



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# The Executive Board of UNESCO

200th  
SESSION

Special Edition



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# Preface by the Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO



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► *Michael Worbs, Chairperson of the Executive Board*

The 200th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO is an opportunity to reflect on the past achievements of the Board, while also looking towards the future for the Organization that we would like.

The culmination of our current work as a team will be reflected in the decisions we take now, and throughout the biennium, as we progress towards the 39th session of the General Conference. From our 199th session, through the current 200th session to our final 202nd session during my term of office, to be held in the autumn of 2017, our work is cut out for us!

We shall need to examine with care the draft Programme and Budget for 2018-2021, which will be the second quadrennium of our eight-year Medium-Term Strategy, ensuring that it reflects the needs of all Member States as we move toward the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those goals and targets within our competence. We will also be required to proceed with the selection of our future Director-General, ensuring that the Organization successfully recruits the best candidate for this vital function.

Our mandate, as a governing body of this Organization – to ensure the effective and rational execution of the UNESCO Programme – is anchored in the Constitution of UNESCO. This booklet brings that responsibility to life: reflecting on past actions; highlighting important moments; and referencing notable quotes from past eminent Members, while describing the major changes that have taken place throughout the last 70 years.

I am pleased to share this special landmark edition with you, as a memento of the 200th session of the Executive Board.

I trust you will read it with as much enthusiasm as I did, and that you will enjoy the memories it provides.

Over the past 200 sessions the composition of our membership has changed and grown considerably from 18 to 58. The work of the Executive Board in our early days was much different from the work of our Board today. One thing, nonetheless, is immutable: the dedication and determination of each and every one of us has remained steadfast, to ensure that the work of UNESCO responds to the needs of its Member States.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael Worbs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and the last name "Worbs" clearly distinguishable.

Michael Worbs

# Foreword by the Director-General of UNESCO



© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard

► UNESCO Director-General  
Irina Bokova

The Executive Board holds a key place in UNESCO's history and work, as a central forum for discussion and decision-making on the execution of the programme.

It was before the UNESCO Executive Board that the Egyptologist Christiane Desroches Noblecourt launched her appeal to save the Temples of Nubia. It is in the Board that intellectuals and politicians of the stature of Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Pablo Neruda, Indira Gandhi, Archibald McLeish, and so many others, have shared their hopes and their determination to build a world that is more just, more peaceful and more respectful of human dignity, based on lasting peace.

This brochure is a journey through time, and a reminder of the principles that underpin our belonging to the same Organization. These vignettes will take the reader through the evolution of UNESCO's work and the way

in which the Board adapts to the needs of the world, in terms of intellectual reflection and the shaping of public policy. UNESCO's Executive Board draws constantly on the voices and tempo of the world, which it in turn inspires so as to strengthen the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind, in respect and mutual understanding.

On the occasion of the celebration of the 200th session of the Executive Board, we are still in need of such energy and determination. As the world embarks on the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, UNESCO's mission is more relevant and the impetus of the Executive Board more necessary than ever.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Irina" and the last name "Bokova" clearly distinguishable.

Irina Bokova



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# Introduction

On 16 November 1945, the Constitution of UNESCO was signed by 37 States. It came into force a year later, on 4 November 1946, after being officially ratified by the first 20 signatories. The creation of UNESCO marked a turning point in thinking about peace as more than an aspect of negotiations and international agreements, but as a creation of mind and heart, a continuous choice in the everyday lives of millions of people. The Organization's Constitution highlighted the fact that 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". A different kind of peace was called for, and the international community entrusted UNESCO with building lasting peace "upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" in the wake of two devastating world wars.<sup>1</sup>

The seven decades that have passed since the founding of the Organization have brought deep changes around the world. However, UNESCO's mission, its core duty of constructing the defences of peace in the minds of men and women through education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information, becomes more compelling with each passing year.

It is indisputable that global crises raise challenges that cannot be resolved by any single country. Societies are interconnected and cannot act in isolation. UNESCO must support the building of a community of humanity, of a common space that excludes no one regardless of continent, origin, age or gender. Its purpose is to lead the way in uniting very diverse peoples and countries around common goals and aspirations.

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1 UNESCO Constitution, [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=15244&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)





## ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The founders envisioned UNESCO's governing bodies – the Executive Board and the General Conference – as key instruments in realizing this process.

The 200th session of the Executive Board represents a prime moment for reflection on the way in which this important body has shaped the policies, visions and role of the Organization, 70 years after its first official meeting.

Today the Board is comprised of 58 Members, elected by the General Conference to act collectively on its behalf, as well as in the name of the States they represent. Its main functions are multiple and directly connected to the day-to-day work of UNESCO. The functions and responsibilities of the Executive Board are derived primarily from the Constitution and from the rules or directives laid down by the General Conference. Other functions stem from agreements concluded between UNESCO and the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations.<sup>2</sup>

Among the functions and responsibilities defined by the Constitution as well as the rules and directives laid down by the General Conference, the Board should: recommend admission of States not members of the United Nations Organization; recommend a candidate for the post of Director-General, with a view to his/her appointment by the General Conference; prepare the agenda of the General Conference; and examine the programme of work for the Organization and corresponding budget estimates submitted by the Director-General, preparing a recommendation thereon to the General Conference. It also oversees the execution of the programme by the Secretariat as well as the implementation of the resolutions adopted at previous General Conference sessions through the examination of reports from the Director-General, and exercises a number of delegated financial responsibilities. It meets twice a year with an additional brief session after each ordinary session of General Conference, for elections. Additionally, the Members of the Board, together with Member States non-Member of the Executive Board as observers with enhanced participation status, and the Secretariat, meet on an experimental basis during intersessional meetings in the current biennium. The Board is not only a policy and oversight body, but also a political one comprised of representatives of governments from around the world. Its sessions thus act as the regular channel of dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat through its Director-General.

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<sup>2</sup> The Executive Board of UNESCO, 14, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002442/244246e.pdf>



# Unesco News

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Conference Press Release No. 522

PARIS, 4th July, 1951

## SIX MEMBERS ELECTED TO UNESCO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Sixth General Conference of Unesco, now in session at Unesco House, Paris, today elected for a term of three years six members to the Organization's Executive Board. Those elected were: Dr. F. Bender, Director of Cultural Relations at the Ministry of Public Education of the Netherlands; Mr. S.M. Sharif, Head of the Education Department of the Government of Pakistan; Mr. Vladislav Ribnikar, Deputy in charge of Science and Culture to the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia; Shri A.L. Mudaliar, Vice Chancellor of the University of Madras, India; Dr. Constantin Zurayk, Rector of the University of Damascus, Syria.

In addition, Count Stefano Jacini, head of the Italian Delegation to the General Conference, who is now Chairman of the Executive Board, was re-elected as a Member of that body.

The outgoing members of the Board, whose terms of office have expired, are Shafik Ghorbal Bey of Egypt, Mr. Victor Dore of Canada, Professor Alex Photiades of Greece, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan of India, and Professor Louis Verniers. The members of the Board sit as private individuals, and not as representatives of countries.

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19, AVENUE KLEBER - PARIS XVI\* - TEL. : KLEber 52-00, BALzac 24-02

Members are now elected for four years, eligible for re-election (renewed by half at each General Conference) and their representatives generally work at ministerial or ambassadorial level, or are eminent persons.

The General Conference decided in 1991 that each State Member of the Executive Board should appoint one representative who, bearing in mind the importance of continuity, would be appointed for the duration of the term of the elected Member State, unless exceptional circumstances warranted his/her replacement. Each State Member of the Executive Board may also appoint alternates, who shall act in the absence of its representative in all his/her functions.



► Election of the Executive Board during the 32nd session of the General Conference in 2003

Also, at the opening of the session of the Board, following each ordinary session of the General Conference, the Board elects a Chairperson from among the representatives of the Members, and six Vice-Chairpersons. In the absence of the Chairperson during a session, his/her functions are exercised in turn by the Vice-Chairpersons. The current Chairperson is Michael Worbs (Germany), elected on 20 November 2015.

## THE SCOPE OF WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The work of the Board, split between the plenary and commissions/committees (“subsidiary organs”), is complex. It includes general policy debates, presentation of reports and adoption of decisions. At the moment there are five permanent subsidiary bodies: the Programme and External Relations Commission (PX), the Finance and Administrative Commission (FA), the Special Committee (SP), the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR) and the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP). They were created at the Board’s initiative at different moments in time to focus on a number of questions, which could then be discussed in plenary or presented for debate to the General Conference. According to Rule 17 of its Rules of Procedure, the Board may establish temporary committees.<sup>3</sup> All Members of the Board are automatically members of both commissions.<sup>4</sup> The Board divides items between its commissions in accordance with the responsibilities implicit in the commissions’ respective titles.

The two main commissions, the Programme and External Relations Commission (PX) and the Financial and Administrative Commission (FA), usually take up four days of the Board’s work during any particular session. The plenary sessions are held two days before and two days after the work of the Commissions. In order to assist him/her in the exercise of his/her functions the Chairperson of the Executive Board may convoke, in connection with the sessions of the Board and, in case of necessity, between sessions, the Vice-Chairpersons and the Chairpersons of the Commissions and Committees, which constitute together with him/her, the Bureau of the Board.<sup>5</sup> The Director-General or his/her representatives participate in all meetings of the Board, its organs and its Bureau, according to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.<sup>6</sup>

3 The Executive Board of UNESCO, 2016, pp. 19-21  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002442/244246e.pdf>

4 70 EX/Decision 3

5 Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, Rule 14

6 The Executive Board of UNESCO, 2016, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002442/244246e.pdf>



Although most of the Executive Board's functions and roles have been defined by the Constitution, UNESCO is a constantly developing Organization, and it has adapted to the multiple new challenges it has faced. While the Executive Board has undergone numerous changes in structure and composition, it remains a crucial part of UNESCO's overall governance structure. Tracing these changes and understanding their meaning is a central part of the Organization's history and the Board's legacy.



► Meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board, 42nd session, Paris, November 1955

Press Release 204  
PARIS, 11 February 1950

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD TO EXAMINE UNESCO'S BASIC PROBLEMS

The ways and means of adjusting Unesco's basic programme and future work to the practical needs of the changing world situation will be examined at the forthcoming meeting of the Organization's Executive Board. The session, which is expected to be one of the most important since the foundation of Unesco, will open at Unesco House on Monday, 13 February, under the chairmanship of Sir John Maud, and will probably last for over a fortnight.

The discussion of the practical possibilities of Unesco in relation to new concrete problems will follow the presentation by the Director-General, Dr. Jaime Torres Bodet, of his report on the activities of the Organization for the past three months, and will be based on new proposals for next year's work plans together with his estimates of the budget necessary for their execution.

Prominent on the agenda are the final preparations for the next session of Unesco's General Conference, scheduled to open at Florence on 22 May, and the preparation of a statement on Unesco's guiding methods of work.

Several other important points of the current programme of Unesco will be discussed by the Board. One of them is a call to Member States to direct their educational programmes towards international peace and security, especially in primary and secondary schools. In addition, Unesco is to take action on the United Nations resolutions on education in non-self-governing territories. These resolutions call for equal treatment in education, the eradication of illiteracy and the choice of languages to be used in Fundamental Education. Already, Unesco is preparing reports on these questions for submission to the United Nations Trusteeship Commission at its August Session.

The attention of the Board will also be drawn to the necessity of finding additional funds if the educational aid programme for refugee children in the Middle East is to continue after 31 March next. The creation of a pilot project for Fundamental Education in the Middle East in collaboration with FAO and WHO will be discussed by the Board.

The continuation of Unesco's programme in Germany and Japan will be debated in the light of recent findings.

Finally, among the administrative questions coming up for discussion is the financial situation of the Organization, including the arrears in payment of contributions by certain Member States.



# The beginnings of the Executive Board

***“We are as great as our belief in human liberty – no greater. And our belief in human liberty is only ours when it is larger than ourselves”. (Archibald MacLeish)***

Walking into the Executive Board meeting room at UNESCO Headquarters today, 199 sessions later, it can be hard to imagine the atmosphere and surroundings of the Board’s very first meeting on 26 November 1946. Initially hosted at 49, Grosvenor Square (January to May 1946) and then at 46/47, Belgrave Square in London, UNESCO moved to Paris on 16 September 1946. The premises generously offered to the new Organization by the French Government were the **Hotel Majestic**, located in the heart of Paris, at 19, Avenue Kléber. Initially, the large building had belonged to Queen Isabella II of Spain, from 1868, and then, after reconstruction, been a hotel from 1908. Before UNESCO moved in, it had been used by the occupying power, followed by the American army.<sup>7</sup>

The initial Executive Board sessions took place in rather improvised conditions in the newly repurposed hotel: “the largest bedrooms were allocated to secretaries, several of whom had to share them and store their files in the wardrobes, while middle-grade professionals were put in disused bathrooms, where the only place to keep the papers was the bathtub. Since the tiles had been hastily covered over with wallpaper, it was impossible to use drawing-pins to stick charts on the walls”.<sup>8</sup>

7 In fact, it was the Preparatory Commission of UNESCO that moved initially from London to Hotel Majestic in Paris. However, after UNESCO had been formally established, it remained the Organization’s home until 1958, when it moved to the new Headquarters at 7 Place de Fontenoy. Preparatory Commission of UNESCO, 1945-1946, <http://www.unesco.org/archives/files/ag03fa00001e.pdf>

8 Michel Conil Lacoste, *The Story of a Grand Design*, UNESCO 1946-1993, UNESCO Publishing, 1994, p. 27



► UNESCO building at Avenue Kleber – Hotel Majestic

## COMPOSITION

These temporary hardships did not wither the commitment of the newly elected Members of UNESCO's first Executive Board. Coming from very different parts of the world, the first Board was formed by Ronald E. Walker (Australia), Louis Verniers (Belgium), Paulo Estevão de Berrêdo Carneiro (Brazil), Victor Doré (Canada), Chen Yuan (China), Jan Opocensky (Czechoslovakia), Shafik Ghorbal Bey (Egypt), Pierre Auger (France), Alex Photiades (Greece), Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (India), Manuel Martínez-Báez (Mexico), Hugo R. Kruyt (Netherlands), Alf Sommerfelt (Norway), Marian Falski (Poland), Resat Nuri Guntekin (Turkey), John Maud (UK), Archibald MacLeish (United States) and Caracciolo Parra-Pérez (Venezuela).<sup>9</sup> It was the first time that the full number of Board Members was elected. In conformity with Article V, paragraph 3 of the Constitution, it was decided by lot which of them should retire at the end of the first year and which at the end of the second year. The first Board did not include women representatives and was dominated by Western European countries. Also, the African continent was not represented at all, an important aspect that changed over the following decades.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, the first Executive Board had 14 members, a fifteenth seat being reserved for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which became a UNESCO Member State in 1954. <http://www.unesco.org/archives/files/ag03fa00001e.pdf>  
The history of the first years of the Executive Board (1946-1948) is based on the work of Jan Opocensky, in two volumes on the beginnings of UNESCO. Jan Opocensky, *The Beginnings of UNESCO – 1942-1945*, p. 89



► UNESCO's first General Conference at La Sorbonne, from left to right, Jean Thomas, Julian Huxley (standing), and Léon Blum, Paris, 1946



► Walter H.C. Laves, Julian Huxley and Ronald Walker, Chairperson of the Executive Board (1947-1948), at the Executive Board session held in February 1948

The first item on the Board's agenda was considering the proposals for a Director-General of UNESCO. Following the recommendations of the Board, the General Conference elected on 6 December 1946, **Julian Huxley** (United Kingdom), the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of UNESCO, as the Organization's first Director-General, for a term of two years.

The first Executive Board session took place in parallel with the first General Conference, which opened on 19 November 1946, in the Grand Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne University of Paris, with delegates and observers of 45 States. The President of the Conference was **Léon Blum**, the head of the French Delegation.

## FROM A LEAGUE OF MINDS TO A COMMUNITY OF NATIONS

The convening of the first General Conference and the first Executive Board, a short time after the coming into force of the Constitution of UNESCO, on 4 November 1946, represented a great achievement and was the fruit of a long and intricate process of negotiations, which had started after the First World War.

The initial step in this direction was the establishment of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris, in 1926, an institution that sought to restore the links severed by a war that had entangled most of the world. The governing body of the Institute was the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation based in the League of Nations in Geneva. Its purpose was to promote international cultural and intellectual exchanges between scientists, researchers, teachers, artists and other intellectuals.<sup>10</sup> The social and moral breakdown leading to the First World War was partly explained through a collapse in this international alliance of minds. It became obvious that isolation did not foster peace – on the contrary. Thus, creating an intellectual organization entrusted to building bridges through culture, art and exchange of knowledge was considered necessary for preventing another global conflict. However, the people associated with the Institute could only watch with a rising sense of alarm the ascension of the Nazi and authoritarian regimes that were predicated on subjugating other peoples and treating others as less than human. Civilization was once again threatened by a new cataclysm, but there seemed little possibility of action.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <http://atom.archives.unesco.org/international-institute-of-intellectual-co-operation>

<sup>11</sup> *From ideas to actions*, p. 21, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002350/235065m.pdf>





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► *The League of Nations at its opening session in Geneva, Switzerland, 15 November 1920*

The task of restoring trust in the power of intellectual cooperation in a world shattered by a second devastating war was beyond daunting. The only chance for post-war reconciliation would have to place the building of peace in peoples' minds at the centre of a new world order. Against a background of total war and millions of deaths, the negotiations for restoring the institutions of collapsed intellectual cooperation began to take place as early as 1942, through the work of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME), which met in London.



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► *The San Francisco Conference which led to the United Nations Charter, 16th Plenary Session, 26 June 1945*

The outcome of three years of discussion combined with the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on International Organizations, held in San Francisco between April and June 1945, resulted in the convening of a United Nations Conference for the establishment of an educational and cultural organization (ECO/CONF) from 1 to 16 November 1945, in London. The drafting and adoption of the UNESCO Constitution was at the centre of these meetings – with every aspect arduously negotiated. The founding of UNESCO aimed to give a stronger political dimension to intellectual cooperation.

## THE CREATION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Since the Executive Board is an essential part of UNESCO's governance structure, its role, functions and powers constituted an important part of the constitutional debates. The role of the Executive Board received higher priority as the focus of the new Organization changed from the initial plan of post-war collaboration and reconstruction in education –and ventured towards a permanent institution focused on building peace through the means of intellectual exchange. The name, structure, representation, elections, mandate and focus of the emerging Organization were areas of intensive discussion, as the participating countries articulated their understanding of the new partnership.

One of the main challenges in drafting the Constitution was finding a balance between short-term needs and long-term planning. As one of the members of CAME put it: ***“the continuing aspect of the Organization should not be prejudiced by the temporary provisions laid down for the handling of immediate problems”***.<sup>12</sup> This approach is still present today in the debates concerning the programme, budget and UNESCO's overall mission, as well as in the alignment of the Organization's programme with the international development agenda, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The configuration of the Board and its mandate have been subject to constant adjustment and adaptation through direct amendments to the Constitution, giving UNESCO the needed flexibility to respond to the evolving needs of its ever-increasing constituencies.

The composition and voting patterns of the Executive Board drew initial attention, as it was not clear what would be the best method of representation for the Member States. Based on the initial number of Member States, early drafts of the Constitution proposed that the Board “should consist of fifteen persons elected by the Conference from among the delegates. Not more than one delegate from any Member State shall serve on the Board at any one time. The Members of the Board shall serve for a

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Drafting Committee, Ministry of Education, London, 18 April 1945, UNESCO Archives

term of three years and shall not be immediately eligible for re-election. At the first election, five persons shall be elected for a three-year term, five for two years and five for one year. Thereafter, five persons shall be elected each year. Members elected to the Executive Board for a partial term shall be eligible for re-election”.<sup>13</sup>

The issue of representation and delegation was raised early on, as one of the proposals in the constitutional meetings had been to allow individual Members of the Board to vote in their own name. However, this position did not gain support, as one of the final versions of the draft Constitution pointed out that “the Committee, while agreeing that the vote by individual was right in principle, felt that it would be difficult in practice [...]”.<sup>14</sup> UNESCO was meant to ensure intergovernmental collaboration, not to be an independent forum for the exchange of ideas, thus it was important that Members of the Board benefited from the support of their countries. Also, they should be appointed in line with UNESCO’s mandate, as the Committee decided “in electing the Members of the Executive Board, the Conference shall have regard to the desirability of including persons with varied experience in educational and cultural fields, bearing in mind geographical distribution”.

The issue of representation and accountability proved to be a fine balancing act from the initial stages. The Drafting Committee proposed that “the Members of the Executive Board shall exercise the powers delegated to them by the Conference on behalf of the whole Conference and not as representatives of their respective governments and [...] **“the Executive Board shall elect its own officers and, subject to any decisions of the Conference, determine its own rules of procedure”**”.<sup>15</sup> This position reflects the debate between those who considered that the Board should represent the interests of the international community, and those who considered that the Board should reflect the national interests of the States as Members of UNESCO. This theme would come up again in later years, as the Executive Board reflected on its role and impact in UNESCO. The last modification, firmly establishing countries and not individuals as Members of the Board, took effect in 1993.

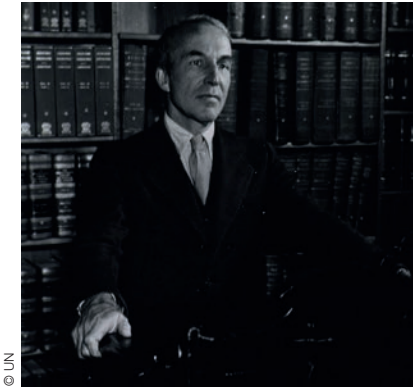
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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the eighth meeting of the Drafting Committee, London, 23 April 1945





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► Archibald MacLeish, Member of the first Executive Board and one of the authors of the Preamble of UNESCO's Constitution



► Ellen Wilkinson, President of the Conference for the Establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, held at the Institute of Civil Engineers, London, from the 1st to the 16th November, 1945

The final version of the Constitution, which was approved by the ECO/CONF in London in 1945, was drafted by a Committee composed of René Cassin (France), Étienne Gilson (Alternate, France), Amarnath Jha (India), Jaime Torres-Bodet (Mexico), Bernard Drzewieski (Poland), Theodora Bosanquet (United Kingdom) and Archibald MacLeish (United States).<sup>16</sup> MacLeish, the American poet and Librarian of Congress, significantly contributed to authoring the Preamble, one of the most debated yet central items of the Constitution. It is to him that UNESCO owes its visionary opening: “That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”.<sup>17</sup>

The signing of the Constitution, on 16 November 1945, by 37 Member States provided important proof that UNESCO was an organization built on consensus.<sup>18</sup>

As one of the members of the Drafting Committee, who later became a Member of the Executive Board (1946–48) and adviser to the UNESCO Archives from 1948 to 1957, Jan Opocensky from Czechoslovakia, noted in his book on UNESCO's founding that the Organization was fundamentally different from the one put forth by the League of Nations: “From the beginning it was agreed that the Members of the new Organization would be States and not individuals, selected by a body of the United Nations; that this Organization would be connected with the United Nations Organization as a specialized agency under the control of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and forming in this way the instrument of the intellectual part of the international collaboration of the United Nations – a part, and not the lesser one, of this Organization in which so many hopes of mankind were once more put”.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Jan Opocensky, *The Beginnings of UNESCO – 1942-1945*, UNESCO, Paris, 1949-1950

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO Constitution, [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=15244&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>18</sup> Michel Conil Lacoste, *The Story of a Grand Design*, UNESCO 1946-1993, UNESCO Publishing, 1994, 26

<sup>19</sup> Jan Opocensky, *Op. Cit.* – 1942-1945, p. 66

## THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The first meetings of the Executive Board had a decisive influence on the way in which UNESCO developed, by creating many of the key formative instruments that shape the Organization, its structure and working processes today. At the same time, the Board dealt with the fundamental external issues of the day. Two of the most important topics raised at the first meeting of the Board, which would regain visibility later, were the relationship with “ex-enemy” countries such as Germany and Japan, as well as UNESCO's budget that set the new Organization's key priorities. Although the first Board raised the topic of their post-war isolation and whether they should be actively involved in UNESCO, it did not take any steps towards making a decision at that particular point. However, as the item was raised after the second General Conference session, in Mexico City, following a series of resolutions on this item, John Maud (United Kingdom), in a communication to the Executive Board in April 1948, pointed out the following: “I have made careful enquiries into this matter [...] and I am clear in my own mind that there is nothing in the Quadripartite agreement, including the Potsdam Agreement, to prevent UNESCO, or any other international organization acting in the matter proposed. [...] Nor do I think that any of my friends and colleagues on the Board need fear that UNESCO activities in Germany should be otherwise than beneficent and helpful to the great cause which we all have joined UNESCO in order to promote”.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, with little precedent, the Member States debated the thorny issue of how UNESCO should be funded and how high its budget should be. Because the initial 6 million dollars allocated was not fully spent, it set off another round of debates at the end of the first fiscal year. Budgetary considerations remained an essential part of the Board's debates.

As of 1946 the working languages of the Board were English and French. Spanish and Russian were added in 1954, Arabic in 1974 and Chinese in 1977 (three years before it became, in 1980, a working language of the General Conference)<sup>21</sup>.

The Executive Board became a key body where external challenges were translated into internal imperatives. In April 1947, for the second session of the Board, the Secretariat had prepared a new draft of the Programme for UNESCO. At the General Conference in 1947, the Executive Board presented its Rules of Procedure and established its working methods.<sup>22</sup>

The third session of the Board, held in Paris from 27 to 29 July 1947, focused on defining the Programme to be submitted to the General Conference in Mexico, with the challenges of structuring UNESCO's broad mandate. The Board instituted a Programme Commission in charge of an overhaul of the structure of the Programme:

20 John Maud, Document 7 EX/16, 5 April 1948, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001614/161403eb.pdf>

21 Document 50 EX/5 paras. 70-90; 8 C/Resolution III.2.11 (1954); 8 C/Resolution III.2.12 (1954); 11 C/Resolution 8.4 (1960), 14 C/Resolution 17 (1966), 15 C/Resolution 34 (1969), 16 C/Resolution 47 (1970), 18 C/Resolution 43.2 (1974); 18 C/Resolution 43.1 (1974)

22 Document 2 C/103

“The chapters should be distinctly summed up into appropriate headings, the projects and continuing activities should be separated and the way each of them is to be accomplished should be clearly indicated”.<sup>23</sup>

At its fourth session (1-15 November 1947), the Board appointed a committee to study the status of its Members from the point of view of composition, operations and areas of responsibility in order to make it a more efficient governing body. To support the work of the Board, at its fifth session (25 November to 2 December 1947), it resolved to institute a permanent Secretariat of its own.<sup>24</sup> It is important to mention that for the first 27 sessions, until 1951, the Bureau of the Board was composed solely of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

The first meeting of a Bureau, consisting of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and the Chairpersons of the Commissions was convened by the Chairperson before the 28th session (October 1951).<sup>25</sup> The Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board were revised at its 29th session.<sup>26</sup>



► Executive Board meeting, 1950

<sup>23</sup> Jan Opocensky, *Op. Cit.* – 1942-1945, p. 99

<sup>24</sup> 5 EX/Decisions, Item 9: “It was agreed that a full-time secretary should be appointed by the Director-General in consultation with the Chairman”

<sup>25</sup> 28 EX/SR.1, 28 EX/Decision 5.2, 29 EX/Decision 4.1. Furthermore, 47 EX/Decision 4.1, adopted on the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee, established two commissions: the External Relations Commission and the Administrative Commission; Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board (Rule 16) amended

<sup>26</sup> Document 29 EX/14 and Corr., Rule 14(2)



► Executive Board members, 1948

At its fifth session, the Board also approved preliminary steps to be taken by the UNESCO Secretariat in establishing contact with the Allied Control Authority in Germany and recommended that the Conference should consider the possibility of engaging in useful activities for UNESCO. Another lasting feature of the Board instituted at the time was an advisory panel of consultants on finance and administration to evaluate UNESCO's work that enhanced its oversight capacity.



► Election of the Chairperson of the Executive Board, Paris, 20 November 1964





► Executive Board meeting, 1949

After elections, a new configuration of the Bureau of the Board was established, with Ronald E. Walker (Australia) as Chairperson, replacing the first Chairperson of the Board, Victor Doré (Canada). Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (India) and Alf Sommerfelt (Norway) acted as Vice-Chairpersons, replacing Pierre Auger (France) and Manuel Martínez Báez (Mexico). Pierre Auger became the Director of UNESCO's Natural Sciences Department (1948-59) and personally played a significant role in the creation of the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN) in 1954. Ronald E. Walker and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan both went on to become Presidents of the General Conference (in 1949 and 1952, respectively).

## FOCUSING AND STREAMLINING

The second session of the General Conference in Mexico City opened on 6 November 1947 at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. During this session, UNESCO became firmly established as the coordinator of a worldwide campaign for aid in cultural and educational reconstruction with a long list of tasks to accomplish for the benefit of humankind. In the first issue of the UNESCO Courier, the Director-General, Julian Huxley declared: ***“The Conference held in Mexico City has demonstrated clearly the benefits to be derived from the idea that UNESCO should come into direct contact with all different cultures [...] We have laid here the foundations of a new spirit of universal cooperation, which constitutes a guarantee of peace”***.<sup>27</sup>

One of the guests at the Conference was Mexico’s President, **Miguel S. Aleman**. Describing UNESCO as ***“the moral guide of the peoples of the world”***, President Aleman stressed the importance of the work already accomplished by UNESCO and stated that the Organization’s principal task was ***“the creation of a mind for peace that shall be like a second nature in all men”***.<sup>28</sup>



► Mexico’s President Miguel Aleman addresses the opening of the second session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Mexico City, November 1947

<sup>27</sup> UNESCO Courier, Vol. 1, Nr. 1, February 1948, p. 1

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 7

The Mexico Conference also represented the first opportunity to assess the Organization's mandate in the light of its first year of existence. It became clear that UNESCO's programme needed more focus to become more effective and have more impact. For the first time, the Programme was divided into six "chapters": Reconstruction, Communication, Education, Cultural Interchange, Human and Social Relations and Natural Sciences. These amendments were a result of the preliminary work of the Executive Board, and reflected its steering role in defining the work of UNESCO. Another resolution concerned UNESCO's work for international understanding with regard to Germany and Japan. The resolutions advised the Director General to begin both 'surveys' and 'experiments' in these countries to assess the possibilities of promoting the Organization's objectives there.<sup>29</sup>



► The 23rd session of the Executive Board, Paris, 1950

Following this second Conference, in February 1948, the Director-General appointed an Advisory Committee of Experts on UNESCO Administration, chaired by **Thanassis Aghnides** who had been the Delegate of Greece to the founding conference in London. The Committee was to advise the Director-

<sup>29</sup> 2 C/Resolution IX, ann. VII; document 2 C/87



General with regard to essential aspects of the Organization's functioning: rules of procedure, structure of the Secretariat and division of functions, programme and inter-agency coordination and budget. The resulting report – the Aghnides Report – dealt especially with “the relationship between the Conference, the Executive Board and the Secretariat on matters of administration”.<sup>30</sup>

In examining the genesis of the Constitution's provisions concerning the Executive Board, the Report concluded that **“its functions are to provide continuous supervision of the policy and programme of UNESCO and of the interpretation of the decisions of the General Conference between sessions. Any other construction would tend towards the creation of a confusing overlap of functions either with the Conference or with the Secretariat”**. The report was critical with regard to the actual functioning of the Board: “The development of its procedures, however, indicates a tendency to tie the hands of the Secretariat unduly, to burden the staff with the preparation of documents for submission to the Board and to be costly in time and effort. [...] Both the Board and the Secretariat are aware that a more effective use of the Board's time and talents would be desirable”.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, the Committee pointed out that the Programme proposed for UNESCO by the Mexico Conference surpassed the capacity of the Organization, both in terms of staff and budget. The Aghnides Committee urged: “The Director-General should be strengthened in every effort to concentrate on high priorities and to postpone projects of lesser urgency until better times. The work of UNESCO should at all times have a bearing on present-day life and exert a favourable impact on its evolution. This is a practical way for UNESCO to make its contribution to the maintenance of peace and security”. Thus, “by subsequent action of the Executive Board and its Programme and Finance Committees, this programme is being reduced and curtailed to fit the money and the staff available”. The recommendations of the Committee were in line with a resolution adopted by the Board on 13 February 1948 affirming “the principle that a limited number of urgent projects should be accorded first priority for intensive prosecution during 1948 and that as many as possible of the remainder should be the subject of limited preparatory work [...]”.<sup>32</sup>

It was the first time the Board acted directly to focus and streamline the direction of UNESCO's actions in the world. The Committee believed that these actions were directly connected to the future of the Organization, highlighting once again the Board's important role in defining the essence of UNESCO's mission.

30 Report of the Advisory Committee of Experts (on UNESCO Administration) – Aghnides report [http://atom.archives.unesco.org/uploads/r/5c00m/6/0/6096/ag08sf00016m\\_compressed.pdf](http://atom.archives.unesco.org/uploads/r/5c00m/6/0/6096/ag08sf00016m_compressed.pdf), p. 10

31 Ibid p. 10-12

32 Ibid p. 6-7



► UNESCO Technical Assistance, literacy class, Columbia, 1954

At this juncture, UNESCO led a number of far-reaching initiatives such as the fundamental education projects (for example the pilot project in the Marbial Valley in Haiti), reconstruction of schools, libraries and media, support for Children's Villages and pioneer work on the protection of nature and conservation and utilization of natural resources.<sup>33</sup>

The first extraordinary session of the Executive Board, dedicated to the Organization's work in the enemy States of Germany and Japan, took place from 2 to 4 April 1948. The first steps toward their integration were enacted. The Board decided that the Programme Committee would prepare future action in Germany and Japan and submit it to the third General Conference session at Beirut in the same year for approval. Until that point the Director-General, in agreement and cooperation with the "appropriate Allied Authorities in Germany" was instructed "to distribute to interested groups in Germany and especially to educators, the documents, publications and other materials of UNESCO and to make known the aims of the Organization by all appropriate means". The Director-General was also instructed to facilitate the exchange of publications and scientific educational and cultural works "calculated to further the aims of UNESCO" and to collaborate on the revision of textbooks and to survey the problems

33 For an overview, see "UNESCO: A world programme", p. 332, UNESCO publication, 1948

involved in and opportunities which existed for the exchange of persons. Also, the Board authorized the Programme Committee to take the necessary actions for German experts to assist in technical meetings called by UNESCO; this procedure was authorized in a similar way for Japan.<sup>34</sup>

From 14 to 17 September 1948, there was a joint meeting of the Executive Board and an extraordinary session of the General Conference. During these meetings, the Board dealt with two important political issues: it granted Israel's request for membership to UNESCO and agreed that the Organization's Programme should be implemented in Germany and Japan. In this latter Programme, the Secretariat established an office in the American occupation zone in Stuttgart and was mandated to set up similar offices in the French and British zones. The following session of the Board (12-15 October 1948, Paris) was dedicated to the preparation of the third session of the General Conference. The debates during this session also led to the establishment of field offices of UNESCO as a more efficient and on-the-ground way of implementing the Organization's programme in the areas where it was most needed. These formative years saw the Board becoming a decisive body shaping the way in which the Organization still works today and how it has implemented its mandate.



► *The 44th session of the Executive Board, Paris, 26 July 1956*

34 7 EX/Decisions (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001139/113926eb.pdf>)

# The Executive Board: voices for peace and human rights

The importance of UNESCO was recognized by many very early on. For instance, **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru**, Prime Minister of India, visited UNESCO on 27 October 1948. The Prime Minister, accompanied by his wife, was received by the high officials of the Organization. His visit marked the beginning of a close collaboration between UNESCO and India. At the General Conference held in New Delhi in 1956, Nehru said that **“man does not live by politics alone”**.



► Visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, René Maheu, Director-General (1962 – 1974), Malcolm Adiseshiah, Assistant Director-General, and Indira Gandhi, member of UNESCO Executive Board, Paris, 21 September 1962



► Jaime Torres Bodet (Mexico), UNESCO Director-General (1948-1952) at an Executive Board meeting

Visiting UNESCO again in 1962, two years before his death, Jawaharlal Nehru declared that the spirit of tolerance was more needed than ever before: **“Science and technology are necessary”,** he said, **“but a spiritual background no less so”**.<sup>35</sup>

The Executive Board played a crucial role in selecting key figures to lead UNESCO whose origins were deliberately and increasingly drawn from diverse backgrounds and areas of the globe. At its third session, the General Conference elected the Organization's second Director-General, **Jaime Torres-Bodet**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. He had led the Mexican delegation at the Conference for the establishment of UNESCO and signed the Constitution of UNESCO. His motto, first uttered at the London conference, had been “peace in truth, on truth and by truth”.<sup>36</sup>

Torres-Bodet saw UNESCO's mission in the following way: **“by connecting culture with health and economics, I want to stress the humanitarian and in the broadest sense of the term, democratic character of UNESCO. We must never forget that the intellectual and moral solidarity at which we aim will be but a beautiful dream so long as men lack health and sustenance. [...] UNESCO must work for the good of the greatest number. If leading scientists and educationists are to pool their efforts within UNESCO, the object of this is not to form a centre of intellectual cooperation for the benefit of a select minority, but to improve the moral and intellectual conditions of the great many, the people”**.<sup>37</sup>

He also underlined the idea that UNESCO, as the **“ever-wakeful consciousness of the United Nations”** must lead not only the reconstruction but also the construction of the peaceful world envisioned after the end of the Second World War.<sup>38</sup> Humanity, human liberty and freedom were the core tasks of the new Organization, and its responsibilities were to remove intolerance, enmity and discord through cooperation in the key fields of action. These ideas were supported by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, on 10 December 1948. The next day, the General Conference of UNESCO passed a resolution instructing the new Director-General to stimulate the dissemination of information about the Declaration and employ it in the UNESCO programme.<sup>39</sup> One year later, between October and December 1949, UNESCO organized a Universal Rights Exhibition at the Musée Galliera in Paris. It marked the start of a worldwide campaign for freedom, against slavery and for universal rights.

35 UNESCO Courier, August-September 1967

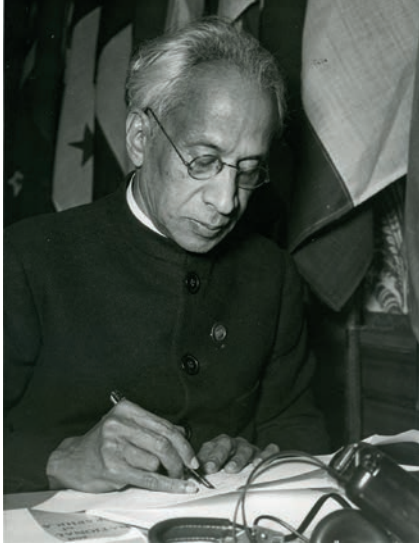
36 UNESCO Courier, December 1948 – January 1949

37 Ibid

38 UNESCO Courier, May 1949

39 3 C/Resolution 8.1, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001145/114593e.pdf>





► Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (India), Chairperson of the Executive Board (1948-1949)

The General Conference, meeting in Beirut in 1948, elected the new Chairperson of the Executive Board, in the person of **Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**, the Head of the Indian delegation at the Mexico Conference. Philosopher, author, statesman and educationalist he once said: ***“All our world organizations will prove ineffective if the truth that love is stronger than hate does not inspire them. Books are the means by which we build bridges between cultures. A life of joy and happiness is possible only on the basis of knowledge and science”.***

The fifteenth Board session, which took place from 9 to 15 June 1949 was deemed one of the most important ones in UNESCO's history, as the Board approved “a programme for the Organization's participation in the United Nations plan for technical assistance to under-developed countries, agreed to the opening of a UNESCO regional office in the Western Hemisphere, and voted the allocation of special

funds to help refugee children in the Middle East and Greece.”<sup>40</sup> Without development and aid, human rights and dignity could not be achieved.

This was an idea echoed at UNESCO's fourth General Conference session, which took place again in Paris, from 19 September to 5 October 1949. The meeting welcomed Pakistan and Israel as the 49th and 50th Member States of UNESCO. The Conference focused on UNESCO's participation in the United Nations plan for technical assistance to underdeveloped areas.

The next meeting of the Board brought new members and a new Chairperson, **John Maud**, Permanent Secretary of the British Ministry of Education, who had been a Member of the UNESCO Executive Board since its foundation, replacing Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. At a United States National Conference on UNESCO in Cleveland, Maud coined the word “Unescan – meaning a person who undertakes his responsibilities as citizen of the world and takes part in UNESCO's activity”.<sup>41</sup>

**Luther Evans** (USA), Librarian of the United States Congress and Chairman of the United States National Commission for UNESCO, also joined for a first term as a Board Member. He went on to become

40 UNESCO Courier, July 1949

41 UNESCO Courier, January 1950

Vice-Chairperson of the Board, as well as Chairperson of the Programme and Finance Commissions in consecutive sessions. Eventually he was elected Director-General of the Organization (1953-1958).



► Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro, Chairperson of the Executive Board (1951-1952) at the opening of the 98th session of the Board on 15 September 1975

The Board re-elected **Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro** (Brazil), the longest-serving member of the Executive Board where he served for 28 years (1946-52, 1954-62, 1964-72, 1974-78 and 1980-82). He was elected Chairperson of the Board for the 1951-1952 biennium and President of the General Conference in 1962. De Berrêdo Carneiro was also the President of the International Commission for the History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind. He said of working for UNESCO: ***“A ‘UNESCO man’, the bearer of UNESCO’s message, a man inspired by feelings of dignity and liberty and inheriting all that is best in our tradition...should subordinate his personal interests, his national and regional interests to the universal interest of mankind. He would inherit all our efforts, be an agent of peace; he will be the cement of human brotherhood and solidarity. It is for this man of the future that the men of the past have worked; we are only a passing link, but we carry with us the message of the future”.***<sup>42</sup> (Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro)

42 UNESCO Courier, December 1948 - January 1949



These quotes highlight some of the key balancing acts for Executive Board Members: acting as a citizen of the globe yet representing one's national or regional interests; acting in response to challenging short-term issues yet developing long-term programmes for the future; and deciding priorities from limited funding for education, communication, sciences and cultural activities.

The fifth session of the General Conference, held in Florence in May 1950, launched one of UNESCO's best-known initiatives, the History of Mankind, under the responsibility of an International Commission on behalf of UNESCO. This project would benefit from the collaboration of 1,000 specialists from more than 60 countries. The Conference also adopted a statement on methods, to describe the working methods of the Organization.<sup>43</sup>

By October 1950, the Executive Board decided that UNESCO would give all possible help and assistance within its fields of competence to the action undertaken by the United Nations in Korea. It was an important decision for the Organization, as it marked its direct involvement on behalf of Member States. In this regard, the Board created a special assistance fund of \$100,000 to “develop teaching about the United Nations putting particular emphasis on the necessity for collective security, based on the respect for law”.<sup>44</sup> In the same year, **Gerónima Pecson** from the Philippines became the **first woman** Member of the Board. She served from 1950 to 1954 and from 1958 to 1962.



► Gerónima Pecson (centre), the first woman member of the Board, at a meeting of the Executive Board, March 1954

In December 1951, UNESCO received a visit from **Eleanor Roosevelt**, United States Representative to the United Nations and Chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. She had been present in Paris on 10 December 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly, after being prepared by the Commission chaired by her.

43 5 C/Resolution VIII

44 23 EX/Decision 4; 23 EX/SR. 2, 3 and 7; 24 EX/Decision 7



► Eleanor Roosevelt discussing with UNESCO's Director-General, Luther Evans (1953 – 1958)



► René Cassin attending the 10th session of the General Conference

***“There is much more to do and nobody can afford not to be concerned about the future work on human rights and the actual change in human nature which must take place before these rights are fully implemented, but we have made a beginning and I believe we are moving forward.”<sup>45</sup> (Eleanor Roosevelt)***

Accompanying Eleanor Roosevelt at UNESCO was **René Cassin** (France), member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, who later (in 1968) received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

***“...The exploitation of women, mass hunger and starvation [...], disregard for freedom of conscience, opinion and expression, widespread and racial discrimination [...] all these and many other abuses are far too frequent to be denied.”<sup>46</sup> (René Cassin)***

Thus, from the very beginning, UNESCO had been actively involved in the fight for universal human rights and against inequality of all kinds, especially concerning racial and gender discrimination. Highlighting these concerns placed UNESCO at the forefront of progressive politics, well ahead of the general tenor of this time. In line with this commitment, it published statements on race –

starting in 1950 – and scientific studies, which demonstrated that the concept of “race” was a political and social construct and not a biological marker. This work against racism had a far-reaching impact and UNESCO's statements became universally recognized ethical and scientific references.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, UNESCO Courier, December 1950

<sup>46</sup> René Cassin, UNESCO Courier, January 1968

<sup>47</sup> Four statements on the race question, Paris, UNESCO, 1969 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001229/122962eo.pdf>

# The Executive Board and the expanding global agenda



► René Maheu, Assistant Director-General, Luther Evans, Director-General and Arcot Mudaliar (India), Chairperson of the Executive Board (1954-1956) at the 41st session of the Board, March-April 1955

Within the general mission of UNESCO, the Director-General and the Executive Board helped to set an agenda for the future within the Organization's mandate.

By the end of 1951, UNESCO became involved in yet another important initiative for peace: the creation of the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN). At the fifth session of the UNESCO General Conference in June 1950, the American Nobel laureate **Isidor Rabi** tabled a resolution authorizing UNESCO to **“assist and encourage the formation of regional research laboratories in order to increase international scientific collaboration”**. In the words of **Albert Einstein**, who in 1946 became Chairman of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists: **“Science has**

*brought forth this danger, but the real problem is in the minds and hearts of men. We will not change the hearts of other men by mechanism, but by changing our hearts and speaking bravely. [...] We must be not merely willing but actively eager to submit ourselves to binding authority necessary for world security”.* Following this basic idea and initiative, a conference of 12 European Member States of UNESCO met in Paris in December 1951 and in February 1952 in Geneva to establish CERN, which became fully functional on 29 September 1954. The leading French physicist, **Pierre Auger**, who was Director of UNESCO's Natural Sciences Department at the time, played a decisive role.



► Maria Schlueter-Hermkes (Federal Republic of Germany), attending the meeting of the 41st Executive Board, March-April 1955

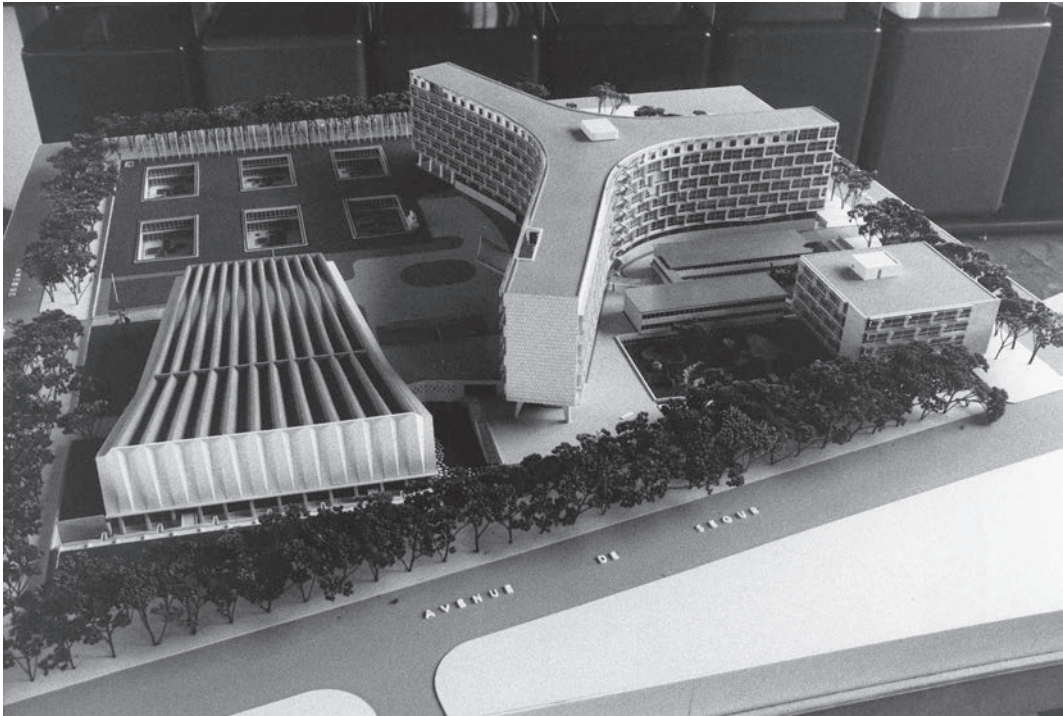
With the rapid growth of UNESCO's constituent Member States, the issue of representation in the Executive Board needed to be addressed. Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany became the 60th and 64th Member States in 1951 and by 1952, Article V.A.1 of the Constitution needed a new amendment concerning the number of Members of the Board, in order to align it with the new reality. Thus, the General Conference decided to raise the number of Executive Board Members from 18 to 20. Only two years later, in 1954, another amendment increased it from 20 to 22. Subsequent sessions of the General Conference continually added seats to the Executive Board. From 24 Members in 1956, it expanded to 30 Members in 1962, then 34 Members in 1968, 40 Members in 1972, 45 Members in 1976 and 51 Members in 1980. As of 1995, the Executive Board numbers 58 Members.<sup>48</sup>

The Executive Board was also affected sometimes by tensions that temporarily altered this steady growing trend. For instance, between December 1952 and January 1953, three East European Member States broke off their relationship with UNESCO. They resumed cooperation in 1954, but similar temporary decisions were taken at various points in time, resulting in a continuous work of adaptation and negotiation. The Executive Board was fully involved in reaching consensus in this regard. Sometimes the admissions of members caused tensions within the Organization. The admission of Spain to UNESCO, under the dictator Francisco Franco, for instance, played a role in the resignation decision of Director-General Jaime Torres Bodet. **John W. Taylor** (United States) was appointed Acting Director-General,

48 Documents 7 C/41.121, 8 C/II.1.2, 9 C/37, 12 C/14, 15 C/11.1, 17 C/13.1, 19 C/17.1, 21 C/18.1, and 28 C/20.2



until the second Extraordinary Session of the General Conference, meeting in Paris from 1 to 4 July 1953, elected Luther Evans (United States).



► *Model of the UNESCO buildings to be constructed, 1956*

Another important item on the agenda of this meeting were plans for a **new UNESCO** Headquarters at its current site.

The balancing act required by Executive Board Members as global citizens, yet responsive to national or regional interests, was illustrated very early in the Cold War. With mounting tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, many public employees as well as personalities in other fields fell victim to what became known as “the Red Scare.”<sup>49</sup> The actions of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in the United States House of Representatives gave the green light for intrusive investigations in the early 1950s aimed at exposing Communists working inside the federal government, public institutions and even Hollywood. UNESCO became involved as eight American members of staff received an unfavourable report from the United States Government and seven were forced to leave the

49 <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/red-scare>



Organization. The Executive Board took a strong stand against this decision. In 1955, at the proposal of the Board, the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) investigated the matter and ordered the cancellation of all punitive measures. The Tribunal also determined that the staff impacted by that decision should be reinstated or paid compensation.<sup>50</sup> It would not be the only time the Executive Board took leadership in protecting the independence of international civil servants. Two decades later, on 6 October 1977, the Executive Board supported the position of the Director-General who refused to accept the letter of resignation of a UNESCO official sent from his home country where he was retained by authorities in violation of the Constitution.<sup>51</sup> The initiative was successful and by May 1978, the international civil servant was able to resume his post at Headquarters.<sup>52</sup> On 27 October 1980, the General Conference adopted a resolution concerning the independence of the international civil service.<sup>53</sup>



► Interpreters at the 42nd meeting of the Executive Board, UNESCO House, Paris, November 1955

50 Documents 8 C/3 (1954), pp. 186-189 and 9 C/3 (1955-1956), pp. 11-14, 235-236

51 103 EX/SR.24

52 The case is thoroughly discussed in a recent publication by the international civil servant in question: Sorin Dumitrescu, *Irrevocable! Comment j'ai vaincu le dictateur Ceausescu*, Charenton-le-Pont, Le Ver à soie, France, 2015

53 20 C/Resolution 25; 20 C/VR.38

## CHANGE IN STATUS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

A crucial turning point for the competencies and structure of the Executive Board occurred in the mid-1950s. At the eighth session of the General Conference, which took place in Montevideo in 1954, it was decided that the Members of the Executive Board, while they should be competent in UNESCO's respective field of activities, would henceforth represent governments. As indicated in the provisions of Article V (paragraphs 1, 2 and 12) of the original text of the Constitution, when it was first established, the Executive Board comprised Members who sat in their personal capacity and were elected by the General Conference from the delegates designated by Member States based on their qualities and their competence in the particular fields of UNESCO's activities. While not representing their respective governments, they exercised collectively the powers delegated to them by the General Conference on behalf of the Conference as a whole. They thus sat on the Board in a dual capacity, a system that remained in force until 1954. The purpose of the 1954 amendment was to confer, additionally, on each Member of the Board the status of representative of the government of the State of which they were a national.<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that this amendment in no way altered the specific character of the Executive Board, whose Members were not States but persons designated by name.<sup>55</sup>

The Montevideo Conference further decided on the adoption of principles, definitions and procedures regarding UNESCO's future programmes, dividing the Organization's activities into general continuous programmes of general interest to all Member States and special activities designed to meet specific needs within a clear time-span and financial limit.<sup>56</sup> Education remained one of the most important areas of work. UNESCO counted the famous educational theorist, **Jean Piaget** (Switzerland) amongst its Board Members (1950-1954). Piaget was the Director of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and the founder of the field of genetic epistemology. His pioneering work in child development stressed the importance of early education: ***"The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done – men who are creative, inventive and discoverers. The second goal of education is to form minds which can be critical, can verify and not accept everything they are offered".*** (Jean Piaget)

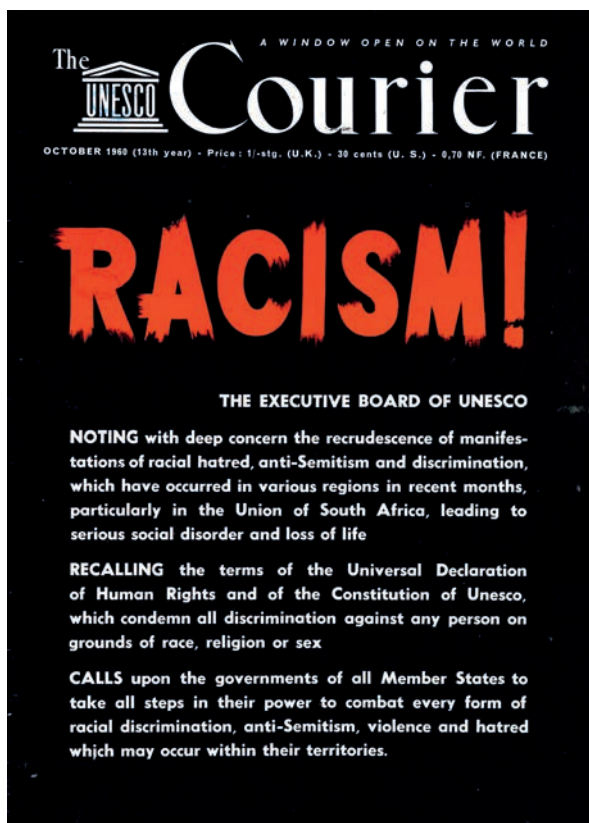
The General Conference, meeting in New Delhi in 1956, approved UNESCO's first three new "Major Projects": the extension of primary education in Latin America (teacher training), scientific research on arid lands and a project on the mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western values.<sup>57</sup>

54 8 C/Resolution II.1.1

55 The UNESCO Executive Board, 2016 Edition, p. 10, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002442/244246e.pdf>

56 Michel Conil Lacoste, *The Story of a Grand Design*, pp. 68-69

57 9 C/Resolutions 1.81, 2.61, and 4.81



► Executive Board decision against racism on the UNESCO Courier title page, October 1960

At the same time, the Executive Board dealt with South Africa's decision to withdraw from the Organization, a decision taken in protest at UNESCO's "activities and interference in South Africa's racial problems by means of UNESCO's publications..." The Executive Board appealed to the Government of the Union of South Africa to reconsider its decision, declaring that the Organization's activities "have never violated Article I, paragraph 3, of the Constitution, which prohibits the Organization from intervening in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the Member States".<sup>58</sup> However, the matter remained unresolved. Later, on 28 November 1966, UNESCO reiterated its opposition to discrimination. At the General Conference, it condemned colonialism, neo-colonialism, the policy and practice of apartheid and racial discrimination and refused all further aid to the Governments of Portugal, the Republic of South Africa and the illegal regime of Southern Rhodesia.<sup>59</sup> Combating discrimination, especially racial and gender

discrimination, have remained important points on UNESCO's agenda, a position fully supported by the Executive Board.

This session also saw the election of **Vittorino Veronese** of Italy as the new Chairperson of the Executive Board in 1956. He had been an active contributor to UNESCO since 1948, when Italy became a Member State, and had attended General Conference sessions as a member of the Italian delegation. He further went on to become the Organization's Director-General from 1958 to 1961, succeeding Luther Evans.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Document 42 EX/43; 42 EX/Decision 4; 14 C/Resolution 11

<sup>59</sup> 14 C/VR.31-35 and 38-39; 14 C/Resolution 11

<sup>60</sup> 10 C/Proceedings

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*“There is yet another paradox – perhaps the most profound of all, which UNESCO has to overcome. It strives to maintain a strict and dispassionate neutrality towards philosophies, systems, political beliefs and religions. Yet it cannot remain alien, deaf and blind to the noblest expressions of human thought, to the anxieties of our modern world, to the yearning and quest for a code of social ethics to match the century of nuclear discoveries and interplanetary conquest. No! Impartiality is not indifference”!*<sup>61</sup> (Vittorino Veronese)

- Vittorino Veronese (Italy), UNESCO Director-General (1958-1961), New York, March 1960



- Admission of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO, Executive Board vote on 29 October 1971 (88 EX/Dec.9)

61 Vittorino Veronese, UNESCO General Conference, Paris, 1958



## NEW HEADQUARTERS

On 3 November 1958, UNESCO moved to its permanent Headquarters in Paris. France, as host country, generously offered the premises, and construction had taken two years to complete.



► UNESCO Headquarters, 1966



The building itself became a mirror of UNESCO's ethos as a meeting place of cultures and ideas.



► UNESCO Headquarters, exterior view of Fontenoy building, 1981



► Inauguration ceremony of UNESCO's new Headquarters, Paris, 3 November 1958

The Y-shaped structure, jointly designed by Marcel Breuer (United States), Pier-Luigi Nervi (Italy) and Bernard Zehruss (France), was inaugurated in the presence of the President of the French Republic, René Coty.



► The painter Juan Miró and the ceramist Joan Gardy Artigas with the model of their work for UNESCO's new Headquarters, April 1958

The building's walls and gardens provided a setting for works of art by some of the world's leading artists, including Picasso, Miró, Moore and Calder. In addition to the main building, a cube-shaped annex was built next to the Japanese garden, and there were two separate large conference halls.





► Henry Moore standing in front of his sculpture 'Reclining Figure' on the Piazza, UNESCO Headquarters, 17 October 1958

Many UNESCO Member States bequeathed the new Headquarters valuable gifts and decorations, reminding everyone of the wide diversity of cultures and traditions gathered under UNESCO's emblem.



► Jean Arp and his bronze relief at UNESCO, 15 December 1958

This transformed the concrete structure into a vision of diversity and dialogue gathered symbolically under one roof.<sup>62</sup> This was the first of an ensemble of seven buildings to be constructed, as UNESCO expanded, with the last, Bonvin (Building VII) brought into use in September 1984.<sup>63</sup>

62 *From Ideas to Actions, 70 Years of UNESCO*, p. 56

63 Document 47 HQ/3



The Executive Board meeting room was inaugurated on 29 September 1964 and was refurbished in 2015.



► The Chairperson of the Executive Board, Rodolfo Baron Castro (El Salvador) cut the symbolic ribbon in front of the UNESCO Executive Board Room on the day of its inauguration, 29 September 1964





► Reopening Ceremony of the Executive Board meeting room, during its 197th session, 12 October 2015, left to right: Hao Ping, President of the 37th General Conference; Irina Bokova, Director-General; M. Shahidul Islam, Chairperson of the Headquarters Committee; Mohamed Sameh Amr, Chairperson of the Executive Board

“At the opening of the sixty-eighth session of UNESCO’s Executive Board, on 29 September 1964, a new meeting room was inaugurated [...] on the UNESCO Headquarters site. At the Director-General’s invitation, Mr. de Berrêdo Carneiro, President of the General Conference at its twelfth session, unveiled the commemorative tablet just outside the door, and Mr. Baron Castro (El Salvador), cut the ribbon which symbolically barred the entrance. Built and decorated according to the plans of the architect Bernard Zehruss, the hall measures 20 meters by 20 meters and its 6 meters in height. One entire glass wall [...] looks out on one of the patios of the new building”.<sup>64</sup> In 2015 a ribbon was cut once again following further renovations of Room X.

***“From a small flat in Grosvenor Square and two adjoining houses in Belgrave Square, London, where UNESCO was founded [...], the Organization went to the Hotel Majestic in Paris. Here it continued to grow in strength and authority until the day when Member States decided that it could no longer be content with makeshift premises. As the new headquarters was inaugurated on November 3, 1958, the measure of this growth and maturity was symbolized by the flags of Member States flying proudly from their 81 masts”.<sup>65</sup>***

64 UNESCO Chronicle, November 1964

65 UNESCO Courier, November 1958



► *Indira Gandhi as member of UNESCO's Executive Board, November 1960*

The Executive Board played a leading role in making the 1960s a major turning point for UNESCO's work. In 1960 alone, 18 new Member States joined the Organization, 17 of them from Africa, bringing UNESCO's constituency to 99 Members. Ghana had become a third Member State from Africa already in 1958, while six more African States would join in 1962 and another three in 1964. As early as December 1960, the General Conference adopted a resolution on the role of UNESCO in contributing to the attainment of independence by colonial countries and peoples.<sup>66</sup> In the same year, **Indira Gandhi**, daughter of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was elected as a Member

of the Executive Board. She remained a Member until 1964. Two years later, she became the first female Prime Minister of India, until 1977 and again in 1980 until her death in 1984.

***“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances”. (Indira Gandhi)***

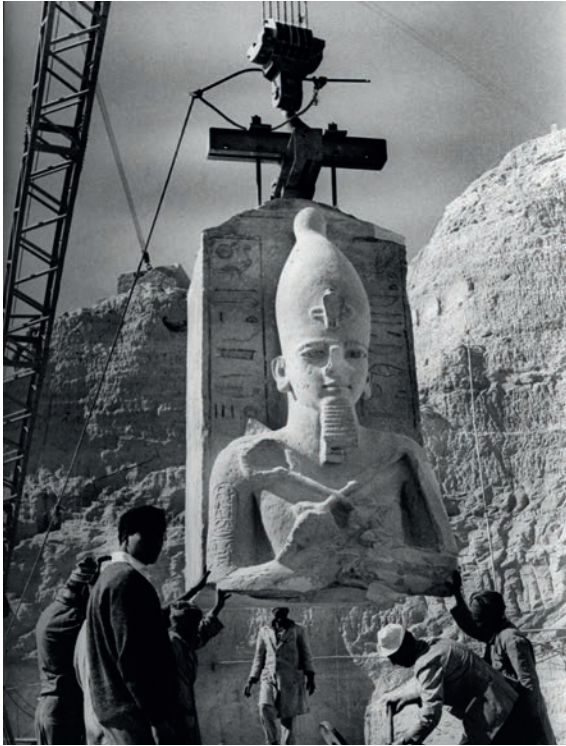
## SAFEGUARDING THE MONUMENTS OF NUBIA

On 8 March 1960, UNESCO launched what became one of its most famous campaigns: the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. Following the proposal of the Director-General, Vittorino Veronese, the Executive Board decided that UNESCO should issue an appeal for international cooperation, which would be addressed “not only to governments and to the public and private institutions concerned, but to public opinion in all countries of the world”.<sup>67</sup> This approach was intended to raise a different type of awareness. The central message was that the people, and not only governments, had a very personal stake in protecting ancient monuments, works of art and places of great beauty. It was not a local, a national or a regional problem: places like Nubia were part of a larger

<sup>66</sup> 11 C/Resolution 8; 12 C/Resolution 8.2; 13 C/Resolution 6.3

<sup>67</sup> UNESCO Courier, February 1960

narrative of humanity, in which each person had a role. Nubia was a metaphor for the connecting line between past and present with a clear implication for the future. Thus, ‘saving Nubia’ was more than about saving an unrepeatable and unique part of the story of humanity. This was the first step in building the concept of “world heritage,” one of the best-known UNESCO initiatives in the field of culture.



► Abu Simbel, 1966



► Statue of Ramses II, Abu Simbel temple, 1968

The Executive Board played a key role. UNESCO set up a Committee of Patrons under the presidency of King Gustaf VI Adolf of Sweden, in response to requests from the Governments of the United Arab Republic and of the Sudan for large-scale international assistance to save the sites and monuments of Nubia, which were threatened by submersion as a result of the construction of the new Aswan High Dam. An international committee of experts formed by the Government of the United Arab Republic, in consultation with UNESCO, was to advise on excavation and preservation plans, on the use of contributions and on allotment of counterpart grants to governments, institutions and persons participating in the international action. Paulo de Berrêdo Carneiro chaired the executive committee for



the Campaign.<sup>68</sup> Presiding over the opening ceremony of the Campaign was **André Malraux**, French Minister of State for Cultural Affairs. His speech at UNESCO Headquarters highlighted the historical moment of this new massive endeavour: “On March 8 1960, for the first time, the nations, though many of them even now are engaged in overt or open conflict, have been summoned to save by a united effort the fruits of a civilization on which none has a pre-emptive claim. [...] If UNESCO is trying to rescue the monuments of Nubia, it is because these are in imminent danger; it goes without saying that it would try to save other great ruins Angkor or Nara, for instance if they were similarly threatened. [...] Yours is the first attempt to deploy, in a rescue operation, on behalf of statues, the immense resources usually harnessed for the service of men. And this is perhaps because for us the survival of statues has become an expression of life. [...] **Your appeal is historic, not because it proposes to save the temples of Nubia, but because through it the first world civilization publicly proclaims the world’s art as its indivisible heritage. [...] There is only one action over which indifferent stars and unchanging, murmurous rivers have no sway: it is the action of a man who snatches something from death**”.<sup>69</sup>

On 22 September 1968, the **Abu Simbel** temples, reconstructed 64 metres above their original site on the banks of the Nile, were officially unveiled. Removed block by block from the sandstone cliff out of which they had been carved, the temples were raised and reassembled exactly as they had stood in the past. However, the campaign was far from being finalized. In the words of the Director-General, UNESCO’s mission in this new area of world cultural preservation was just starting: **“May the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind, which it is UNESCO’s mission to promote, be further strengthened on this occasion in the saving of this precious treasure, thus vindicating the worth of the human spirit and advancing the cause of peace”**.<sup>70</sup>

**René Maheu** was named Acting Director-General from 7 June 1961 in replacement of Vittorino Veronese, who resigned due to ill health. By 15 November 1962, Maheu was appointed as UNESCO’s sixth Director-General, and remained in charge of the Organization for two successive terms, until 1974.<sup>71</sup>

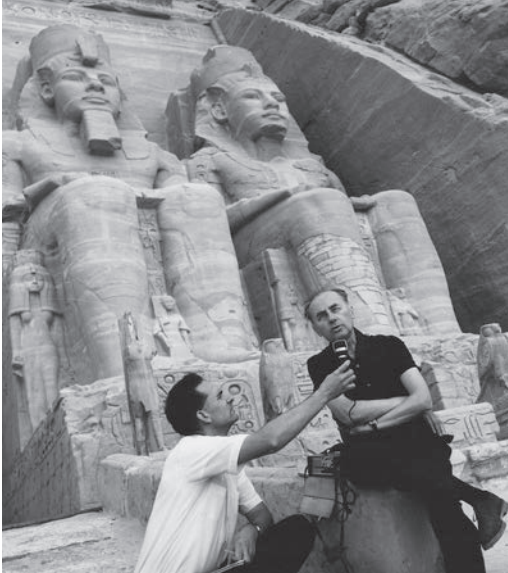
68 UNESCO Courier, March 1960

69 André Malraux, UNESCO Courier, May 1960

70 UNESCO Courier, December 1968

71 12 C/Proceedings, 15 C/VR.9





► René Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO attended the inauguration ceremony of the Abu Simbel temples, 1968



► Habib Bourguiba, President of Tunisia, René Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO and Atilio Dell'Oro Maini (Argentina) Chairperson of the Executive Board (1966-1968), 29 June 1972

*“UNESCO is founded on the belief that in the long run it is the freedom of man which decides the path of history, and in particular which makes the choice between war and peace - ‘wars are born in the minds of men’ - so that there can only be true peace as long as the mind abides by an order which it respects. [...] Peace itself has no value and, strictly speaking, no reality for UNESCO unless it is founded on justice, which is nothing other than human rights in action. Peace, for UNESCO, is not the illusory security or transient stability represented by the dominance of one power or even a balance of power, the goal pursued so desperately in an armaments race that is as vain as it is exhausting. Peace is justice acknowledged and this, we know full well, can be attained only by radical changes in the structure of societies and the organization of the world”.<sup>72</sup> (René Maheu)*

During the same session in 1962, the General Conference elected to the Executive Board Amadou Hampâté Bâ from Mali and **Atilio Dell’Oro Maini** from Argentina. Dell’Oro Maini later went on to become Chairperson of the Executive Board, from 1966 to 1968 and President of the General Conference in 1970.

<sup>72</sup> UNESCO Courier, October 1976, pp. 29-30

## KNOWLEDGE AS A LIGHT WITHIN PEOPLE

**Amadou Hampâté Bâ**, the man who was known as **“the living memory of Africa”**, was a writer and advocate for the significance of oral traditions. Throughout his time as a Member of the Executive Board, he supported the systematic collection of oral teachings and the rescue of African oral traditions, not only because of their cultural value, but also because they enshrined and encompassed a vast sum of historical, religious, philosophical, scientific and literary knowledge. The saying he was associated with was **“in Africa, when an old man dies, a library disappears”**; this has become so famous that it is sometimes quoted as an African proverb. He first uttered the phrase in 1962, appropriately at a meeting where the rescue of the monuments of Nubia was discussed. After expressing his pleasure that UNESCO was endeavouring to save artistic and architectural treasures of universal value, Amadou Hampâté Bâ explained that other monuments existed in Africa that were just as precious for the cultural heritage of humankind, but were unfortunately far more fragile and perishable.



► Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Malian writer and diplomat, during a session of UNESCO's Executive Board in November 1962

These oral tradition monuments were the great repositories of ancestral African lore that were irreplaceable sites of meaning, yet whose knowledge would probably die with the next generation: **“In 60 years the Nubian stone monuments, even if waterlogged, will still be there, but our last great ‘illiterate scholars’ will have gone for ever, and their knowledge with them”**. He liked to quote this phrase by his philosophical master, the Sufi mystic Tierno Bokar: “Writing is one thing and knowledge is another. Writing is the photographing of knowledge, but it is not knowledge itself. Knowledge is a light that is within man. It is the heritage of all the ancestors knew and have transmitted to us as seed, just as the mature baobab is contained in its seed”. Amadou Hampâté Bâ was one of those who made the greatest contribution, notably at UNESCO, for winning worldwide recognition of the cultures of Africa, which were not embodied in stone.<sup>73</sup>

The Executive Board also helped support the Organization to sharpen its focus and innovate. Starting in September 1963, the Secretariat entered into a major reorganization phase, a process that ended in July 1966. During this time the present-day “sectors” headed by Assistant Directors-General were created, as well

<sup>73</sup> UNESCO Courier, January 1992

as departments, offices and bureaux corresponding to UNESCO's major fields of activities. One of the Executive Board's major decisions that helped UNESCO to channel its focus in new directions occurred during its October 1963 session, which approved the offer of the Swedish Government in favour of the education of African women. For the first time 'self-benefiting' or 'third parties benefiting' funds were put directly at the disposal of UNESCO to finance a particular development project. The Executive Board approved, helped implement and provided effective oversight of such programmes that proliferated greatly. By 1973, 56 countries were engaged in Funds-in-Trust arrangements through UNESCO's administration.<sup>74</sup>

One of the most important reorganizations of the Executive Board took place during the 15th session of the General Conference held in 1968. In order to correct an imbalance in the distribution of seats on the Board, which increased with each session of the General Conference, the General Conference, based on a proposal of the Executive Board itself, adopted a system of electoral groups, which was established for the sole purpose of electing the Members of the Board. Member States were thus divided into five groups in accordance with criteria that were not solely geographical. This new system gave each group a certain number of seats, which is readjusted by the General Conference whenever it decides to modify the total number of seats on the Executive Board.<sup>75</sup> In order to speed up the rotation of seats among nationals of the different Member States, the General Conference decided at the same time that the term of office of the Members of the Board would from then onwards be of six years and would not be renewable, whereas previously, starting with 1952 and until that point, Members had been elected for a four-year term and were eligible for a second term. At the time of the decision, there were 125 Member States and the number of Board Members had been raised from 30 to 34. Yet until 1968, half of the Member States had never had a representative on the Board.<sup>76</sup>

However, four years later, in 1972, a new amendment again reduced the term of office of the Board Members from six to four years, without immediate eligibility for a second term, as the General Conference considered that this reduction "would speed up considerably the rotation cycle and offer the opportunity to a greater number of Member States to participate in the activities of the Executive Board".<sup>77</sup> These changes demonstrate the constant preoccupation of the Board with ensuring equal and fair representation, as well as a willingness to adapt and negotiate.

At its 1968 session, the General Conference also adopted a resolution on the future programme to guide the Director-General and the Executive Board in formulating the programme and budget for 1971-1972 as well as shaping the long-term plan of the Organization. This resolution highlighted and strengthened the role of the Executive Board in guiding the policy of UNESCO, not only regarding its immediate implementation

74 Document 66 EX/9; 66 EX/Decision 4.7; document 94 EX/5 Add. Annex VI

75 Executive Board, UNESCO 2016, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002442/244246e.pdf>

76 15 C/Resolution 11; document 15 C/76; 15 C/VR.11-14, pp. 28-29

77 17 C/Resolution 13.2

but also on formulating the long-term strategic goals and objectives.<sup>78</sup> By 19 November 1976, the first Medium-Term Plan was adopted, which divided UNESCO's work into 11 chapters and 44 objectives. It became the first such document to serve as guidance for the biennial programme and budgets.<sup>79</sup>



► Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow (Senegal), Director-General (centre) with Hector Wynter (Jamaica), Chairperson of the Executive Board (1974-1976) at the opening of the 98th session of the Board, 15 September 1975

**Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow**, from Senegal was elected to the Executive Board in 1966, where he became Chairperson of the Programme and External Relations Commission at the 1966 session. He remained a Member of the Board until 1970, and was elected Director-General of UNESCO in 1974, for two consecutive terms, until 1987.<sup>80</sup> The path that led the country boy from the African Sahel to head one of the most important organizations of the United Nations system perhaps marked a turning point in the emergence of this other

world, the “world of the disinherited peoples”. **“I feel that I am today the symbol of these peoples”**, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow said when taking office on 15 November 1974. “In choosing him as Director-General for six years, UNESCO has entered the 21st century”.<sup>81</sup>

The new Director-General wrote in the UNESCO Courier: **“The inevitable choice facing mankind is between entering an age of solidarity or relapsing into an age of barbarism. It calls for an effort to rise above our differences in order to build, on a worldwide scale, a new economic, social and cultural order which, transcending national self-interests, will enable man to organize his environment rationally, so that each of us may live there freely and happily, in brotherhood with his neighbours, whoever they may be. If the goal at times seems far distant and our quest an arduous one, it is because the true achievement of our purpose would mean nothing less than an ethical revolution [...]”**.<sup>82</sup>

78 15 C/Resolution 10

79 Document 19 C/4; 19 C/Resolution 100

80 18 C/VR.28 (14 November 1974) and 21 C/VR.9 (27 September 1980)

81 In the words of Pierre Kalfon in the UNESCO Courier, February 1975, p. 18

82 Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow UNESCO Courier, February 1975, p. 20

Yet, at the same time that the Board saw an increasing preoccupation with the wonders of antiquity and oral traditions, it turned its attention to space research as a forum for international bridge building. Thus, it received, on 30 September 1963, the visit of Yuri Gagarin (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the first human to journey into outer space.



► Yuri Gagarin as guest of the UNESCO Executive Board, 30 September 1963

***“The age of cosmic flight and bold research ventures in the far reaches of space has begun. I am firmly convinced that greater international cooperation is needed for the mastery and utilization of outer space so that each manned flight and each launching of a space station or laboratory for cosmic research can serve man in positive and peaceful ways”.***<sup>83</sup> (Yuri Gagarin)

The Board welcomed, two years later on 11 May 1965, the Soviet cosmonauts **Valentina Tereshkova** and **Andrian Nikolayev** (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). **Valentina Tereshkova** is the first woman to have ever flown into space, orbiting the Earth 48 times in three days when she piloted Vostok 6 in June 1963. Another prominent guest of the Executive Board was **Galo Plaza Lasso**, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), who came to UNESCO on 6 May 1969.

During the 1970s, the Board continued to strengthen UNESCO's focus on Africa. In spring 1971, the Board discussed the report of a mission sent by UNESCO to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), approved funds and invited the Director-General to seek additional resources for the education of African refugees and other peoples under colonial domination. In January 1972, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would approve a regional project of assistance to African liberation movements to be executed by UNESCO through the intermediary of OAU.<sup>84</sup> In the same year, UNESCO decided to implement a ten-year plan for the study of oral traditions and the promotion of African languages.<sup>85</sup>

Two years later, in 1974, **Joseph Ki-Zerbo**, representative of Upper Volta – today Burkina Faso – was elected to the Executive Board. Ki-Zerbo's contribution to the promotion of African history and the

83 Yuri Gagarin, UNESCO Courier, May 1966

84 Document 87 EX/10; 87 EX/Decision 4.2.5; 87 EX/SR.12.13; 16 C/Resolution 8.5-6

85 17 C/Resolution 3.311; document 17 C/73



understanding of its nuanced and rich culture extended far beyond his four-year tenure as a Board Member. He edited Volume I of the General History of Africa, which represented a turning point in understanding the history of Africa as “the story of an awakening” since “ignorance of one’s own past, in other words of a large part of oneself” is alienating. Thus, by looking beyond the “centuries of oppression, generations of travellers, slave-traders, explorers, missionaries, governors, and scholars of all kinds” and repudiating a story that had not been written from within, only then could Africa reconnect with its authentic self and thrive. He believed that looking back and retracing the history of “a lonely continent if ever there was one”, Africa would not only better understand the past but shape its future: **“Unless one chooses to live in a state of unconsciousness and alienation, one cannot live without memory, or with a memory that belongs to someone else. And history is the memory of nations”**.<sup>86</sup> (Joseph Ki-Zerbo)

In the 1970s, the Executive Board included and received a number of diverse literary, intellectual and political personalities, who contributed to enhancing its ideas and policies. For instance, **Pablo Neruda**,



© Archivo Fotográfico de la FUNDACIÓN PABLO NERUDA

► Pablo Neruda during his time as Ambassador of Chile in France and Member of the UNESCO Executive Board

Ambassador to France and Permanent Delegate of Chile to UNESCO, was elected to the Executive Board in 1972, just one year after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was a Chilean poet, diplomat and playwright committed to the defence and recognition of American Indian civilizations.<sup>87</sup>

**“Poetry is always an act of peace. The poem comes out of peace as bread comes from flour”**.<sup>88</sup> (Pablo Neruda)

Also in 1972, **Nikolai Todorov** from Bulgaria became a Member of the Executive Board until 1976. Todorov was later the Bulgarian Ambassador to Greece between 1978-1983 and went on to become the President of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1985. In 1990 he became acting President of Bulgaria.

86 Joseph Ki-Zerbo, UNESCO Courier, August-September 1979

87 UNESCO Courier, April-June 2011

88 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/tagore-neruda-and-cesaire/convergent-themes/poetry-and-art/>

**Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo**, Ambassador of Portugal, joined the Executive Board in 1976. She remained active in the Organization until 1980. In 1979, she was called to serve as Prime Minister of Portugal, so far the first and only woman to fill the position.

The Executive Board continued to receive visits from many personalities, active in varied contexts, from education specialists to high-level political figures from all over the world. By hosting these personalities, the Board showed leadership in bringing as many voices as possible into the Organization's arena, staying true to UNESCO's mandate of building peace in the minds of people everywhere. On 27 June 1974, the Board received **Todor Zhivkov**, Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Communist Party from 1954 to 1989, and on 9 October of the same year welcomed the representatives of African liberation movements. On 10 October 1975, **Mamduh Salem**, Prime Minister of Egypt, visited the Executive Board.

## MILESTONES FOR EDUCATION AND PEACE

On 25 September 1972, the President of the International Commission on the Development of Education, **Edgar Faure** of France visited the Executive Board. Faure was instrumental in developing one of the most important reports on education, published by UNESCO in 1972 under the title “Learning to Be” which, in addition to the initial French and English editions, was soon translated into several languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. One of the main assumptions of the report was that “only an over-all, lifelong education can produce the kind of complete man the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder. We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life—‘learn to be’”.<sup>89</sup> Faure also emphasized, in an article for the UNESCO Courier, that **“in the long term, education is linked to social and political development as well as technical and economic progress. Better educated people tend to assert their rights as citizens and if there are a lot of them, they press their claims for democracy. [...] Democracy now appears to be the only way of preventing man from becoming the slave of the machine and the only condition compatible with human dignity and the human intellect, and hence deserves our full support”**.<sup>90</sup> (Edgar Faure)

Education continued to remain a main field of activity for the Executive Board. Two decades later, on 30 October 1992, the Executive Board received **Jacques Delors**, on the heels of yet another important initiative in the field of education. Delors, former French Minister of Economy and Finance, who acted

<sup>89</sup> *Learning to be, the world of education today and tomorrow*, UNESCO, 1972

<sup>90</sup> UNESCO Courier, November 1972

as the eighth President of the European Commission, was appointed President of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century. The resulting report was published in 1996 under the title “Learning: the treasure within”, and represents another turning point for UNESCO’s education policies. The Commission was mandated “to study and reflect on the challenges facing education in the coming years, and to formulate suggestions and recommendations in the form of a report that could serve as an agenda for action for policymakers and officials at the highest levels”. The conclusions of the Commission focused on **“the four main pillars that the Commission has illustrated as the bases of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together”**.<sup>91</sup> (Jacques Delors)



► Félix Houphouët-Boigny, President of Côte d'Ivoire and Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of UNESCO, Paris, 5 May 1976

**Félix Houphouët-Boigny**, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire was received by the Executive Board on 7 May 1976. Known as the “Sage of Africa” or the “Grand Old Man of Africa”, Houphouët-Boigny played an important role in the process of decolonization in Africa through his work as the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. His work in peace building and in encouraging the dialogue between cultures and civilizations led to the establishment by UNESCO in 1989 of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize. Intended to honour living individuals and active public or private bodies or institutions that have made a

significant contribution to promoting, seeking, safeguarding or maintaining peace, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO, the Prize has a highly symbolic value.<sup>92</sup>

**“Let us proceed slowly, for we are in a hurry.”** (Félix Houphouët-Boigny)

The first to be awarded the Prize were **Nelson Mandela** and **Frederik de Klerk**. The award ceremony was held on 3 February 1992 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, and was attended by President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, among many others.

<sup>91</sup> Jacques Delors, UNESCO Courier, April 1996

<sup>92</sup> Among other winners of the Prize are Yasser Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres (1993) and more recently, François Hollande, President of the French Republic (2013) <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/houphouet-boigny-peace-prize/>



► Nelson Mandela on the occasion of the Houphouët-Boigny Prize ceremony, Paris, 3 February 1992

Upon receiving the prize, Mandela said: **“South Africa cries out for peace and for democracy. It is our considered judgement that we shall not have the one without the other. What we seek to build in South Africa is a society centred on human needs and aspirations. The oppressed majority in South Africa has waged a struggle to capture for themselves the right to determine their own destiny, including the right to determine for themselves what to do with their future. The**

**indispensable condition for that is the achievement of democracy. We consider that a goal that is worthy of the support of the entire international community. This prize has meaning because it symbolizes that support”**.<sup>93</sup> One year later, in 1993, Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk shared again another prize, symbolizing **“their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa”** – the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>94</sup> Just months before being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress was guest of the Executive Board of UNESCO on 13 October 1993. He became South Africa's Head of State in 1994 and a true symbol of reconciliation.

93 UNESCO Courier, April 1992

94 [https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1993/](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1993/)





► Nelson Mandela as guest of the Executive Board in 1993

***“It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. [...] A man who takes away another man’s freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. [...] The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity”.***<sup>95</sup> (Nelson Mandela)

Under Mandela’s leadership, only months after his official inauguration as President, South Africa announced its decision to re-join UNESCO in 1994, after almost four decades of absence.

**Yasser Arafat**, President of the Palestine Liberation Organization, visited the Executive Board on 21 October 1993. The following year, he received the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize jointly with Prime Minister of Israel **Yitzhak Rabin** and Foreign Minister of Israel **Shimon Peres**. The same year, 1994, the three of them were also jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

95 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, London, 1994 (ed. 2003), p. 751



► Yasser Arafat speaking at the Executive Board in 1993

Yasser Arafat said: *“Just as war is a great adventure, peace is a challenge and wager. If we fail to endow peace with the wherewithal to withstand the tempest amid the storm. If we fail to nurture peace so that it may gain in strength, if we fail to give it scope to grow and gain in strength, the wager could be wasted and lost”*.<sup>96</sup>

Yitzhak Rabin stated: *“Peace will be built slowly, day by day, through modest deeds, and countless spontaneous details. It will be built, step by step, by people. From now on, the making of peace is not a matter for spotlights, for elegant halls, and ball gowns”*.<sup>97</sup>

Shimon Peres said: *“A man may feel as old as his years, yet as young as his dreams. [...] Today as in my youth, I carry dreams. [...] Not all of it came true, but not all of it went to waste. The part that came true created a new landscape. The part that did not come true resides in our hearts”*.<sup>98</sup>

96 Yasser Arafat, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture 1994, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/arafat-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/arafat-lecture.html)

97 Yitzhak Rabin, Speech at the Houphouët-Boigny prize ceremony, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001872/187260E.pdf>

98 Shimon Peres, the Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, 1994, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/peres-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/peres-lecture.html)

# A vision of peace and humanism

The 1980s proved to be extremely eventful, with the Executive Board again playing a major part in shaping both the policy and the outlook of the Organization. The adoption, by the General Conference, in November 1980 of the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Conference for Cooperation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development (DEVCOM) led to a series of changes in the structure of UNESCO's membership, with an immediate impact on its functioning and that of the Executive Board.<sup>99</sup>

The Medium-Term Plan, adopted at the fourth extraordinary session of the General Conference, in November and December 1982, had to be rethought, as one year later, the United States of America notified the Director-General of its intention to withdraw from UNESCO, with effect from 31 December 1984. The Executive Board noted with regret this decision, recalling the principle of universality of the United Nations system and expressed the hope that the Government of the United States would reconsider such a course of action.<sup>100</sup> However, in 1985 the United Kingdom and then Singapore followed suit.<sup>101</sup> Their reasons for leaving encompassed both broader criticism concerning management policies and disagreement with certain programmes.

These decisions had a serious impact on UNESCO's budget and required immediate action. The Executive Board led the consultations. The Board met from 12 to 17 February 1985 for its 4th special session to review the new budgetary situation and determine the way forward.<sup>102</sup> The main item on the agenda was the improvement in the management of UNESCO, a topic on which the Executive Board had already taken initiatives. In May 1984, the Board had established a Temporary Committee to recommend ways of improving the functioning of the Organization. By June 1985, the Executive Board, at its 121st session adopted the second report of the Temporary Committee, which worked in close collaboration with the four working groups established by the Director-General.<sup>103</sup> This is yet another

99 Document 21 C/86, 21 C/Resolution 4/21

100 29 May 1984, document 119 EX/14

101 Document 119 EX/30

102 4 X/EX/Decisions

103 Document 121 EX/39, 212 EX/Decision 3.1.2

instance in which the Executive Board acted directly in steering and supporting UNESCO's functioning. The main reforms concerned the streamlining of UNESCO's programmes, adjustment of posts and refocusing of its mandate.

On the eve of its fortieth anniversary, the Organization faced major budgetary challenges due to the reduction in its membership, but remained steadfast in implementing its mandate despite necessary austerity measures. On 3 October 1986, UNESCO marked its fortieth anniversary with a solemn meeting during the 125th session of the Executive Board in the Main Conference hall, in the presence of Board Members, Permanent Delegates and members of the Secretariat. As a special guest to this event, the Board invited **Juliette Huxley**, the widow of Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director-General.

In October 1987, the Board proposed **Federico Mayor Zaragoza** from Spain for the post of Director-General, a proposal validated by the General Conference one month later, on 7 November 1987.<sup>104</sup>



► Federico Mayor Zaragoza (Spain), Director-General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999

***“Lasting peace is a prerequisite for the exercise of all human rights and duties. It is not the peace of silence, of men and women who by choice or constraint remain silent. It is the peace of freedom and therefore of just laws of happiness, equality and solidarity, in which all citizens count, live together and share. Peace, development and democracy form an interactive triangle. They are mutually reinforcing. Without democracy, there is no***

***sustainable development: disparities become unsustainable and lead to imposition and domination”.***<sup>105</sup> (Federico Mayor Zaragoza)

**Ivo Margan** from Yugoslavia was the Chairperson of the Executive Board during this time, from 1985 to 1987. An experienced diplomat, Margan had been a Board Member since 1983 and President of the 21st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. In welcoming **Mathieu Kérékou**, the President of the Republic of Benin, who visited the Executive Board on 24 September 1981, Margan underlined the importance of the presence of African countries in UNESCO: ***“The voice of your country has been heard often in UNESCO and its wise and moderate resonance has brought harmonious solutions well accepted by all parties”.***<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> 24 C/Resolution 0.9

<sup>105</sup> Federico Mayor Zaragoza, UNESCO Courier, July-August 1997

<sup>106</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000474/047481EB.pdf>



Margan was followed in 1991 by the first woman to chair the Board, **Marie Bernard-Meunier** from Canada, who served until 1993.

**Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva**, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a Member of the Board from 1989 to 1991. Otunbayeva went on to become President of Kyrgyzstan (the Kyrgyz Republic) from 2010-2011. **Edward Gough Whitlam** from Australia was a Member of the Board between 1985 and 1989. Whitlam had been Prime Minister of Australia from 1972 to 1975.

On 14 September 1982, the Board received a visit from **Javier Pérez de Cuéllar**, the newly appointed United Nations Secretary-General, a position held until 1991. Pérez de Cuéllar later became Prime Minister of Peru from 2000 to 2001 and Permanent Delegate of Peru and its representative to the Executive Board for two years, from 2001 to 2003.

***“The cultural dimension of development is today all the more crucial in that culture and knowledge are tending to occupy an ever more important place in production, the economy and indeed all human activity. It is, moreover, culture that moulds our acts and our patterns of behaviour. For it includes not only the physical heritage but also the ‘non-physical heritage’, the symbolic, ethical and spiritual heritage. It is not mere elitist commerce with works of the mind; it is language, thinking, innovation, creation, critical discernment and action that exerts an impact upon the world”.***<sup>107</sup>  
(Javier Pérez de Cuéllar)

Another Member of the Board who later played an important role in his country was **Ronaldo Ronald Venetiaan** from Suriname. He was elected Member of the Executive Board between 1989 and 1991, and then became President of Suriname from 1991-1996 and again from 2000-2010.

Among notable guests of the period was **Maurice Bishop**, Prime Minister of Grenada, who visited the Executive Board on 16 September 1982.

<sup>107</sup> Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/javier-perez-de-cuellar-on-unesco-and-the-cultural-dimension-of-development>

## “A CLIMATE OF FREEDOM AND HOPE”

On 10 October 1989, the Executive Board received **Willy Brandt**, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1969 to 1974. His visit to the Board just one month before the fall of the Berlin Wall, which signalled the winds of change in Europe, remains memorable, particularly because of his position concerning over-armament and development:



► Willy Brandt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1969- 1974), as a guest of the Executive Board, 10 October 1989

***“None of the major problems prevailing between industrialized nations and developing countries can be effectively solved by means of confrontation. Reasonable solutions can only be based on dialogue and co-operation. However, this will not be possible without a new understanding of mutual dependencies. [...] Objectively speaking, all countries - be they North or South, East or West, industrialized or developing - have an obvious interest in more security and less defence spending. And they are equally interested in an improved capacity to tackle global problems”.***<sup>108</sup> (Willy Brandt)

<sup>108</sup> Willy Brandt, UNESCO Courier, May 1988

The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990 symbolized a new era in international relations, which further increased the number of UNESCO's members. Within six months, in 1992, the Organization received eight new Member States.

The 26th session of the General Conference, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, from 15 October to 7 November 1991, reflected this new epoch. The meeting brought together 2,000 delegates and was, in the words of the Director-General, Federico Mayor, a “second birth”: **“For the first time since 1946, a General Conference is being held in a climate of freedom and hope”**.<sup>109</sup>

While these momentous external events were occurring, this same 1991 Conference also introduced an important amendment, proposed by Japan, to the Constitution of UNESCO, concerning the internal composition of the Executive Board. **The Conference decided that starting with the following session of the General Conference (effectively in 1993) the Executive Board should consist of States chosen among the Organization's Member States, instead of individuals who were theoretically independent from their country's government.**<sup>110</sup>

This meant that the name of the country would feature in the lists showing the Board's composition, followed in brackets by the name of its representative, and not the other way around. This decision changed the structure of the Board, with governments and not individuals becoming effectively Members of the Executive Board. A reform along these lines had already been outlined at the eighth session of the General Conference in Montevideo in 1954, and the practice had been moving in that direction. Provisions were made for a set of transitional arrangements.<sup>111</sup>

The 1990s also saw for the first time the rise of women to the leadership of the Executive Board and UNESCO as a whole, with a corresponding shift in general to the role of women throughout the world and in development. During the same session of the General Conference, **Marie Bernard-Meunier**, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Canada to UNESCO and Member of the Executive Board, was elected by the Board to serve as its Chairperson, from 1991 to 1993. This was the first time in UNESCO's history that a woman had occupied this office. She was followed by **Attiya Inayatullah**, the representative of Pakistan to the Executive Board, from 1993 to 1995. She was also the Chairperson to manage the transition of the Board as a result of the aforementioned General Conference amendment on its composition.<sup>112</sup>

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109 Michel Conil Lacoste, *The Story of a Grand Design*, p. 339

110 26 C/Resolution 19.3

111 Michel Conil Lacoste, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 340-341

112 26 C/Resolution 19.3



► View of the Executive Board room during a meeting



## “INSTEAD OF GIVING A RIFLE [...] BUILD A SCHOOL”

The 145th session of the Board, which took place from 17 October to 4 November 1994, saw the visit of **Rigoberta Menchú**, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.



► Rigoberta Menchú as a guest of the Executive Board, with Attiya Inayatullah, Chairperson of the Board, 17 October 1994

She addressed the Executive Board on 17 October 1994: “Her deepest message lay in the truth which pervaded her actions and compelled people to look to her as an example. Social and historical factors had left indigenous people in a time warp, and assigned them a place apart in their own homelands. The Executive Board saluted Menchú’s passionate crusade to defend those peoples and to pull down the walls of doubt, lack of confidence and alienation. She had awakened the consciousness of indigenous peoples and helped them to overcome their marginalization. Finally, she was a shining example of the contribution women could make to the culture of peace”.<sup>113</sup>

***“I think it is necessary that the indigenous peoples, of which I am a member, should contribute their science and knowledge to human development, because we have enormous potential and we could combine our very ancient heritage with the achievements of European civilization as well as with civilizations in other parts of the world”.***<sup>114</sup> (Rigoberta Menchú)

In 1995, UNESCO received the visit of **Fidel Castro**, the Cuban President, who addressed the Executive Board on 13 March. During his address to the Board he said:

<sup>113</sup> 145 EX/SR.1-18

<sup>114</sup> Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, 1992, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1992/tum-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1992/tum-lecture.html)



► Fidel Castro, President of the Republic of Cuba, speaking before the Executive Board, 13 March 1995

*“For our people will develop when there is peace but there will only be peace when the possibility of development is all alike. The growth of the world population, the spread of poverty and environmental degradation are global problems that have joint solutions. These dramatic realities confirm that true social development requires a more equitable redistribution of income, improving the quality of life, and rational and balanced use of the natural environment. It also presupposes the predominance of solidarity among men*

*and among nations, and the right of all peoples to development and to decide their own strategy to achieve it”.*<sup>115</sup> (Fidel Castro)

Another important visit to the Executive Board occurred in 1998 when the scientists **Peter Piot**, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and **Luc Montagnier**, co-discoverer of the HIV virus, addressed the Board. They described the status of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, the activities of international organizations, the need to pursue prevention efforts, and the hopes generated by current research. Montagnier’s optimism at the time, concerning the possibilities offered by the newest medicine available and the discoveries in the area, was confirmed by later developments. However, active support for prevention remained key, and UNESCO, through its Executive Board, played an important role: **“The disease’s treatment will continue to evolve thanks to cellular inhibitors and vaccine therapy, which will make the treatment easier and increase its effectiveness. Meanwhile we must absolutely continue prevention campaigns and explanation of the disease and its transmission, and reinforce research capacities in developing countries by promoting scientific cooperation at an international level. This is the goal of the World Foundation for Aids Research and Prevention with the support of UNESCO. We will defeat AIDS in all countries, or we will not defeat it”.**<sup>116</sup> (Luc Montagnier) Professor Montagnier spoke again before the Board in 2000. Eight years later, he received the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

<sup>115</sup> Transcripts from Spanish of Fidel Castro’s speech before the Executive Board, 13 March 1995

<sup>116</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/bpi/eng/unescopress/98-87e.htm>



► Koïchiro Matsuura (Japan), Director-General (1999–2009); Sonia Mendieta de Badaroux, Chairperson of the Executive Board (1999–2001)

**Sonia Mendieta de Badaroux** played an important role, as the Chairperson of the Executive Board, concerning the recommendation for adoption of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. At its 161st session, the Executive Board established an open-ended ad hoc working group in order to help the Secretariat to prepare the text of the draft declaration on cultural diversity, including the main lines of an Action Plan for its implementation.<sup>117</sup> The 162nd session of the Board took place after the events of 11 September 2001. The adoption of the declaration was seen, in the words of UNESCO Director-General **Koïchiro**

**Matsuura** (Japan), as **“an opportunity for States to reaffirm their conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace and to reject outright the theory of the inevitable clash of cultures and civilizations”**.<sup>118</sup> Thus, the Board recommended to the General Conference that it adopts, at its 31st session, the draft UNESCO declaration on cultural diversity.<sup>119</sup> On 2 November 2001, the General Conference unanimously adopted the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity which emphasized that **“cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature”**.<sup>120</sup>

In 2007, the Executive Board welcomed to its midst **Irina Bokova**, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Bulgaria to UNESCO. She remained a representative to the Board until 2009, when she was nominated by the Board for the post of Director-General of UNESCO, in succession to Koïchiro Matsuura, who had been leading the Organization for two terms, between 1999 and 2009. When she took office in November 2009, as the tenth Director-General of UNESCO, she marked two firsts: the first woman and the first Eastern European to head UNESCO. Her mission statement reflects her belief in UNESCO's role in building peace and bringing real change in its fields of competence:

117 161 EX/Decision 3.4.1

118 Cultural Diversity: A Vision, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127162e.pdf>

119 162 EX/Decision 3.5.2

120 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001246/124687e.pdf>



► Irina Bokova (Bulgaria), Director-General; Michael Worbs, Chairperson of the Executive Board

***“My conviction that the greatest challenge in the world today is the global governance of the twenty-first century, has been reconfirmed. In overcoming the crisis, we should not go back to yesterday’s status quo. The greatest challenge is to lead the world into a new era of peace and humanism, to create more inclusive, just, and equitable societies through sustainable economic and social development, based on science, innovation and new technologies that will serve mankind and will preserve the environment. [...] UNESCO should take part in the global governance debate because its competences are at the core of globalization”.***<sup>121</sup>

Upon a proposal of the Executive Board, the General Conference, at its 36th session in 2011, admitted Palestine as a member. South Sudan was admitted to membership of UNESCO, after it became a Member State of the United Nations in July 2011, and immediately subsequent to its signature of the Constitution and deposit of its instruments of acceptance at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London in October 2011. In October 2015, the Executive Board considered the request of the Republic of Kosovo for admission to UNESCO and decided to recommend that the General Conference admit

<sup>121</sup> Irina Bokova, Mission Statement, 2009, [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BPI/EPA/images/media\\_services/Director-General/mission-statement-bokova.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BPI/EPA/images/media_services/Director-General/mission-statement-bokova.pdf)

the Republic of Kosovo as a member of the Organization.<sup>122</sup> However, at its 38th session in November 2015, the General Conference did not approve this recommendation by the two-thirds majority required by the Constitution when requests for membership come from countries which are not already members of the United Nations Organization.<sup>123</sup>

Hence, UNESCO's membership currently stands at 195 (and ten Associate Members), one of the highest in the United Nations system.

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122 197 EX/Decision 43, Request for the admission of the Republic of Kosovo to UNESCO,  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002351/235180e.pdf#xml=>  
[http://www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=&set=0057CD732C\\_2\\_397&hits\\_rec=24&hits\\_ing=eng](http://www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=&set=0057CD732C_2_397&hits_rec=24&hits_ing=eng)

123 38 C/Res. 69



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# Conclusion

From its inception, UNESCO's Executive Board has been faced with great challenges.

The Executive Board represents the diversity of the world's cultures, its various viewpoints, and many experiences and ensures that UNESCO's mission is translated into concrete policy actions, as approved by the General Conference and implemented by the Director-General and his/her team within the Secretariat.

The Board provides executive leadership, overseeing the delicate balancing act between the ideals of “building the defences of peace in the minds of men and women”, while ensuring the effective implementation of the Organization's programme by its Secretariat, with the collective ambition of achieving UNESCO's global goals, as approved by the General Conference, cognizant of its unique place as a specialized agency within the United Nations system.

Throughout UNESCO's history, the Executive Board has been the key shaper of UNESCO's priorities and agenda from its beginnings, through many turbulent times, during the Cold War, the period of decolonization, the sudden flooding of the Nile River Valley, the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the boom in new media communications. The Executive Board, in collaboration with the Director-General and the Secretariat, has addressed key challenges and new events, providing recommendations to the General Conference, based on consultations with the Director-General, that provide effective responses, by creating new internal practices and establish or modify programmes of action.

The Board helps to ensure the successful alignment of UNESCO's priorities with Member States' needs whilst addressing other internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and, now the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development..

Throughout the past 70 years, the transformations made to the composition of the Board and its evolving rules, demonstrate a subtle balance of Members acting as global citizens within an international organization – a conscious construct of the mind – while remaining representatives of their own countries, with their own distinct traditions, languages and cultures.

Yet it is precisely this constant dialogue between universality and diversity within the Organization, the Executive Board and its individual members, that can advance peace and cooperation through this blend, so that an intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind arises, and can provide a new spirit of universal cooperation that can foster the “defences of peace” in the minds of people everywhere.



► Executive Board Room X

# Chairpersons of the Executive Board 1945-present

Sessions	Years	
1-4	1946-1947	Mr Victor DORE (Canada)
5-12	1947-1948	Sir Ronald E. WALKER (Australia)
13-17	1948-1949	Mr Sarvepalli RADHAKRISHNAN (India)
18-21	1949-1950	Sir John MAUD (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
22-26	1950-1951	Count Stefano JACINI (Italy)
27-31	1951-1952	Mr Paulo E. de Berrêdo CARNEIRO (Brazil)
32-39	1952-1954	Sir Ronald ADAM (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
40-45	1954-1956	Mr Arcot L. MUDALIAR (India)
46-50	1956-1958	Mr Vittorino VERONESE (Italy)
51-52	1958	Mr Gholam Ali RAADI (Iran)
53-57	1958-1960	Sir Ben Bowen THOMAS (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
58-63	1960-1962	Mr Mohamed AWAD (Egypt)
64-66	1962-1963	Mr C. Edward BEEBY (New Zealand)
67-68	1964	Mr Rodolfo BARON CASTRO (El Salvador)
69-74	1964-1966	Mr Mohammed EL FASI (Morocco)
75-80	1966-1968	Mr Atilio DELL'ORO MAINI (Argentina)
81-85	1968-1970	Mr Gian Franco POMPEI (Italy)
86-90	1970-1972	Mr Prem N. KIRPAL (India)
91-95	1972-1974	Mr Fûad SARRUF (Lebanon)
96-100	1974-1976	Mr Hector WYNTER (Jamaica)
101-105	1976-1978	Mr Leonard C.J. MARTIN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
106-110	1978-1980	Mr Chams Eldine EL-WAKIL (Egypt)
111-117	1980-1983	Mr Victor MASSUH (Argentina)
118-122	1983-1985	Mr Patrick K. SEDDOH (Ghana)
123-127	1985-1987	Mr Ivo MARGAN (Yugoslavia)
128-132	1987-1989	Mr José Israel VARGAS (Brazil)

## Sessions    Years

133-137	1989-1991	Mr Yahya ALIYU (Nigeria)
138-142	1991-1993	Ms Marie BERNARD-MEUNIER (Canada)
143-147	1993-1995	Ms Attiya INAYATULLAH (Pakistan)
148-152	1995-1997	Mr Nouréini TIDJANI-SERPOS (Benin)
153-156	1997-1999	Mr Pál PATAKI (Hungary)
157	1999	Mr Christopher J. CHETSANGA (Zimbabwe)
158-162	1999-2001	Ms Sonia MENDIETA DE BADAROUX (Honduras)
163-167	2001-2003	Ms Aziza BENNANI (Morocco)
168-172	2003-2005	Mr Hans-Heinrich WREDE (Germany)
173-177	2005-2007	Mr ZHANG Xinsheng (China)
178-182	2007-2009	Mr Olabiyi Babalola Joseph YAÏ (Benin)
183-187	2009-2011	Ms Eleonora MITROFANOVA (Russian Federation)
188-192	2011-2013	Ms Alissandra CUMMINS (Barbados)
193-197	2013-2015	Mr Mohamed Sameh AMR (Egypt)
198-	2015-	Mr Michael Worbs (Germany)

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► The ceiling of the Executive Board Conference Room at UNESCO, 1964