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## INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF UNESCO

### PART I

#### REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD'S AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

##### REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Vera Lacoecilhe, Saint Lucia)

1. The Executive Board, having examined the conclusions and recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of UNESCO as presented in documents 185 EX/18 and its addendum, decided to establish an ad hoc working group (AHWG) mandated with examining the IEE report and with drafting concrete proposals concerning its recommendations. The proposals were to take into account the discussions held at the 185th session of the Board, and to be presented by the AHWG at the 186th session of the Executive Board. The Board also decided that the Group would be composed of 18 Board Members (three from each electoral group) designated after consultation of the electoral groups, and that it would convene open-ended meetings to permit the enhanced participation of all Member States of UNESCO (185 EX/Decision 18).
2. The Ad Hoc Working Group held seven meetings between 2 December 2010 and 23 March 2011: a short, first meeting to elect the Chair, and six further one-day meetings, most of them followed by drafting sessions which summed up in writing the main conclusions stemming from the debates.
3. Following my election as Chairperson of the Group in November 2010 (at a brief meeting during which the Chairperson of the Executive Board conducted the election of the Group's officers), I had the great pleasure to work closely with its designated members, the distinguished representatives of Belarus, Chile, Congo, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Madagascar, Morocco, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, United States of America and Zimbabwe. I thank them all for their support, collaboration and active contribution to the work of the Group. I particularly wish to express my deep gratitude to the Vice-Chairperson of the Group, Mr Jens Dalsgaard (Denmark).
4. One of the main features of this ad hoc working group – and undoubtedly an example to be followed in the future, where appropriate – was the enhanced participation of all Member States of UNESCO in the meetings. This format permitted observers (from Member States, members and non-members of the Board) to participate on an equal footing in all meetings of the AHWG, with the exception of the final adoption of the Group's recommendations. All Member States were

notified of meeting times, and a considerable number of them actually attended. With an average of 50 observer delegations per meeting, representatives of 87 Member States (out of which 45 Members of the Board) and two observer delegations attended and actively participated in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group. All were given the floor whenever requested at each meeting, and could thus participate and express their points of view at every stage of the proceedings.

5. In addition to the formal sessions of the AHWG, many Member States did a considerable amount of additional work. At several stages, I invited all Member States to submit individual or collective written contributions or amendments to draft texts, which were subsequently formally shared with all delegations. All Member States were also invited to participate in the subsidiary drafting sessions and to work alongside group members, in order to contribute to creating the largest possible consensus on the proposals. Furthermore, many representatives of Member States met – within the framework of their respective electoral groups or through informal channels – to debate ideas, draft contributions, etc. This collective effort is, in my view, one of the most successful examples of collaboration among Permanent Delegations in living memory.

6. The meetings of the AHWG were also attended by several key members of the Secretariat, who provided information and clarifications as required, answered various questions and, when necessary, informed the Group of the opinion of the Director-General on the issues at stake. I extend my warm thanks to the Director-General for all the facilities provided for the work of the Group and for the constructive assistance of the Secretariat at all stages.

7. Following the short, initial meeting in November 2010, the Ad Hoc Working Group held its second meeting on 10 December 2010 in order to discuss Strategic Direction One (*Increasing UNESCO's Focus*) of the IEE report. The Deputy Director-General (designated by the Director-General, according to the terms of 185 EX/Decision 18, to ensure liaison between the Secretariat and the Ad Hoc Working Group) informed the participants that measures were being taken by the Director-General – within the scope of her responsibilities and prerogatives – for the follow-up to the recommendations of the IEE report.

8. With regard to Part I of the IEE on the focusing of UNESCO's Programme, the debate confirmed the unanimous view of the delegations in favour of the envisaged introduction of a quadrennial programme cycle. All interventions concurred that this new cycle would greatly contribute to strengthen the focus of the Organization's work and enhance its relevance and impact.

9. There was also broad agreement that the selection of a limited number of strategic objectives would help attain this objective. In addition, it was felt that a quantitative approach and specific criteria should be established for the overall preparation of the C/5 document, including the assessment of capacity to deliver and impact, comparative advantage, as well as exit strategies, sunset provisions and a global, ongoing culture of evaluation. The debate also showed the need to agree on the definition of "Programmes", it being understood that Member States' level of intervention could not be restricted to that of the five major programmes corresponding to the programme sectors of the Secretariat.

10. The Group analysed in detail the consequences of moving over to a quadrennial programming cycle while keeping a biennial budget, both for the different stages of programme preparation and for its implementation. A number of recommendations related to the consultation process, priority-setting and reporting were thus formulated. An open-ended drafting session took place following the meeting in order to translate the oral summary presented by the Chair at the end of the debates into concrete draft recommendations.

11. Strategic Direction One was partially revisited at further meetings of the Group, in order to clarify some points and reach consensus on the recommendations as drafted. Some of the

suggestions and/or recommendations put forward were not widely supported and therefore were not reflected in the final recommendations.

12. At its third meeting on 20 January 2011, the Group took up the joint examination of Strategic Direction Two (*Positioning UNESCO closer to the field*) and Strategic Direction Three (*Strengthening participation in the United Nations*). There was broad consensus on the need to reinforce the presence and action of UNESCO in the field, based on the principles adopted by the Executive Board for a new field network (185 EX/Decision 29). It was highlighted that this architecture should, however, respond to the specific needs of each region and subregion, within the context of the programme concentration mentioned above. The coordination and synergy between Headquarters and field offices should be strengthened, and field offices should be provided with reinforced means – both in terms of budget and of human resources – to be able to carry out the programme at the regional/subregional level.

13. It was underscored that strengthening the participation of UNESCO in the United Nations system is indeed very much related to UNESCO's field presence, particularly in the context of the One United Nations. UNESCO's active participation in the framework of One United Nations would also position the Organization as a more significant actor within the United Nations system and enhance its impact and added value. Several AHWG participants requested more information on the activities of the Liaison offices in New York and Geneva in order to enhance the coherency of Member States' positions in matters related to the Organization's mandate. The role of the New York Liaison Office was particularly debated in the context of the relationship established between this Office and the Permanent Missions in New York. Many participants stated that the Governing Bodies should receive regular, updated information on the activities of the Office and underlined that it is up to the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO to ensure coherent positions with their counterparts in New York in matters pertaining to UNESCO's fields of competence. Following the meeting, an open-ended drafting session was held on 31 January 2011 to transcribe the main results of the debates.

14. Strategic Direction Four (*Strengthening governance*) was the most extensively discussed. The fourth meeting of the Group on Wednesday, 16 February 2011, was marked by such a rich and lively debate that it could not be concluded within the allotted time, and I decided to pursue its examination at the following meeting, where delegations which had concrete proposals to submit, were invited to present them to all Member States in writing. Six proposals (five individual and one collective) were subsequently received and dispatched to all Permanent Delegations, with a view to their examination at the subsequent meeting.

15. On Wednesday, 23 February 2011, the Group held its fifth meeting. During the morning session, the written contributions submitted by several Member States on Strategic Direction Four were discussed. During the lengthy debate which ensued, it was highlighted that the Constitution of UNESCO provided an appropriate framework for the governance of the Organization and the relationship between its three organs. Nevertheless, concrete problems came up in certain areas when translating the constitutional provisions into practice, particularly concerning the respective responsibilities and accountability. Participants expressed their views and suggested concrete measures and mechanisms – many of them are reflected in the final recommendations – aiming at making the relationship between the three organs more operational. The Group considered that a light mechanism should be put in place to allow dialogue every time that there are responsibility drifts.

16. It was recalled that the present model is rather complex because of the existence of diverse entities, such as the different governing bodies of international and intergovernmental programmes, category 1 institutes, international UNESCO Conventions, etc., which leads to a loose governance scheme. It was agreed that this subject should be given further consideration in the future in order to enhance coherence and efficiency of the Organization.

17. Concerning the General Conference, it was underlined that respect for its constitutional role should be strengthened. Adopting a quadrennial programme cycle would help in this regard. The General Conference would still be held every two years but one session would focus more on setting the priorities of the future C/5 while the other session would focus on the adoption of the Programme and Budget.

18. Concerning the Executive Board, many delegations indicated that there is a need for a better preparation of its sessions with a view to permitting in-depth study of a limited number of items, most particularly the execution of Programme and Budget issues such as world reports and follow-up of international conferences. Many options were debated and based on written proposals submitted by different Member States. The Chair presented a new proposal, taking into consideration all concerns, namely the possibility for non-members of the Board to participate in these important discussions in a format similar to the actual Ad Hoc Working Group.

19. Strategic Direction Five (*Developing a Partnership Strategy*) was examined during the afternoon session of the fifth meeting of the Group. The wide-ranging spectrum of UNESCO partners, the largest within the United Nations system, calls for a comprehensive policy and accountability framework, as stated in the IEE report. The main conclusion of the debates was to call upon the Director-General to develop such a framework through establishing key criteria for all partnerships, including the networks of Goodwill Ambassadors and UNESCO Artists for Peace, while taking into account the diversity of the different schemes set up by UNESCO over its history. The Director-General was also requested to elaborate a better management of all existing UNESCO networks. It was underlined that a better use of the different networks should provide the Organization with much needed expertise, which is sometimes otherwise sought through the employment of outside consultants.

20. A large part of the debate on Strategic Direction Five concerned National Commissions. While underlining their uniqueness, the Group noted that the majority of National Commissions are part of Member States and therefore, it was up to each Member State to determine their role in the conduct of relations with the Secretariat. In this context, it was highlighted that relations between the Secretariat and National Commissions should be conducted in accordance with the appropriate constitutional provisions. Since an evaluation of the cooperation between National Commissions and UNESCO is currently under way, the Group did not formulate recommendations on this particular issue.

21. Since the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, many participants had indicated their interest in holding a working session with Professor E. Stern, leader of the independent external evaluation team. Therefore, the Group held a sixth (initially unscheduled) meeting on Thursday, 3 March 2011, which offered the opportunity for direct interaction with Professor Stern via a question and answer session. Previously, all delegations had been invited to address written questions, which were transmitted beforehand to Professor Stern. The participants had a free exchange with Professor Stern, who clarified several aspects of the report. The issues discussed included: micro-management; change management and “pilot schemes”; accountability frameworks; clearer Results Based Management (RBM); “intergovernmentalism” versus civil society; the use of indicators for the measurement of change; duplication and responsibility drifts in governance; priority-setting and programme focusing; reinforcement of multilateral cooperation.

22. Since several issues concerning Strategic Directions Four and One had not been concluded, the morning session of the 3 March meeting was devoted to discussing and refining some of the proposals. The Chair’s paper on the establishment of an ad hoc subcommittee and its terms of reference was also debated and adopted by consensus. The Director-General attended this morning meeting, praising the work already accomplished and offering her support and willingness to follow-up the decisions taken by the Executive Board upon the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

23. The Ad Hoc Working Group held its seventh and last meeting on Monday, 21 March 2011. This final meeting was devoted to the adoption of the recommendations to be submitted to the Executive Board. The Group worked on the basis of a consolidated text proposed by its Chairperson. The final text of the recommendations was the result of the work of various drafting groups that had met throughout the process, and of extensive consultations with all interested Permanent Delegations. Before the final adoption of the text, the floor was open to comments from all delegations. Afterwards the Group proceeded with the final adoption of the recommendations, paragraph by paragraph. The full text can be found in paragraph 16 of document 186 EX/17, Part I, which is to be examined by the Executive Board.

24. In summary, whatever conclusions the Board may reach regarding this issue, it seems of the utmost importance to determine a clear follow-up mechanism with clear deadlines for the implementation of the recommendations. The Member States have put a lot of work into these recommendations. It is now the responsibility of the Executive Board to ensure that they are adopted and implemented in order to move the Organization forward.