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Eighth session

Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme

19-20 May 2014

UNESCO House, Paris (Fontenoy Building, Room XI)

9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m.- 5.30 p.m.

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

**Reports on the activities of IFAP and status of implementation of
the recommendations of the 7th session of the IFAP Council**

Progress Made in Implementing the Recommendations of the Seventh IFAP Council

Recommendation 1 - *Continue the efforts and initiatives undertaken in view of implementing the objectives contained in the IFAP Strategic Plan (2008 – 2013) in close collaboration with all members of the Council, the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat.*

Response – The report on the review of the implementation of the IFAP Strategic Plan (2008-2013) presented to the Executive Board at its 191st session revealed that 71% out of 52 Member States respondents positively evaluated IFAP and its results. In addition, it offered proposals to consolidate and strengthen the gains made by the Programme. The Executive Board (191 EX/Decision 41) called on Member States to “strengthen their participation and contribution to IFAP”. The report was also submitted to the 37th session of UNESCO’s General Conference. The General Conference in its resolution called on all Member States to take into consideration the findings of the IFAP Review in the process of elaboration and implementation of their respective national policies, programmes and strategies for building equitable and inclusive knowledge societies. Furthermore the General Conference urged Member States to strengthen their participation in, and contribution to IFAP.

Recommendation - *Include in future reporting, activities organized in the framework of IFAP by Member States and the Secretariat and provide detailed elements on additional funding secured, including from the regular budget*

Response – Throughout the biennium, news items on activities organized by the Secretariat in concert with Member States have appeared on the UNESCO website. Similarly when information on IFAP activities organized by Member States has been received these have UNESCO has published news.

Activity and financial information has also been provided in the statutory reports to the Governing Bodies (37C/ REP/16 Reports on the implementation of the Information for All Programme (IFAP) (2012-2013). The report notes that voluntary contributions totaling US\$40,000 were made to the IFAP Special Account in 2012 and 2013 by China and that a contribution of \$54,528.20 from Switzerland to support the WSIS+10 Review held at UNESCO was received. \$220,000 from the Emergency and Multi Donor Fund was used to reinforce IFAP activities in Africa and the Caribbean. Some US\$300,000 in direct funding had been made available for IFAP activities organized during 2012 and 2013 in the Russian Federation and Grenada also provided some US\$4,000 to support a digital preservation project. Several Member States – China, Jamaica, Latvia, Oman, St. Lucia, Zambia, amongst others - have also provided in-kind and/or direct funding support for IFAP activities. However, the enumeration and reporting of such contributions is solely at the discretion of each Member State. UNESCO can only certify amounts passed through its administrative channels.

Recommendation - *Ensure that IFAP’s objectives and priorities are duly reflected and made appropriately visible in the next C5 and C4 documents of the Organization.*

Response – Member States have identified clear roles and actions to be undertaken by IFAP both in implementing actions in the priority areas but also foreseen its active engagement both regionally and internationally in building multi-stakeholder partnerships and contributing to the international policy debate in such forums as WSIS and the post-2015 development plans. Member States at the 37th General Conference have also committed to strengthening the implementation and outreach in IFAP priority areas, particularly in Africa and in SIDS, in recognition of IFAP’s important contribution to UNESCO’s mission of building Knowledge Societies.

Recommendation - *Request the Director-General in collaboration with Member States to actively seek extra-budgetary resources to fund IFAP activities and ensure its visibility.*

Response – Member State contributions to IFAP have been received through the Emergency Fund. Other indirect support has also been received from Intergovernmental and civil society partners such as the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the Internet Society who have co-organized and and/or sponsored international expert policy debates in Africa and Asia.

Recommendation - *Invites the Director-General to allocate the necessary resources for the implementation of follow-up activities to IFAP conferences and events especially in LDCs.*

Response – IFAP has provided support for the follow-up of the First Regional Caribbean Conference for Dutch and English speaking Caribbean countries held under the theme “Building Caribbean Knowledge Societies” which was held in St. Georges, Grenada in June 2011. At least 5 follow-up regional events, policy studies and national implementation roadmaps covering more than 17 countries in the region aimed at realizing the political declaration and action plan adopted at the meeting have been undertaken. Attention has also been given to supporting the implementation of the declaration adopted at UNESCO’s international Conference, the “Memory of the World in the Digital Age: Digitization and Preservation” held in Vancouver, in September 2012. Interventions in the Caribbean and Africa aimed at building capacity of archivist and other information professionals, developing training programmes as well as providing digitization equipment has been carried out.

Recommendation - *Continue the work by the Bureau on the draft text on proposed modifications in the Statutes of IFAP in order, inter alia to ensure a better geographical representation and allow Member States to participate as observers to the Bureau.*

Response – The Bureau decided to postpone action on this recommendation until after the review of the Implementation of the IFAP Strategic Plan (2008 -2013) was completed.

Recommendation - *Requests the Bureau to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations of the intergovernmental Council.*

Response – The discussions of the Bureau and the actions which it undertakes are oriented by the IFAP Strategic Plan (2008-2013) and the recommendations of the Council.

Recommendation - *Invites the Director-General to take the appropriate measures to ensure that the Council and Bureau receive all the assistance necessary to accomplish its work.*

Response – Within the constraints of the available human and financial resources the Director-General continues to provide support to the Programme and to encourage Member States to participate more actively. In this regard, Member States were invited to nominate their national experts to the Working Groups established in the IFAP priority areas in order to reinforce their capacity and increase the number of Member States directly involved in IFAP’s work. The Bureau reviewed the nominations received from the 18 responding countries and assigned them to the relevant Working Groups.



Evgeny Kuzmin
Outgoing Chairman of the Intergovernmental Council
of the UNESCO Information for All Programme – IFAP

Speech at the 8th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the
Information for All Programme

(UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 19 May 2014)

Madam Director General of UNESCO,
Madam Chairman of IFAP,
Members of the Intergovernmental Council, representatives of the Secretariat,
Observers,

To begin my statement, as outgoing Chairman of IFAP, I want to offer my wholehearted congratulations to our new Chairperson, Ms Chafica Haddad, on her election to this important post.

Dear Chafica, you have always been devoted to the noble aims of IFAP and have always advocated them consistently and successfully. You are an experienced diplomat and a very charming woman. I therefore believe that under your leadership the Information for All Programme will continue to develop just as successfully and will receive new impulses. It is with joy that I hand you the baton.

Esteemed colleagues, it is a great honour and pleasure for me to speak to you today. As Chairman of IFAP for four years, I have felt a great degree of responsibility and have endeavoured in every way possible to justify the confidence shown in me. These have been four years of great and interesting work, which have constantly demanded a great deal of time, effort and nerve. But taken as a whole it has been a great pleasure and a fascinating process of knowledge acquisition. Thanks to this I have become acquainted with many fine professionals from developed and developing countries, wonderful people who have broadened my horizon, taught me a great deal, and become my friends. They have given me a great deal, both as a human being and as a specialist. Thanks to these people I have begun to understand in more depth the problems which IFAP is called upon to resolve. Thanks to these people I have come to understand better the realities of our rapidly changing world, its diversity and contradictions, its needs and its hopes.

I am very happy that despite all the difficulties, we have managed a great deal together.

Numerous and diverse IFAP measures and projects are being implemented in all the priority areas: information accessibility, preservation of information, media and information literacy, information ethics, information for development and multilingualism in cyberspace.

The IFAP projects are being implemented in almost all regions of the world. I am happy that we have succeeded in involving experts from more than 150 countries in these projects. These are world-famous politicians, cultural anthropologists, philosophers, sociologists, historians, researchers into the problems of globalization and developing an information society, librarians, archivists, museum staff, writers, publishers, university professors, schoolteachers, service and content providers,



government officials and representatives of the mass media, national UNESCO committees, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

At the major international IFAP events which took place in Russia alone, there were representatives from 120 countries.

The events and projects of the Information for All Programme take various forms: conferences, round tables, meetings of experts, seminars, training sessions, consultations; the preparation, publication and translation of books and analytical reports; the development of global plans and conceptual documents; conducting scientific research and monitoring; organizing collaboration; creating centres of competence; the reading of public lectures and speeches on mass media; creating specialized virtual libraries, websites, portals and databases.

The required recommendatory policy framework for the creation of an information society has been published and translated into various languages as have collections of analytical material and recommendations for all the IFAP priority areas.

An important part of our work has been to promote the ideas, approaches and developments of IFAP in other international organizations, which are strategic partners of UNESCO. We did this via the UNESCO Open Fora as part of the annual World Library and Information Congress (IFLA) and at International Telecommunication Union conferences where the WSIS+10 documents are prepared. We held a UNESCO Information for All Programme day as part of the annual International Library and Information Congresses in the Ukraine, and assisted in organizing the third International Symposium on Multilingualism in Cyberspace, which was held in Paris in 2012.

In order to increase IFAP's visibility within UNESCO, we carried out a large-scale special IFAP event as part of the WSIS+10 forum. Members of the IFAP Bureau gave speeches at fora organized by the Communication and Information Sector and other structures within UNESCO: in particular at the International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and at the 8th Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST).

We worked closely with the Secretariat and this cooperation was fruitful.

Money began to be available for the realization of IFAP projects including fairly substantial sums of money from the regular UNESCO budget.

This all indicates a considerable increase in interest towards IFAP. To quote one simple example: in 2010, on the eve of my first election as IFAP Chairman, nobody knew what would happen at the elections. Nobody was seriously discussing it in advance and for me my election was completely unexpected. This time, however, election preparations began a long time before today, owing to the active involvement of countries which had previously not been interested in IFAP.

I am very happy that it has been possible to publish a fine and detailed report on the realization of IFAP projects between 2008 and 2013.

The main components of success in any area are enthusiasm, energy, solidarity, mutual aid and a feeling of responsibility. Where these factors are on hand, money always appears from somewhere for realizing specific projects in specific areas. They say that there was no money for IFAP. But there was! Not only did the Secretariat find funds, but project participants and organizers also did so.



The work of each separate area of IFAP was organized so as to involve specialists from different IFAP areas; in other words a complex interdisciplinary approach was applied. This enabled us to see everyone involved in the IFAP priority areas and indeed the whole of IFAP in a new light.

Owing to this approach, major IFAP projects which have been realized for the first time in the history of UNESCO have been breakthrough achievements.

Thanks to this approach, a unique professional community has formed around IFAP. It comprises world-renowned specialists from a variety of professions and countries who have become acquainted during IFAP events and continued to work together enthusiastically ever since, and are prepared to work to promote IFAP. They feel that participating in IFAP projects enriches them as professionals. They understand the importance of IFAP for fulfilling their own professional tasks. They are fully aware that international interdisciplinary cooperation within IFAP is one of the instruments for solving problems at a national level in each of the six IFAP areas of competence.

It is precisely this complex interdisciplinary and integrated approach to problem-solving in each individual IFAP priority area which has enabled us to see the entirety of today's world in a new way.

And this new understanding leads to the conviction that we now need to solve not only those problems which were formulated 15 years ago by our remarkable predecessors, that is to say the IFAP founder members, but also new problems arising in a new and changing context.

Let us look at how the information environment has changed over the years since IFAP has been in existence. Twenty years ago the leaders of ICT corporations loved to repeat that the information technology they had released into mass production would change the world. It went without saying that it would change things only for the better. ICT has indeed facilitated communication, led to increased productivity in the workplace, broadened the horizons of science and increased the accessibility of mass information. That is commonly known and talked about a great deal. But 20 years ago, few would have assumed that the changes would turn out to be so fundamental. Today the time has come to speak not only of the great advantages of ICT, of the new possibilities it creates and of how to make them accessible to all, especially in developing countries. We will no doubt continue to talk about that. The time has come, however, to speak seriously and in depth of the problems which ICT engenders.

The information environment we inhabit today is completely different from twenty years ago. There have been fundamental quantitative and qualitative changes. The Internet has radically changed literally over the last five years: it has gone broadband and mobile and become accessible to almost everyone. But the information divide is nevertheless growing because social stratification is on the increase. The volume of information created and circulated is growing exponentially and the speed and diversity of information streams is heading for infinity. Each year the amount of information in text form alone exceeds that in all the books published throughout the whole history of humankind. Nevertheless, it is estimated that the proportion of texts in terms of the general volume of information constitutes less than one hundredth of one per cent. The rest is audiovisual content, games, infographics and other forms.

Thirty years ago, people used to become acquainted with the world primarily through books, through reading, that is to say by assimilating textual information. Reading developed thinking, language, imagination and the ability to express one's thoughts competently and form a notion of the complexity of the world. Now people become acquainted with the world primarily through pictures and this has a serious effect on their intellectual and creative abilities. University professors and schoolteachers



throughout the world are saying that more and more students today are unable to express any kind of complicated thought even in their native language, neither orally nor in writing. The development of digital television and the Internet has led to an increase in the use of audiovisual information along with a decrease in the use of textual information. There is less interest in reading, that is in the slow and scholarly mastery of serious texts; they are processed in an increasingly superficial and uncritical manner. The reading of books has been ousted to the periphery of our way of life but only reading enables people to develop an imagination and the ability to think critically. The search for one's own true decisions, the search for ways to express one's own thoughts has always been a difficult task for everybody: people have always had to overcome inertia in their thinking and engage in constant intellectual training. Now that the Internet is available constantly, the temptation is very great to make quick use of unverified information and other people's expressions, ideas and approaches; as a consequence the decisions people take often turn out to be inappropriate.

ICT has laid remarkable foundations for unlimited expression of opinions and development of communication. Each individual can express himself as he wishes without inhibitions. It is difficult for our children to imagine that our only means of communicating when we were young was by letter and that we waited several days or even a week for a reply. Huge volumes of information are available to everyone who has even the most basic gadget and Internet access – and that will soon mean almost everyone. This is a huge achievement. The creation of universally accessible information resources has been democratized and has ceased to be the prerogative of a limited circle of authors and organizations. Now anyone can be a part of this process. But let us take a look at the other side of these phenomena.

Who used to create and disseminate content in the age of paper? It was primarily the most educated people, who had a good mastery of literary language and were conscious of their responsibilities towards society. Their texts became universal property via publishers, traditional mass media, universities and scientific institutes, which also bore the responsibility. The names of those people and organizations were known. Now, in the digital age, it is the preserve not only of people like them but also of a huge number of other people who have no sense of responsibility and who have unknown levels of qualification and unknown intentions. They also create content which is universally accessible and which they disseminate freely and anonymously, at times even forcibly. There is no attitude of responsibility either at the stage of creating the information or at the stage of rendering it accessible. Never before have we experienced this. This is happening for the first time in the history of humanity.

These new authors undoubtedly often perform very useful work in providing us with important information which traditional mass media do not communicate. They are, moreover, very often able to do this only thanks to their anonymity. But we cannot ignore the fact that alongside the useful information in the information environment, first and foremost the Internet, there is also a rapid growth of useless, meaningless, disorienting and often outright false, harmful and dangerous material. On an equal footing with the up-to-date, true and quality information on the Internet, there is also much long out-of-date, poor-quality and false information. Only highly educated people are able to distinguish the one from the other and identify the communicator's intentions. At times it is difficult for them too. Cyberspace is rapidly becoming contaminated but we are not aware of the consequences of this, not even to the extent to which we are aware of the harm inflicted on organisms by air, soil and water contamination.

Not very long ago the problem was how to obtain information but nowadays it is how to deal with the excess of information. There has not yet been research into the effect of excess information on the



psyche and thought processes as distinct, let us say, from research into the harm caused by overeating.

It is a great pleasure to stroll around virtual museums without leaving your house, to watch fine films, order electronic books and converse easily with friends. For many, virtual reality replaces real existence. It is not the artefact which is important but its image, not the original but its copy. The virtualization of our culture and of our life is growing at a headlong rate. Research tells us that people often behave completely differently on the Internet from how they behave in real life with its cultural limitations.

These fundamental quantitative and qualitative changes to the information environment affect not only individuals but also entire communities, social institutions and entire countries. This too has been little researched to date.

Today many people are justifiably talking about an imminent state of digital amnesia. There is a widespread illusion that all information is available on the Internet and that no special measures are needed to ensure its long term preservation. The existence of such important social institutions as libraries and such important professions as that of librarian have been called into question. The job of librarian has lost its prestige, and this is very dangerous. Without well educated and highly qualified librarians it will not be possible to select, order and preserve valuable information for future generations in a thorough and regulated fashion. Huge volumes of digital content have already been irretrievably lost and we are at times unaware of how valuable that lost material is.

Preserving electronic information is not only a technological problem. It is first and foremost a problem concerning our world view, relating to politics, organizations, skill levels and ethics. Humankind has been learning how to preserve analog information in libraries and archives for thousands of years and has created a mighty infrastructure for this purpose: institutions of memory, policy, laws, standards and a system of staff training, and it all functioned superbly. But as for preserving electronic data, we are only just taking the first steps. There is a need for scientific research in this area to ensure that these steps are in the right direction; there is a need for political action on both the national and international levels. And until we have developed this to a sufficient degree, we will continue to lose important information to which there will be no access tomorrow.

Prominent experts also place the privatization, concentration and monopolization of information resources among the main obstacles to access to quality information. The share of information in the public domain is growing narrower. Cyberspace is increasingly being used to manipulate and control mass consciousness including on a global scale. This becomes easier the more the primary motive for acquiring and using data is a hunger for entertainment rather than a striving for knowledge, education, enhanced qualifications or a deeper understanding of the world.

The Internet and other forms of ICT exert a considerable influence on the processes of educating and socializing children and young people. Paradoxically the appearance of unprecedented communication possibilities exacerbates the cultural divide between generations and destroys the traditional mechanisms of transmitting models of conduct, moral and cultural values and ethical principles from older to younger members of the population.

Access to information can only be considered universal when everyone has the opportunity to receive it in an easily understandable language. But to this day, only seven per cent of languages are represented on the Internet.



ICT makes not only the social domain ever more transparent and subject to control (which is on the whole a good thing) but also private life (which is undoubtedly a bad thing). The longer we spend at the computer, on the Internet, and the more we consume and disseminate information, the more we find ourselves under the control of the special services of our own and other countries and of governments, transnational companies and banks. Under the control of people unknown to us. And even under the control of machines which nowadays make important decisions themselves, without human participation. Many social network users willingly decline privacy options, often without understanding the consequences of this level of openness.

The traditional notions of ethics and morals formed over centuries are changing; there is a huge and growing amount of ICT abuse and crime.

We are confronted with humankind's inability in an age of virtual communication to guarantee both security and privacy at the same time.

Total transparency of our private lives is a challenge that is fundamentally anthropogenic. We are as yet unable to find a reasonable balance between freedom and responsibility and between rights and obligations in the realm of information and communication.

Cyberspace exists across political, administrative and other borders. This is a great achievement for humankind. But there are many countries afraid of massive influences from other cultures and consequently perceiving cyberspace to be a source of risks to their sovereignty and identity. In order to minimize these risks, they are attempting to regulate their section of cyberspace separately and develop their own norms for information ethics.

If we wish to maintain a united and open cyberspace, we must recognize the urgent need for a new system of universal information ethics. The ethical problems of the information society should become a serious scientific area of research and there must be collaboration in every way possible at an international level to develop universal ethical principles.

This, however, would require influential world players to overcome their economic, political and cultural selfishness and short-sightedness.

This is our new world. We live in it and will continue to live in it. And we need to learn how to live in it in such a way as to lose neither our worth nor our humanity. We need to study this world in depth. Moreover we need to learn how to study this world.

Dear Colleagues,

Everything I have spoken of constitutes the context in which the Information for All Programme will be realized. But I ask you to note that I have up until now been speaking about changes engendered by information technology alone. Meanwhile, scientists are discussing the convergence of nano-, bio- and cognitive technologies the development of which is in turn closely linked to ICT and which have an equally powerful potential to influence sociocultural processes. Specialists are predicting even more fundamental changes by the middle of the twenty-first century. Artificial intelligence will attain the level of natural intellect and in a number of cases will surpass it. Machine-human hybrids, cyborgs and humanoid robot-androids created on a biological basis, will become more and more widespread. Also becoming ever more widespread are the ideas that technological intervention in the human organism, fundamental changes to the nature of man, are desirable and beneficial in that they enable a biological evolution which is truly controlled. Some call this world view transhumanism



and some technological fascism. Either way, our future lies more and more in the hands of new engineers, genetic scientists and programmers.

The analysis of world developments prompts us to re-examine the tasks of IFAP – the place and role which it can and must have in the work of UNESCO.

The Information for All Programme was created within UNESCO 13 years ago as a reaction to the processes and consequences of the development of the information society; indeed, both the processes and the consequences. It is time to recall the aims of IFAP, which has succeeded in proving that it is needed and in demand today. Of the UNESCO Member States who participated in the last overview of IFAP activities, 67 per cent advocated strengthening the Programme.

But what can IFAP do to solve all these problems?

IFAP cannot solve them of course, but it can help to expose and formulate them. It can help to mobilize specialists from various domains and countries. It can help analyse the problems and determine which directions to move in and what precisely needs to be done in each of the IFAP priority areas.

IFAP is useful precisely because it outlines the framework of the most common problems of the information society and helps all interested parties to overcome existing and constantly arising dangerous distortions, if not in practice then at least at the level of awareness.

The Intergovernmental Council and the Bureau in particular should work together with the Secretariat. The composition of the Intergovernmental Council varies: some are members of the Council and Bureau today, others tomorrow. It has a mobile structure, but the Secretariat has a stable structure. The Secretariat is the main custodian of the knowledge and experience gained within IFAP.

It is very important for the members of the Intergovernmental Council to involve countries which are not members of the Council in the realization of IFAP. We must develop a spirit of solidarity and of common responsibility.

IFAP is our common business. In conclusion, I would like to wish us all fruitful work.

Many thanks.