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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF INTERSECTORAL PLATFORMS

SUMMARY

By 177 EX/Decision 25 (I), the Executive Board recommended to the General Conference that it invite the Director-General to report to the Executive Board regularly regarding the development and implementation of the various intersectoral platforms, beginning with the 179th session. In adopting document 34 C/5, the General Conference endorsed this recommendation. The present report is submitted in response to this decision.

Decision proposed: paragraph 17.

1. By paragraph 6 of 177 EX/Decision 25, the Executive Board recommended to the General Conference that it invite the Director-General to report to the Executive Board regularly regarding the development and implementation of the various intersectoral platforms, beginning with the 179th session. In adopting document 34 C/5, the General Conference endorsed this recommendation. The present report is submitted in response to this decision.

I. THE RATIONALE FOR INTERSECTORAL PLATFORMS

2. The Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4), which provides the overall framework and direction for the biennial programme and budget, is conceived as a programme-based approach underlining the commitment to ensure coherence of the Organization's action involving all its programme sectors. Action is designed around specific and complex global challenges calling for the mobilization of all core expertise and competencies of the Organization. In this context, emphasis is given to a broadened intersectoral and interdisciplinary engagement as an integral part of the programming process. This engagement is reflected in the translation of the strategic programme objectives of document 34 C/4 into a limited number of biennial sectoral priorities and main lines of action in document 34 C/5.

3. Intersectoral work holds particular promise for UNESCO in the context of the United Nations reform where the capacity to approach an issue in an integrated manner can add value when pursuing the Organization's global goals, commitments and principles, agreed at country level.

4. Building on UNESCO's past experience with intersectoral work, both at Headquarters and at field level, including through the cross-cutting theme projects, the Organization will implement 12 intersectoral platforms during the 2008-2009 biennium (see section III below) that focus on key global challenges necessitating an interdisciplinary approach. Intersectoral platforms are therefore not only a technical modality or a new vehicle for implementation. They are rather a novel way of addressing in a more coherent and coordinated manner complex issues and global-, regional- and country-level challenges. The intersectoral platforms are about implementing the regular programme and attaining the expected results approved by the General Conference, from which is expected an enhancement in the quality, coherence and relevance of our programme delivery.

II. THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERSECTORAL PLATFORMS

5. New and flexible approaches have been put in place so that sectors – and field offices – involved in platform activities can effectively work together and enhance UNESCO's ability to respond adequately to the complex contemporary problems in UNESCO's fields of competence facing the world today. The intersectoral engagement through the modality of the platforms envisages:

- the development and pursuit of a joint strategy with commonly agreed objectives, expected results and performance indicators and activities to be carried out;
- maintaining separate sectoral funding of the various activities; but undertaking joint mobilization of extrabudgetary resources;
- the development of sectoral work plans for each respective contribution to a platform, entering the information into a SISTER-related pertinent sectoral main line of action;
- the aggregation of the various work plans through SISTER for each platform so as to provide an integrated picture for a platform as a whole;
- the accountability by each sector for performance against results;
- the collective monitoring and reporting by all sectors involved;
- an arrangement whereby the DDG or one sector ADG leads a platform and coordinates contributions from all involved sectors, field offices and institutes around the shared strategy and expected results;
- a steering committee which serves as an intersectoral strategy and oversight mechanism, meeting periodically to assess progress, provide guidance, monitoring and reporting (to the College of ADGs) on progress achieved throughout the biennium and to ensure course correction as needed;
- the designation of a platform manager for the coordination and implementation of all substantive input to a platform, reporting to the lead ADG;
- the nomination of a focal point by each sector/office involved;
- the formation of an operational task team, bringing together the platform manager and all focal points in a team-based effort to define the details of the action plan, to foster its substantive, integrated implementation, including where possible through joint endeavours of the strategy and activities, and to undertake regular review and monitoring of the implementation process;

- the provision of technical backstopping and overall coordination by the Bureau of Strategic Planning, including integration of gender equality considerations into all platforms, and also identifying opportunities for cross-fertilization of approaches and experiences among the various platforms.

6. In a further refinement, steering committees are invited to consider for very select platforms the adoption of yet a higher degree of programmatic integration with pooled resources – both funds and staff – from participating sectors.

III. THE INTERSECTORAL PLATFORMS ENVISAGED IN DOCUMENT 34 C/5 APPROVED

7. Compared to draft document 34 C/5, second version, volume 2, two proposed intersectoral platforms will not be pursued, namely, enhancing linkages between cultural and biological diversity as a basis for sustainable development, and development of a cross-sectoral programme for capacity-building. The intersectoral platform on enhancing linkages between cultural and biological diversity as a basis for sustainable development was suppressed because the Director-General decided that the substantive work initiated over the past biennia on this subject would be continued in close cooperation with the two sectors (MP II and MP IV) concerned, and therefore an intersectoral platform was not needed. The Director-General decided not to maintain a separate platform on the development of a cross-sectoral programme for capacity-building since it is already a key modality of UNESCO and by necessity cuts across several other platforms. In this regard, capacity-building will be addressed and explicitly integrated in the strategies and expected results of at least six intersectoral platforms.

8. The Director-General has assigned the lead responsibilities for the 12 intersectoral platforms, as set out in the Approved Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5 Approved), to the DDG and lead ADGs, as shown in the matrix contained in the Annex. It also provides information on the major programmes/sectors involved and the platform managers who will assist the DDG/lead ADGs and the steering committees.

9. The initial strategies and objectives to be pursued by each intersectoral platform and sector for the various platforms are set out in paragraphs 8006-8017 of document 34 C/5 Approved. These parameters are now being reviewed and updated, as appropriate, by the relevant steering committees and task teams which have since recently begun their work.

IV. NEXT STEPS AND ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

10. The College of ADGs will periodically review and monitor the functioning and overall management of the platforms and provide guidance, if required.

11. In a number of cases, intersectoral task forces were already in place for a number of themes addressed in the platforms prior to the creation of the platforms (e.g. HIV/AIDS, education for sustainable development, SIDS, strategy on climate change, languages and multilingualism, post-conflict and post-disaster situations). These task forces will be rationalized in view of the introduction of steering committees for the various platforms.

12. In devising the strategies and action plans, the platforms must ensure that due attention is being paid to integrating the gender equality dimensions into the design and implementation of the strategies, action plans, activities and budgetary provisions.

13. Moreover, country offices will need to be fully involved by each platform, including in the decentralization process of resources impinging on the platforms. This may further necessitate reflection to what extent platforms can make contributions to United Nations common country programming exercises, in particular UNDAFs, “delivering as one” pilot programmes, MDG-F activities (Spanish MDG Fund) and other relevant approaches.

14. Regarding financial contributions by sectors to the various platforms, the indicative figures given in draft document 34 C/5 are the minimum floor amounts which will not be undercut. Ideally, sectors may even increase their financial contributions in the course of implementation and extrabudgetary resources can be mobilized.

15. Intersectoral platforms will also have to have a strong visibility component, projecting UNESCO's contribution to important contemporary issues globally, regionally and nationally and undertaking advocacy for a theme at large. This may ultimately facilitate the mobilization of extrabudgetary funds for the various platforms. Likewise, efforts will be made to establish partnerships in furthering the objectives of a particular platform.

16. Human resource issues involved in the designation of platform managers, focal points and the work of the platforms will need to be addressed and resolved (e.g. reporting lines, preservation of seniority, performance assessment and evaluation).

V. DRAFT DECISION

17. The Executive Board may wish to consider adopting the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Reiterating that intersectoral and interdisciplinary action is one of the comparative advantages of UNESCO, when responding to contemporary problems of today's world in UNESCO's fields of competence,
2. Recalling that the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4) with its overarching objectives and strategic programme objectives is built on a strong intersectoral vision and approach,
3. Recalling 177 EX/Decision 25 (I) by which it had recommended that the Director-General be requested to report regularly, beginning with the 179th session, on the management and implementation of the various intersectoral platforms envisaged for the implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5) and which was endorsed by the General Conference when adopting document 34 C/5,
4. Having considered document 179 EX/16,
5. Expresses its appreciation to the Director-General for the document and its contents;
6. Requests the Director-General to submit the next progress report to the Executive Board in 2009.

ANNEX

Intersectoral platform	Lead DDG/ADG	Participating Major Programmes (MP)/Sectors	Platform Manager
1. Science education	ADG/SC	MPs I, II and III	Minella Alarcon, Programme Specialist, Basic Sciences Section, (SC/BES)
2. HIV and AIDS	ADG/ED	All MPs	Chris Castle, Senior Programme Specialist, Section on HIV and AIDS (ED/UNP/HIV)
3. Education for sustainable development	ADG/ED	All MPs	Mark Richmond, Director, Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education (ED/UNP)
4. Contribution to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	ADG/SC	All MPs	Douglas Nakashima, Chief, Sciences for Society (formerly Coasts and Small Islands) (SC/PSD/SCS) and SIDS focal point for UNESCO
5. Fostering ICT-enhanced learning	ADG/CI	MPs I and V	Miriam Nisbet, Director, Information Society Division, (CI/INF)
6. Strengthening national research systems	ADG/SHS	MPs I, II, III and V	Paul de Guchteneire, Chief of Section, Division of Social Sciences Research and Policy (SHS/SRP)
7. Languages and multilingualism	ADG/CLT	All MPs	Mauro Rosi, Programme Specialist (CLT/CEI/CID)
8. Contributing to the dialogue among civilizations and cultures and a culture of peace	ADG/CLT	All MPs	Ann-Belinda Preis, Senior Programme Specialist (BSP/PMR)
9. Support to countries in post-conflict and disaster situations	DDG	All MPs	Mogens Schmidt, Deputy Assistant Director-General, CI and Director, Division for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace (CI/FED)
10. Priority Africa: coordinating and monitoring the plan of action to benefit Africa	ADG/AFR	All MPs	Cheikhna Sankaré, Executive Assistant (AFR/ADG)
11. UNESCO action to address climate change	ADG/IOC	All MPs	Peter Dogse, Programme Specialist, Ecological Sciences and Biodiversity Protection (SC/EES/ESB)
12. Foresight and anticipation	By Director-General's delegation, ADG/BSP	All MPs	Jérôme Bindé, Director, Office of Foresight (DIR/FOR)