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

SUMMARY

In accordance with 129 EX/Decision 5.2.1, the Director-General submits to the Executive Board the annual report of the Council of the United Nations University (UNU) on UNU's activities in the period from January 2010 to December 2011. She also presents her observations on the work of UNU as well as on cooperation between UNESCO and UNU during that period.

The financial or administrative implications of the reported activities fall within the parameters of the C/5 document.

Action expected of the Executive Board: decision in paragraph 20.

1. Established in 1973, the United Nations University (UNU) is an international community of scholars that generates and shares knowledge and strengthens capacities relevant to promoting human security and development. As an academic institution within the United Nations system, it contributes directly to the advancement of knowledge relevant to the role and work of the United Nations as well as to its application in the formulation of sound principles, policies, strategies and programmes for action. With intellectual independence, in particular in the selection of topics and the dissemination of results, guaranteed through its Charter, the University can make these contributions with objectivity and integrity. In December 2009, the General Assembly amended the Charter to grant UNU permission to award postgraduate degrees.
2. UNU has grown to encompass a worldwide network of 15 research and training institutes and programmes, presently located in 13 countries and coordinated by the UNU Centre in Tokyo. Additionally, two liaison offices, located respectively in Paris and New York, centred within UNESCO and the United Nations system, actively support the UNU Centre.
3. In carrying out its mission, UNU works in close collaboration with other United Nations partners as well as with leading universities and research institutes throughout the world.

Major themes and programmes in 2010 and 2011

4. As per the UNU's Strategic Plan (2011-2014), UNU works within five inter-dependent, inter-linked thematic clusters, aimed at promoting interdisciplinary research, postgraduate education, knowledge transfer, and capacity development in the themes of: a) Peace, Security and Human Rights; b) Development Governance; c) Population and Health; d) Global Change and Sustainable Development; and e) Sciences, Technology and Society.

5. During the 2010-2011 biennium, UNU adopted several major initiatives, notably:

A. Postgraduate Programmes

The University Postgraduate Programme and Awards Statute, developed in 2010, establishes the legislative framework, as well as relevant regulations, policies and institutional support structures for this initiative. The objective is to face the important challenge for higher education to assimilate knowledge from diverse disciplines into an integrated comprehensive approach, thereby ensuring that the “answer” developed by one discipline does not present a new “problem” when viewed from a different dimension. Several UNU postgraduate degree programmes have already been launched; among them a Master of Science in Sustainability, Development and Peace at the UNU Institute for Sustainability and Peace (UNU-ISP) and a Master of Science in Environmental Governance with Specialization in Biodiversity at the UNU Institute for Advance Studies (UNU-IAS).

B. Twin Institutes

This concept was adopted as a strategic step towards strengthening the University's presence in developing countries and countries in transition, and intensifying research and teaching interaction between developed and developing countries. UNU is therefore moving towards a “twinning” structure for its institutes; each UNU institute will typically have two or more locations, one in a developed country and another in a developing country. So far, preliminary twinning relationships have been launched between the UNU Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (MERIT, The Netherlands) and two partners – Consortium for Economic and Social Research (CRES, Senegal) and Renmin University (China); between the UNU Institute for Sustainability and Peace (ISP, Japan) and the UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (INRA, Ghana); and between the new UNU Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources (FLORES, Germany) and a soon to be established component in Mozambique.

6. The full Report of the Council of the United Nations University for the years 2010 and 2011 present the broader spectrum of activities it has undertaken during these past two years.

Cooperation between UNESCO and UNU

7. The joint activities undertaken by UNESCO and UNU during the period 2010-2011 cover the following areas:

8. **Education:** UNESCO-UNU cooperation continued within the framework of the eight existing joint UNESCO/UNU Chairs and Networks to undertake their evaluation. The UNU Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) programme on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has closely collaborated with UNESCO in holding symposiums in the development of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), and on perspectives on university performance evaluation, bringing together representatives of member institutions of the network for the Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research (ProSPER.Net).

9. **Social and Human Sciences:** Joint activities have focused on producing a comprehensive report, based on the UNU Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) experience, on the relationship between Regional Integration and human mobility. The report will be the first of its

kind to examine migration policy in the framework of regional integration processes throughout the world. A UNESCO/UNU Chair on this topic has been created at UNU-CRIS to further address this issue, in cooperation with the University of Pretoria (South Africa).

10. **Natural sciences:** Joint activities have focused on water sustainability, groundwater and human security, water and cultural diversity, disaster risk reduction, policy guidelines for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) on hazard assessment and mitigation in integrated coastal area management, marine governance and biodiversity, management of mangrove forests culminating in the *World Atlas of Mangroves*, traditional and indigenous knowledge, environmental governance, the sustainable management of marginal drylands, and research related to innovation indicators. In addition the UNU – Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT) contributed to the first chapter of the UNESCO Science Report 2010: the current status of science around the world, 'The Growing Role of Knowledge in the Global Economy'.

11. **Communication and Information:** Collaboration continues with the UNESCO Open Training Platform offering 21 development topics, which UNU joined in May 2008.

12. **The Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence:** UNU and the Intersectoral Platform are key partners in addressing UNU's thematic clusters on Peace, Security and Human Rights; and Development Governance. In this regard, the newly established UNU International Institute on the Alliance of Civilisations (UNU-IIAOC) could become a key player to promote mutual understanding within and among contemporary plural societies.

13. **External Relations and Public Information:** Collaboration with UNESCO's Division of Public Information is focused on publicising public events organized by UNU at UNESCO Headquarters and sales of a selection of UNU publications at the UNESCO bookshop.

Comments by the Director-General

14. The Director-General takes note with satisfaction of the activities carried out by UNU during the 2010-2011 biennium, in particular the book chapter in UNESCO Science Report 2010: the current status of science around the world, "The Growing Role of Knowledge in the Global Economy".

15. The Director-General appreciates the continued contribution of UNU to the UNESCO Open Training Platform.

16. The Director-General notes with interest the adoption of the University Postgraduate Programme and Awards Statute, particularly in view of its interdisciplinarity in research.

17. Recognizing the wide contributions of the UNU's institutes and research and training centres, the Director-General acknowledges the adoption of the structure of 'Twin Institutes' and welcomes the reinforcement of UNU's presence in developing regions, especially Africa.

18. The Director-General appreciates the cooperation between UNU and UNESCO, particularly the establishment of joint Chairs which has provided an excellent opportunity for UNESCO to focus the reach of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme on key areas pertaining to the mission and goals of the United Nations.

19. The Director-General looks forward to reinforced cooperation over the next biennium, particularly within the framework of the UNITWIN and the UNESCO Chairs programme in the field of higher education, as follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education organized by UNESCO in 2009.

Action expected of the Executive Board

20. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 190 EX/6,
2. Recognizing the key role of the United Nations University (UNU) as a bridge between the international academic community and the United Nations,
3. Further recognizing the excellent quality of the relationship that has been developed between UNU and UNESCO over the years,
4. Expresses its satisfaction at the development of the programme and activities of the United Nations University;
5. Expresses its appreciation of the increased participation of the United Nations University in the programmes and activities of UNESCO, particularly the UNESCO-UNU Chairs and Networks and Priority Africa;
6. Stresses the need for continued collaboration between UNESCO and UNU on areas of joint expertise and capacity through, for example, the revival of the Staff Exchange Programme;
7. Invites UNESCO and UNU to submit a Plan of Joint Activities for the 2014-2015 biennium to the Executive Board at its 192nd session (autumn 2013);
8. Further invites the Director-General to communicate to the Chair of the Council of UNU the terms of its decision.