of the draft instrument.
- **Focus on implementation of declarations**
Two declarations have been adopted by UNESCO: the Universal Declaration of the Human Genome and Human Rights, and the International Declaration on Human Genetic Data. Information about these declarations can be disseminated, and proposals for implementation in the country discussed.

ORGANISATION

In order to organize the conference, we make an arrangement with a hosting organization. In most cases this will be the National UNESCO Commission, but it can occasionally be another organization, such as a national bioethics committee or a university department.

The organization will require the following steps

- a) contact the Permanent Delegation to UNESCO
- b) contact the National Commission for UNESCO
- c) contact the relevant field office
- d) identify the willingness to host a conference
- e) identify the needs and requirements in the respective country
- f) draft a preliminary program
- g) identify the best UNESCO participants and invite them (IBC, COMEST)
- h) make a budget
- i) contract / agreement with hosting organization (if necessary)
- j) announcement of conference
- k) distribute materials: texts of presentations, books and printed materials

FOLLOW-UP

When the conference has been concluded, the Division EST will make a draft report, which will be circulated to the hosting organization. It will not be published, but used as a component in the final report that will be produced after a series of conferences have been completed, in order to evaluate the project and to improve future conferences.

In cases that the conference was focusing on consultation in the context of the elaboration of a declaration on universal norms on bioethics a more extensive report will be made, in order to use it in the general process of consultations.

BUDGET

UNESCO will take care for the travel and accommodation costs of the IBC member involved, the COMEST member involved and the Secretariat.

The hosting national organization will take care for:

- costs of conference (accommodation, facilities, meals)
- costs of invitations
- travel and accommodation costs for national experts
- interpretation, if necessary
- a draft report (in English), if necessary

The number of national experts who will be invited depends on the needs and wishes of the host country. For example, if the focus is on consultation in the context of the Declaration on Universal Norms on Bioethics, a wide variety of experts might be invited to reflect the diversity of moral perspectives and traditions within the country (or the region); in this case the number of experts might vary between 40 and 100.

If the focus of the conference is on ethics teaching, the participating experts will most probably be university teachers involved in ethics education; the number of invited national experts might in this case vary between 20 and 40.

PRELIMINARY PLANNING

- Spring 2004 we should have a preliminary schedule with the dates of various conferences; the point is that as early as possible it should be known where and when conferences in this biennium will take place so that we can start advance planning leaving sufficient time for preparation and organization.
- In the detailed planning schedule it is indicated who in the Division EST will be primarily responsible for the planning and organization of a conference in a respective country. These professionals will take care for the contacts with the delegations, national commissions, and hosting organisation in the particular country. The Director of the Division EST will coordinate and supervise the various activities so that a common approach will be used.
- The first step to be taken is to make an appointment with the Permanent Delegation, which will inform the National Commission for UNESCO.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

The list of countries is provisional and therefore can be modified. Preliminary contacts have been made with the Permanent Delegations of the Member States indicated to explore the willingness to enter into a joint organizational venture. Also the exact time frame will be open to change - for some countries the actual conference can be planned earlier than expected; other countries will have to take action later than expected.

The only restraint is that if the focus of the conference is on the consultation on the declaration of universal norms on bioethics, the conference shall be planned before the end of 2004, given the planning of the drafting process (which will be completed early 2005).

The intention is to have an exact list of data for the conference in 2004-2005 around early February 2004.

2004

Planned conferences: **THE NETHERLANDS**: 18 March 2004 (topic: consultation on the declaration on universal norms on bioethics)

REPUBLIC OF KOREA: 10 November 2004

Conferences have been scheduled in the following countries

- **CANADA** (topic: consultation on the future declaration on universal norms on bioethics)
- **CROATIA** (topic: ethics teaching)
- **IRAN** (topic: consultation on the future declaration on universal norms on bioethics)
- **LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA** (topic: national bioethics committee)
- **MEXICO** (topic: ethics teaching)
- **PARAGUAY** (topic: ethics teaching)
- **PORTUGAL**
- **GERMANY**
- **SWITZERLAND** (topic: consultation on the future declaration on universal norms on bioethics)
- **TURKEY** (topic: consultation on the future declaration on universal norms on bioethics)
- **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

2005

Conferences will be scheduled in the following countries:

- **BURUNDI**
- **JAMAICA**
- **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**
- **JAPAN**
- **POLAND** (topic: ethics teaching)
- **SWAZILAND**
- **UGANDA**

ANNEXE I

Examples of programme

1ST EXAMPLE : topic of the conference: **Consultation in the context of the elaboration of the declaration on universal norms on bioethics**

Morning session (9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.): The programme of ethics of science and technology of UNESCO

Opening and welcome addresses

- Minister and National UNESCO Commission

“Unesco and ...(country)”

- speaker from the host Member State

“The International Bioethics Committee (IBC)”

- Michèle Jean (Canada), chair of IBC

“The World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)”

- Jens Erik Fenstad (Norway), chair of COMEST

“Unesco activities in the area of (bio)ethics”

- Henk ten Have (UNESCO), Director of the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology

Afternoon session (2.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.): Consultation in the context of the elaboration of the declaration on universal norms on bioethics

“The Universal Declaration on Bioethics”

- explanation of the process so far
- draft text circulated

Consultation with national experts

- short introductions and statements by a number of experts
- discussion with the experts about the draft text

2ND EXAMPLE: topic of the conference: **Ethics teaching**

Morning session (9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.): **The programme of ethics of science and technology of UNESCO**

Opening and welcome addresses

- Minister and National UNESCO Commission

“Unesco and ...(country)”

- speaker from the host Member State

“The International Bioethics Committee (IBC)”

- Michele Jean (Canada), chair of IBC

“The World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)”

- Jens Erik Fenstad (Norway), chair of COMEST

“Unesco activities in the area of (bio)ethics”

- Henk ten Have (UNESCO), Director of the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology

Afternoon session (2.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.): **Ethics teaching**

“The UNESCO program in ethics education”

- Henk ten Have (Paris), Director of the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology

“Experiences in ethics education”

- Speaker from the country

“Examples of ethics teaching programs”

- Speaker from the country

“Possibilities and opportunities for improving ethics teaching”

- Speaker from the country

General discussion

Closure

ANNEX II

The Division of Ethics of Science and Technology of UNESCO

Since its creation immediately after the Second World War, UNESCO has been considered as the conscience of the United Nations. In the 21st century our world is undergoing fundamental changes and UNESCO's ethical mission is more important than ever.

The current revolution in science and technology has led to concerns that unbridled scientific progress is not always ethically acceptable. UNESCO's Programme on the Ethics of Science and Technology reflects these concerns and aims to place such progress in a context of ethical reflection rooted in the cultural, legal, philosophical and religious heritage of the various human communities. The Ethics of Science and Technology, including the Bioethics Programme and the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), is one of UNESCO's five priority programmes.

Through the [Bioethics Programme](#), UNESCO addresses the ethical, legal and social concerns stemming from advances in the life sciences, particularly in genetics. The Programme includes the [International Bioethics Committee](#) (IBC) and the [Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee](#) (IGBC), the only international bodies that address bioethics issues. The Programme's major success was the adoption in 1997 by the General Conference of the [Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights](#) – subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 – and the adoption in 2003 of the [International Declaration on Human Genetic Data](#).

UNESCO's ethical reflection also covers other scientific and social areas. The [World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology \(COMEST\)](#) was created in 1998 to formulate ethical principles that provide non-economic criteria for decision-makers, concerning sensitive areas such as: sustainable development; freshwater use and management; energy production, distribution and use; outer space exploration and technology; and issues of rights, regulations and equity related to the rapid growth of the information society.

The Division of Ethics of Science and Technology assists the Member States to address the moral concerns in connection to science and technology through providing expertise in four areas of ethics: Bio-ethics, Environmental ethics, Space ethics, and Science ethics. I will enhance the capacities of Member States by initiating and supporting networks of experts involved in ethics teaching, by developing ethics teaching materials, by supporting the establishment of ethics committees, and by assisting in the drafting of national legislation and guidelines. The Division will also increase awareness of and sensibility to ethical concerns promoting public debate, disseminate information through conferences and publishing resource materials and studies.

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ANNEX III

The International Bioethics Committee (IBC)

The International Bioethics Committee (IBC) is a body of 36 independent experts that follows progress in the life sciences and its applications in order to ensure respect for human dignity and freedom. It was created in 1993.

IBC provides the only global forum for in-depth bioethical reflection by exposing the issues at stake. It does not pass judgment on one position or another. Instead, it is up to each country, particularly lawmakers, to reflect societal choices within the framework of national legislation.

What are the IBC's tasks?

1. To promote reflection on the ethical and legal issues raised by research in the life sciences and their applications and to encourage the exchange of ideas and information, particularly through education;
2. To encourage action to heighten awareness among the general public, specialized groups and public and private decision-makers involved in bioethics;
3. To co-operate with international governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned by the issues raised in the field of bioethics as well as with national and regional bioethics committees and similar bodies;
4. To contribute to the implementation of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights and the International Declaration on Human Genetic Data and the dissemination of the principles set out therein.

How does the IBC work?

Since 1998, the Statutes of IBC define its mandate and composition.

The Director-General of UNESCO convenes the IBC at least once a year. Through its sessions and working groups, the Committee produces reports, advices and recommendations on specific issues that are widely disseminated and submitted to the Director-General for transmission to Member States, the Executive Board and the General Conference.

How are the IBC members chosen?

The 36 members of IBC are appointed by the Director-General in their personal capacities to serve for four-year terms. Cultural diversity, balanced geographical representation and proposals from States of qualified specialists in the life sciences and in the social and human sciences, including law, human rights, philosophy, education and communication are taken into account in the selection of membership.

On-going activities?

Entrusted by the Director-General in accordance with the specific mandate endowed by the General Conference, IBC will concentrate its activities in 2004-2005 on the elaboration of a declaration on universal norms on bioethics. This will be carried out in close consultation with the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC) and with the participation of all other actors concerned (intergovernmental, non governmental and national bodies).

IBC will also work on the drawing up of a plan for the implementation of the International Declaration on Human Genetic Data in cooperation with IGBC.

ANNEX IV

The Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC)

IGBC was created in 1998, under Article 11 of the Statutes of IBC. IGBC is composed of 36 Member States whose representatives meet at least once every two years and constitute the relay between IBC and governments.

What are the tasks of IGBC?

IGBC examines the advice and recommendations of IBC. It informs IBC of its opinions and submits these opinions along with proposals for follow-up of the IBC's work to the Director-General for transmission to Member States, the Executive Board and the General Conference.

How are the IGBC members chosen?

The 36 Member States are elected by UNESCO's General Conference taking into account cultural diversity and balanced geographical representation. Members serve for terms of approximately four years, from the end of the ordinary session of the General Conference in which they are elected until the end of the second subsequent ordinary session.

What States are members of the IGBC?

Azerbaijan	India*	Republic of Korea*
Belgium	Indonesia	Russian Federation
Brazil	Islamic Republic of Iran	Saudi Arabia*
Canada*	Italy*	Swaziland
Chile	Kenya	Thailand*
China*	Latvia	Togo
Costa Rica*	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Tunisia*
Egypt*	Malawi	Uganda*
Finland	Mexico*	United Kingdom*
France	Mozambique*	United States of America*
Germany	Nigeria*	Uruguay
Ghana	Pakistan*	Venezuela*

* States elected at the 32nd session of the General Conference. They are IGBC members until the end of the 34th session (Autumn 2007). The other States will remain members until the end of the 33rd session (Autumn 2005).

ANNEX V

The United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics

The need for international engagement and dialogue between different international bodies is increasingly felt in the field of bioethics. The Director-General of UNESCO therefore took the initiative of proposing to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, the creation of an inter-agency committee on bioethics composed of intergovernmental organizations within and outside the United Nations system, to improve the coordination of activities carried out by the various organizations in the field of bioethics and avoid duplication.

Further to a consultative meeting convened by UNESCO on 17 September 2001, the UN Inter-Agency Committee on Bioethics was established in March 2003, with UNESCO acting as Permanent Secretariat.

What is the composition of the Inter-Agency Committee?

Members: The United Nations¹ and those specialized agencies² that have developed programmes in, or carry out specific activities focusing on bioethics, including its human rights aspects and other related issues;

Associate Members: Other international and regional intergovernmental organizations and institutions outside the United Nations system,³ particularly regional agencies of developing countries, engaged in activities relating to bioethics, including its human rights aspect and other related issues. The Inter-Agency committee may extend Associate Membership to organizations and institutions that have requested such membership and meet these criteria.

What are the goals of the Inter-agency Committee?

- a) To provide a forum for debate and exchange of information in the field of bioethics and related issues, with special attention to the human rights aspects;
- b) To regularly examine the human rights aspects of bioethics and related issues;
- c) To examine topics and issues in the field, in order to identify where concerted or joint efforts would be beneficial and where major gaps and constraints affecting cooperation in the field need to be addressed;
To promote coordination of activities undertaken in this field by the United Nations and its specialized agencies;
- e) To actively encourage cooperation among the Members and Associate Members in this field;
- f) To facilitate collaboration in the field with other intergovernmental and international organizations, particularly developing-country regional agencies, in order to promote bioethics activities both at national and regional levels, including capacity-building initiatives.

¹. UNHCHR, UNICEF, UNU, etc.

². FAO, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, WIPO, WTO, etc.

³. ALESCO, ASEAN, CoE, EC, OAS, OAU, OECD, ICGB.

ANNEXE VI

The World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)

In 1997, the General Conference of UNESCO, fully aware of the increasing importance of ethical reflection in the light of the cultural and social effects of the rapid development of scientific knowledge and technology, approved the creation of the *World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology* (COMEST). Composed of 18 prominent independent figures from different regions of the world and from various scientific and humanistic disciplines, the Commission has a consultative rather than a prescriptive function.

What is the task of COMEST?

As a unique forum of reflection, the task of COMEST is to formulate, on a scientific basis, ethical principles that can shed light on the various choices and impacts occasioned by new discoveries in scientific and technological fields, thus fostering a constructive ethical dialogue on the values at stake. In this international and interdisciplinary space, actors from both the industrialized world and developing nations can work together to seek answers to common concerns.

Mandate of COMEST

Since its inception, COMEST is mandated to: a) be an advisory body of UNESCO; b) be an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience; c) detect on that basis the early signs of risk situations; d) promote dialogue between scientific communities, decision-makers and the public at large.

Areas of activity

In order better to achieve these aims, COMEST established four Sub-Commissions that, during the past years, have focused their work on the ethics of freshwater, the ethics of outer space, the ethics of energy, and the ethics of the information society.

Based on the work accomplished by the four Sub-Commissions, COMEST has now adopted a new approach. The ethical reflection and analysis of the issues at stake is being moved forward by adopting the broader perspective of environmental ethics and sustainability. In addition to this new focus, COMEST, along with other relevant international bodies, is working to provide the necessary advice on how to integrate ethics and responsibility in scientific training.

For the biennium 2004-2005, the action of COMEST will be centered on a number of new topics that have been identified as core issues, namely ethics of nanotechnology, ethical implications of research on human beings, an ethical code of conduct for scientists, the development of Science Ethics and Space Ethics, the ethical analysis of the Precautionary Principle.

The main role of COMEST is to formulate ethical principles and guidelines to guarantee that technological progress and sharing of scientific knowledge are fully consistent with the respect of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, it is expected that the studies of the Commission, together with a vast consultative action, will lead to the preparation of a number of international instruments, e.g., an *International Declaration on the Ethics of Outer Space*; an *International Declaration on the Ethics of the Environment*; an *International Declaration on Scientific Ethics*, including an *Ethical Code of Conduct for Scientists*.