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CONSIDERATIONS ON A PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON A CULTURE OF PEACE

SUMMARY

This document provides a brief overview of the challenges concerning a culture of peace. It reviews, for instance, the conceptual framework, basic principles and key moments that have marked the process of developing and implementing a culture of peace. In addition, this document lays the groundwork for an updated interpretation of the concept, and sets out substantive arguments for renewed global mobilization in the face of the complex challenges posed by the current global situation and the requirement for a strategic and coherent response by UNESCO, its Member States and all its partners.

This information document is submitted by Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, India, Kuwait, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

A peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and (...) must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

Constitution of UNESCO

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The beginning of the twenty-first century was full of promise in the light of the Millennium Development Goals, the dividends of peace, progress and scientific advances, and the advent of peaceful relations between States. This was complemented by the significant and growing involvement of civil society in the affirmation of the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution of UNESCO. Collective awareness that human beings must be central to all development processes is no doubt the most symbolic expression of this shared hope.

2. Notwithstanding all these promising prospects, humanity is currently undergoing an ethical and moral crisis affecting all political and economic relations between States and their citizens.

3. In the current global context, many concerns have arisen in relation to persistent forms of injustice such as extreme poverty and various types of discrimination, as well as new concerns raised by growing intolerance, xenophobia and extremism, and new forms of violence affecting mainly the most vulnerable, particularly young people and women. Pursuant to its mandate within the United Nations system, UNESCO's response has always been to work relentlessly to build the values of peace and dialogue.

4. The year 2000 provided an opportunity to work together to transform the culture of war and violence into a culture of peace and non-violence, matching the expectations of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). The year 2010 must mark the beginning of a new phase, drawing on the achievements of the Decade and providing fresh impetus to ensure that a culture of peace is an essential priority of our time. The Organization should not seek to establish a new field of activity but to build on its achievements with a view to opening up new horizons of hope and humanism in the current context and to make use of innovative tools in the educational, cultural, scientific, technological and digital fields, *inter alia*. This will provide an innovative and creative basis for the development of the programme of action required under 35 C/Resolution 108, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2009.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

5. The conceptual framework of a culture of peace referred to in this document is that adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and which stipulates that a culture of peace "*consists of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society*" (preambular paragraph 2 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/13, adopted on 15 January 1998).

The fundamental principles of a culture of peace include:

- Respect for human life and dignity
- Rejection of violence

- Respect for human rights
- Combating ignorance and poverty
- Promotion of mutual knowledge and understanding
- Promotion of sustainable endogenous development
- Preservation of nature
- Strengthening of solidarity
- Promotion of science for peace

III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

(Reference website: www.unesco.org/cpp)

6. The concept of a culture of peace, which emerged from the heart of Africa in 1989 under the auspices of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny and on the initiative of the Director-General of UNESCO, was established at the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, held in Africa (Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 1989). In its final declaration, the Congress recommended that UNESCO "*help construct a new vision of peace by developing a **peace culture** based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men*".

The term "culture of peace", adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1989, was also based on the Seville Statement on Violence (1989), in which scientists from around the world stated from an irrefutable, scientific perspective that war was not genetically programmed or determined by a violent brain, by human nature or by instinct, but was in fact a social construct. Consequently, "*the same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace*".

7. By 140 EX/Decision 28, the Executive Board of UNESCO decided to establish a special programme for a culture of peace, in an effort to contribute to the United Nations peace-keeping efforts. With a view to taking action, primarily, in its fields of competence – education, science, culture and communication – UNESCO offered to *assist in peace-building in the aftermath of conflict and to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. National programmes were thus introduced in many Central American, African and Asian countries. In addition, a culture of peace formed the basis of the peace processes in El Salvador, Guatemala and Mozambique.

8. A turning point was reached in 1995, when the General Conference of UNESCO decided to focus the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001 on a culture of peace. To meet this challenge, UNESCO developed a project in that connection, and the various sectors would make a coordinated and concerted effort to achieve its objectives.

9. Recognizing the value of UNESCO's experience in the area of a culture of peace, the United Nations General Assembly at its 52nd session placed on its agenda the item "Culture of Peace" (A/RES/52/13 of 15 January 1998) and requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in coordination with the Director-General of UNESCO, to submit to it a consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. The General Assembly also endorsed the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by proclaiming 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace, with UNESCO as its focal point. The Executive Board of UNESCO, which met in Tashkent at the invitation of the President of the

Republic of Uzbekistan, at its session held in November 1998, adopted the Tashkent Declaration on a culture of peace and defined UNESCO's activities in Member States.

10. In autumn 1998, the United Nations General Assembly approved a recommendation by ECOSOC, based on a proposal submitted by all the winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, inviting it to proclaim the decade 2001-2010 "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World". On 13 September 1999, the General Assembly at its 53rd session adopted a "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace" (A/53/243). The year 2000 was intended to mark a new era and the beginning of a long-term transformation process.

11. Between 1989 and 2000, UNESCO successfully mobilized its partners in the political, cultural, social and scientific spheres and many civil society stakeholders in support of a culture of peace, which gave rise to 68 declarations. The full scale of the process is reflected in Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, proposed by some 20 Nobel Peace Prize laureates, signed by 38 Heads of State and Government and endorsed by some 60 eminent persons. Manifesto 2000 has gathered more than 75 million signatures worldwide.

12. Since then, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted several resolutions on a culture of peace, the implementation of which has been entrusted to UNESCO. A culture of peace was thus a central theme of the 2000 Earth Charter and plays an important part in Article 1 of the 1995 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO. Moreover, at the 2005 World Summit, all the Heads of State and Government reiterated their request that UNESCO be the lead agency for a culture of peace.

13. It should be noted that a number of countries, including Bolivia, have incorporated a culture of peace into their constitutions. Others have adopted specific legislation for the implementation of activities related to a culture of peace, such as Spain, which adopted *Act No. 27/2005 of 30 November 2005 on the development of peace education and culture*. As to Guatemala, it has adopted a culture of peace public policy (2005-2014). It has also recently adopted an *Act on education for a culture of peace*, the main advocate of which was Ms Rigoberta Menchu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.

IV. TOWARDS AN UPDATED INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

14. A culture of peace is relevant in the context of an intellectual watch function – essential from a forward-looking perspective – consistent with the principles underlying peace, as enshrined in the Constitution, by reaffirming the notions of intellectual and moral solidarity, human dignity, human rights, democracy, justice, and so forth.

15. A culture of peace, as a concept inclusive of diversity, remains an appealing prospect at the personal, institutional and political level, particularly given the loss of bearings exacerbated by the current crisis. UNESCO must continue to fulfil its specifically ethical calling in a world seeking new landmarks and a foundation of common values, now that greater vigilance is necessary in view of the grave violations of peace, partly as a result of an upsurge in the various forms of violence, affecting all population groups and sparing no part of the world.

16. The culture of peace is a concept that speaks to the heart and mind. It is easily appropriated at the personal, institutional and political level, and particularly by young people.

17. The culture of peace is a holistic concept able to rise to the complex challenges facing peace and to address universal and interdependent issues. In this regard, it is essential to capitalize on the achievements and to maximize the outcomes of all ongoing initiatives promoting a culture of peace. The *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the*

World (2001-2010) provided a relevant, sound and effective basis for any future initiatives in the area of a culture of peace.

18. The culture of peace is above all a culture of conflict prevention, peace-building, conflict resolution, education for non-violence and dialogue. It consists of a dual mechanism that acts as a permanent reference point – both substantive and symbolic – and that generates a constantly evolving process, so as to more effectively address social, ethical, cultural, political, environmental and other transformations.

19. The culture of peace is a key resource for the formulation of public policies promoting democratic governance at the local and global levels.

20. A culture of peace is an inclusive concept, integrating conceptual elements of an ethical and philosophical nature, standard-setting elements (human rights, cultural diversity and dialogue, the right to education, the fight against discrimination, minority rights, etc.) and practical elements that have been clearly substantiated.

21. A culture of peace, in the current global context, is no doubt one of the most effective means of combating extreme poverty, exclusion, xenophobia, violence, ignorance, and so forth. UNESCO is in an ideal position to encourage the efforts of the international community to gain a better insight into the transformations of the modern world, in all their complexity, and to develop innovative strategies to meet the new challenges emerging across the Organization's fields of competence and to counteract the tendency towards rejection and violence.

V. GLOBAL MOBILIZATION FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

22. UNESCO must, more than ever before, assume its fundamental leadership role in building peace, in accordance with its constitutional mandate and with the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the UNESCO General Conference.

23. More than 75 million people are signatories to *Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence* and more than 5,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are currently working in the field of a culture of peace (World Report on the Culture of Peace, prepared by civil society for the United Nations). In this connection, it is important to revitalize and reactivate the many existing networks and to foster the establishment of new networks for a culture of peace.

24. It is now up to Member States and their main institutions to appropriate a culture of peace and to encourage the involvement of a variety of stakeholders with a view to nurturing, enhancing and strengthening a culture of peace. In other words, beyond the inclusion of a culture of peace in political agendas – albeit essential – the challenge is to disseminate and promote the concept and to ensure its assimilation and appropriation by all.

25. In this context, UNESCO's mobilizing capacity will help to promote large-scale action involving all partners: Member States (National Commissions, UNESCO Clubs, UNESCO Associated Schools), parliamentarians, mayors, Goodwill Ambassadors, Artists for Peace, universities, research centres, journalists, the media, NGOs, various institutions, religious authorities, ombudsmen and women/mediators, national human rights institutions, the private sector, women's associations, youth associations, and so forth.

26. Particular emphasis should be placed on the fundamental role of women as key stakeholders in the transmission of a culture of peace to future generations. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the United Nations agencies have endeavoured to integrate a gender perspective into all their activities. To this end, UNESCO must revitalize its activities related to the tandem women/culture of peace.

27. Special attention should be paid to young people, mainly through quality education (in the formal and non-formal system), including education for peace, citizenship, human rights, democracy, tolerance, and so forth. The essential role of young people in social transformation should also be considered from the perspective of innovation. The use of new information and communication technologies will be necessary for young people, in the light of the spectacular development of social networks (Facebook and Twitter) on the Internet and of the many interfaces provided by the Internet, which have illustrated the significant participation of young people in current debates.

28. Mobilization for a culture of peace and non-violence should draw on the benefits of the new information and communication technologies, particularly by bringing the real world into the virtual world. It will be important not to overlook cyberspace, a constantly evolving information and communication environment.

29. This whole multidimensional mobilization process will encourage the political and academic worlds and civil society in all its diversity, *inter alia*, to become actively involved in a concerted effort to build sustainable peace.

VI. UNESCO: TOWARDS A STRATEGIC AND COHERENT RESPONSE TO A COMPLEX ISSUE

30. UNESCO is a unique forum where Member States can come together to meet the ethical, educational, cultural, scientific, social and environmental challenges posed by globalization and new threats to peace. Seen in a new, updated light, a culture of peace is a powerful concept which, along with the significant support it inspires in young people especially, forms an ideal framework for a new international movement for peace in the world.

31. UNESCO is at the forefront of efforts to understand events in the world today and the worries they cause. The Organization works with Member States to deal with situations that are continually evolving and which require new and suitable solutions, to prevent conflict and the emergence of new forms of violence and intolerance, and to protect minorities and support vulnerable, fragile populations made ever more so by extreme poverty and natural disasters, and so on.

32. UNESCO offers a special space in which to share, coordinate and meet at the international level, where Member States can compare policy experience, seek answers to shared problems, identify best practices and work towards aligning their national and international policies in the Organization's fields of competence.

33. UNESCO must invest its full potential in a culture of peace and support global, committed action for peace at every turn, as the pressing and serious challenges faced by the international community call for immediate and strategic choices to be made.

34. To be effective, every strategy requires a new way of viewing the challenges and the solutions they call for, but the culture of peace has been legitimized by unanimous and unprecedented support around the world, and new consultations are not needed. UNESCO must take full stock of this dynamic and respond in earnest to expectations that come lined with hope.

35. The Organization must continue its fundamental mission of building peace, as required by its Constitution and made all the more essential by a current economic crisis that, being also political, social, intellectual and ethical in nature, is the result of a loss of bearings.

36. A culture of peace is peace in action.