

**REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL WITH
MEMBER STATES AND NATIONAL COMMISSIONS
FOR UNESCO IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION**

Thanh Hoa Province, Viet Nam – 16 to 18 June 2012

Introduction

1. Delegations of 30 Member States (out of 46) attended the Director-General's consultation with Member States and National Commissions for UNESCO, of the Asia and Pacific region on the preparation of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (37 C/4) and the Programme and Budget for 2014-2017 (37 C/5). The following includes a summary of the opening ceremony and a synthesis of the views and proposals expressed by the delegates during the plenary sessions of the consultation. Delegations attended from: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Cook Islands, Republic of Kazakhstan, Fiji, Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Republic of Maldives, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

2. H.E. Nguyen Thanh Son, President of the Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO and Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, opened the consultation meeting with a warm welcome to the delegates of Member States from the Asia-Pacific region and the representatives of the UNESCO Secretariat. He highlighted the special occasion on which the meeting was hosted by Viet Nam, coinciding as it did with the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO. It was the second time for Viet Nam to host the consultation meeting since 2006. The President thanked delegates for attending the ceremony to commemorate this milestone and stated that their presence was a great encouragement for Viet Nam and especially for its National Commission for UNESCO. It was an honour for Viet Nam to support the organization of these consultations in the current financial situation of the Organization. Encouraging the delegates to use the opportunity to also learn more about the people and culture of Thanh Hoa Province hosting the meeting, the President of the National Commission announced the holding of a ceremony of handing over the certificate of inscription of the Citadel of the Ho Dynasty on the World Heritage List that would be held later the same evening. Mr Thanh Son felt that the inscription of the site on the List was also recognition of the efforts of many generations of Vietnamese people to protect the legacy of their ancestors.

3. Speaking on behalf of Mr. Trinh Van Chien, Chairman of Thanh Hoa Province, Mr. Vuong Van Viet, Vice Chairman of Thanh Hoa Provincial People's Committee, emphasized that it was an honour and joy for Thanh Hoa Province to host this Consultation meeting, which coincided with the handover ceremony of the Citadel of the Ho Dynast's inscription in the World Heritage List. Thanh Hoa had been an important crossroad in Viet Nam and, as such, enjoyed favourable conditions for economic development. The province's long historical and cultural traditions, including the valuable Do Mountain relics, Con Moong Cave, Ba Trieu Temple, the Lam Kinh Kingdom and especially the Ho Citadel, provided great potential for development of tourism. The province also had a strong tradition of learning, with a high number of young people, many of whom pursued their studies at universities nationwide. The Vice Chairman expressed his hope for the meeting to also provide occasions to share experiences in reaching national development targets and building tourism

development plans for heritage sites, contributing to poverty reduction, socio-economic development and the improvement of people's lives.

4. Mr Eric Falt, Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Public Information of UNESCO (ADG/ERI), representing the Director-General of UNESCO, expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Viet Nam for its generosity in hosting the regional consultations of high importance for the Organization. He particularly thanked Thanh Hoa Province for the financial and logistical support provided for the successful organization of the meeting. He highlighted the two important events celebrated on the occasion of the consultation meeting – the ceremony of handing over a certificate of inscription of the Ho Citadel on the World Heritage List and the 35th anniversary of the Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO. Mr Falt expressed his appreciation for the participation of representatives of Member States and National Commissions in the regional consultation, which will provide invaluable insight of common regional priorities with regards to UNESCO's work and programmes. He felt that the input provided from ASPAC regional consultations was of particular relevance in light of the fact that it represented 60% of the world's population. The Assistant Director-General underscored the need to focus activities on identified priorities, analyze UNESCO's strengths and weaknesses, and identify the causes Member States wanted UNESCO to serve. He emphasized that the time was ripe to make the change, which had been discussed at length, happen. UNESCO must remain faithful to its mandate to build peace, eradicate poverty and create the conditions for sustainable development and intercultural dialogue. Finally, Mr Falt paid a special tribute to the worldwide network of National Commissions, an invaluable asset of the Organization.

5. At the opening of the first plenary session of the consultations, the following delegates were elected as members of the Bureau:

- Chairperson: Mr Pham Cao Phong (Viet Nam)
- Vice-Chairpersons: Ms Assel Utegenova (Kazakhstan) and Ms Lucy Moala-Mafi (Tonga)
- Rapporteur General: Mr Neil Walter (New Zealand)
- Co-Rapporteurs: Mr Utak Chung (Republic of Korea) and Mr Kishore Thapa (Nepal)

6. Mr Jean-Yves Le Saux, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Strategic Planning and Director of the Division for Programme and Budget, introduced the discussion on the 37 C/4 and C/5, outlining the new environment of the current consultations: the lead-up to the 2015 MDGs target date and discussions on the post-2015 development agenda; the call of the UN Secretary-General for an integrated approach to human development, sustainable development, economic development and peace and security; the shift to a new planning cycle (8 years for the Medium-Term Strategy and 4 years for the programme part of the Programme and Budget); the recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation; and the decisions of the General Conference and the Executive Board on the preparations of documents 37 C/4 and 37 C/5. He highlighted that the Director-General's consultations were carried out at various fora: General Conference, including the Leaders Forum and the Youth Forum; information meetings (on issues such as sustainable development, culture of peace, gender equality); regional consultations of Member States, including National Commissions; global and regional events on TVET; STI in Africa; etc. The Secretariat had designed a new type of questionnaire including both qualitative and quantitative aspects, intended to allow for a better prioritization and focus. Mr Le Saux emphasized that the Secretariat had received a record number of responses (as at 16 June, 107 Member States had submitted their responses)

which served as a basis for the preliminary analysis made available online and at the consultation meetings so as to facilitate informed discussions on the next strategy and programme of the Organization. Mr Le Saux suggested that the discussions be focused on the following topics: global priorities; overarching objectives; intersectorality; UNESCO's mission statement; functions; key areas for UNESCO's leadership within and outside the UN system; partnerships; operational effectiveness of the Organization; role of National Commissions for UNESCO; and engagement with partners – NGOs, IGOs and the private sector.

7. The agenda and the Rules and Procedures were adopted with minor modifications.

UNESCO's cooperation with National Commissions

8. A special session on UNESCO's cooperation with National Commissions and civil society partners was organized during the Consultation. Mr Eric Falt, (ADG/ERI), made a presentation focusing on the Participation Programme (PP), strategy for partnership with civil society, communication with Member States and National Commissions, and follow-up to the review of the Secretariat's cooperation with National Commissions. Mr Diego Gradis, Member of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, spoke about the Committee's work in promoting cooperation between UNESCO and NGOs, as well as between National Commissions and civil society organizations.

9. As stressed by Mr Falt, the Participation Programme has been adequately managed by the Secretariat in spite of the current financial difficulties. Priority is given to Africa, LDCs and SIDS in conformity with 36 C/Resolution 69. The review process of the PP requests has been speeded up as two meetings of the Secretariat's Intersectoral Committee on the PP were held so far to examine and recommend a certain number of requests for approval. An appeal was made to National Commissions to send any outstanding financial reports to help Secretariat.

10. Regarding the partnership strategy, the delegates were informed that, as requested by the Executive Board, an overall strategy for partnerships with civil society, including NGOs, the private sector, the media, UNESCO clubs and parliamentarians is being produced by the Secretariat and will be submitted to the 190th session of the Executive Board (October 2012) for consideration. Given the important role of National Commissions in this regard at country level, ADG/ERI invited delegations to closely follow up and contribute to this debate.

11. Delegates were also informed that communication with Member States and National Commissions has been improved over the last two years through new communication tools, such as monthly letters, website designed for Member States and National Commissions (www.unesco.int), multilingual promotion materials (press releases, fact and figure sheets, executive summaries, television B-rolls) and online National Commissions forum. The purpose is to provide information well in advance and to involve National Commissions in the celebration of special events and the launching of important reports, such as EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), World Press Freedom Day, Youth Day, Teachers' Day and International Jazz Day. National Commissions are invited to send to the Secretariat information about their activities which will be posted on the UNESCO website for wider publicity.

12. As follow-up to the Report of Review of the Secretariat's Cooperation with National Commissions (available online since January 2012), the Executive Board endorsed at its 189th session the setting up of the open-ended tripartite working group composed of representatives of National Commissions, Permanent Delegations and the Secretariat (HQ and field offices) and asked the regional consultations on 37 C/4 and 37 C/5 to produce proposals on the remit and terms of reference of this group for its consideration and adoption at 190th session. A preliminary proposal in this regard was circulated to the delegates for discussion. ADG/ERI invited the ASPAC National Commissions to nominate their representatives to this tripartite working group (at least two per region) and contribute to costs for participating in its work.

13. In the ensuing discussion, delegations expressed appreciation of the Secretariat's effort to strengthen cooperation and improve communication with National Commissions, as a unique network within the UN system. They agreed that National Commissions should play an active role in promoting partnerships with civil society and contribute to the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) process at country level. There was general support for the proposed terms of reference of the tripartite working group and some delegations expressed their intention to be part of this group.

Plenary discussion

14. Sub-regional groups met on 16 June to discuss the agenda items. They each reported to plenary on the outcome of their meetings on 17 June. During the plenary discussions, Directors of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureaux intervened to outline UNESCO's activities in the areas of education and the sciences in the region.

15. The following summarizes the outcome of the plenary discussions.

A - Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (37 C/4)

As regards the general context in which the next strategy and programme of the Organization is prepared, the delegates:

- agreed that the next Medium-Term Strategy should fully reflect the findings and recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) and its follow-up, especially in the following areas: increasing UNESCO's focus; moving UNESCO closer to the field; strengthening participation in the UN system; strengthening governance; enhancing partnerships;
- welcomed the preliminary analysis of the questionnaires on the 37 C/4 and 37 C/5 as a useful contribution in defining the future objectives and priorities of UNESCO;
- urged that the next C/4 and C/5 should fully reflect the new emerging global landscape, building in particular on the lessons and recommendations of the Rio + 20 conference and on the preparations for the post-2015 agenda;
- recalled the abiding need for UNESCO to respond in a convergent manner to the core challenges of poverty eradication and the reduction of inequalities; sustainable development; peace and security, and learning to live together;
- emphasized the need to further strengthen UNESCO's engagement with UN at global, regional and national levels, ensuring that UNESCO meets the highest standards of UN cooperation;
- urged UNESCO to move decisively closer to the field, recognizing that "one size does not fit all", and recommended that UNESCO should provide a greater degree of choice and flexibility at regional, sub-regional and national levels, within the global framework of the C/4 and C/5, in consultation with national authorities and National Commissions, providing to field units an increased level of autonomy, responsibility and delegation of authority, with proper mechanisms, including in particular the design of UNESCO Country Programming Documents;
- recalled that adequate mechanisms ought to be set in place to ensure that the next Medium-Term Strategy can be regularly reviewed and "rolled", as necessary;
- recommended that, in light of the financial uncertainties facing the Organization, further efforts be made to strengthen the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources to finance priority areas and the building of partnerships.

1 - Key challenges

General support was expressed for addressing key global challenges such as:

- promoting peace, intercultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding;
- responding to sustainable development, including global environmental changes;
- accelerating progress on all Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the MDGs, with a special focus on EFA;
- upholding human rights in UNESCO's fields of competence, including freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and promoting universally agreed norms and standards.

The following challenges were highlighted as being of particular relevance to the region:

- assisting in promoting and building knowledge societies and in addressing key technological development challenges;
- promoting equality and quality, including for marginalized communities, mainstreamed across all programmes;
- increasing regional solidarity in favor of the LDCs, in particular through dedicated programmes, and increased South-South cooperation in areas of UNESCO's programmes;
- giving increased attention to the specific challenges of countries in conflict, post-conflict and post-disaster situations;
- responding to the challenges of rapid urbanization and migration (within and between countries);
- harnessing the potential of youth for peace, sustainable development and poverty eradication, recognizing youth as a global and regional priority, empowering them and equipping them with the skills needed for decent work and livelihoods;
- addressing the particular challenges facing the Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- emphasizing the specific challenges of the ASEAN community and of the Asia and the Pacific region.

2 - Mission statement

- There was broad support for maintaining the existing mission statement.
- The delegations emphasized the need for UNESCO to recognize the importance of building knowledge societies.
- Support was expressed for UNESCO's intellectual and international role.

3 - Global priorities

- There was wide support for designating Youth as a new global priority in addition to the existing priorities of Africa and Gender Equality.
- Delegates highlighted the importance of paying more attention to the target group of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recognizing the particular needs of LDCs, with a special focus on Asia and the Pacific.
- Other priorities:
 - indigenous and marginalized communities, including those in remote areas;

- promoting a green economy and green societies in the context of sustainable development.

4 - UNESCO's key functions

- Delegates agreed that the five UNESCO functions (i.e. laboratory of ideas, standard setter, clearing house, capacity development, catalyst for international cooperation) remain relevant and mutually supportive.
- One delegation suggested that the 'clearing house' function, which is of lesser priority, could be merged.
- Several delegates suggested that UNESCO's role at country level should focus on policy advice and capacity development, as well as on benchmarking and monitoring services.
- Importance was attached to UNESCO's role in promoting international cooperation in its areas of competence.
- Delegates saw value in UNESCO's role in assisting countries to ratify its Conventions.

5 - Overarching objectives for 2014-2021

- There was broad support for maintaining the existing overarching objectives, with the understanding that focus and prioritization should happen at a lower level.
- Some delegates suggested reducing the number of overarching objectives, in particular considering the current financial situation of the Organization.
- Several delegates suggested to delete "through information and communication" from the overarching objective "Building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication".

B - Programme for 2014-2017

1 - Education

With regard to the Programme and Budget commencing in 2014, the delegates:

- agreed that education should continue to represent the most important area for UNESCO's work;
- underlined the abiding relevance of Education for All ;
- called for UNESCO to focus more strongly on enhancing the quality of education to meet the challenges of poverty eradication, sustainable development, and knowledge societies and economies;
- stressed that quality and equality should be emphasized in all of UNESCO's education programmes, and that "learning to live together" should also be emphasized in all of these programmes;
- called for continued commitment to Education for Sustainable Development, mainstreaming its principles into education policies and programmes, and focusing on concrete implementation and delivery in the region, such as the "green school projects";

- highlighted the importance of enhancing education for skills, to promote greater employment and improved livelihoods.

Among the core areas of work in education, delegates recommended to:

a) Strengthen:

- Sector-wide policy formulation and planning;
- Quality education and lifelong learning **for all**, enhancing in particular the education, training and status of teachers, and “learning to live together”;
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within broader education policies, with a focus on implementation;
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET);
- Higher Education;
- EFA coordination, monitoring and partnership;
- ASP Net.

b) Maintain:

- Literacy and non-formal education;
- Advocacy and partnership for education for girls and women;
- Knowledge sharing and foresight in education;
- ICTs in education.

2 - Natural Sciences

With regard to the next Programme and Budget commencing in 2014, the delegates:

- stressed the fundamental importance of further developing science, technology and innovation in the ASPAC region in order to address the multiple challenges of sustainable development, enabling countries to meet today’s social and economic challenges, to address the challenges of climate change and sustainability, to ensure the transition to green societies and green economies, to improve the management of natural resources, to ensure decent work and employment of youth and the welfare of people, and to foster innovation and creativity;
- recalled the need for UNESCO to develop an issue-oriented approach to natural sciences, facilitating the design in the region of integrated programmes and avoiding excessive fragmentation into isolated individual programmes;
- highlighted the continuing importance of oceans and coastal areas, freshwater, and ecological and earth sciences, including wetlands;
- stressed the need to reinforce science education;
- stressed the particular challenges of the ASPAC region in the area of disaster risk reduction and mitigation;
- stressed the importance of continued commitment to improve access to scientific information and to enhancing participation;
- acknowledged the value of category 2 centers and biosphere reserves.

One delegation suggested the development of “sustainability science” as an integrated approach, bringing together individual components of the Natural and Social and Human Sciences programme. Several delegates expressed their interest for this approach.

Several delegates felt that the complex challenges faced by the ASPAC region would warrant specific research.

Among the core areas of work in the natural sciences, delegates recommended to:

a) Strengthen:

- Science, technology and innovation policies;
- Oceans and coastal zones;
- Freshwater systems;
- Science education;
- Ecological and earth systems;
- Natural disaster reduction and mitigation.

b) Maintain:

- Access to scientific knowledge and engineering;
- Broad-based participation in science, technology and innovation;
- Alternative and renewable sources of energy.

3 - Social and Human Sciences

With regard to the Programme and Budget commencing in 2014, the delegates:

- stressed the importance of improving understanding of social transformation and the development of social inclusion policies;
- supported the development of programmes aimed at the empowerment and employment of youth;
- emphasized the importance of pursuing work in the area of ethics of science and technology, including bioethics;
- stressed the importance of promoting social science knowledge networks and research;
- recalled the importance of a human rights based approach to all of UNESCO’s programmes.

Several delegations considered that UNESCO should adopt an integrated approach to all the Sciences, bringing together natural sciences with social and human sciences, and building on the “sustainability science” approach.

Among the core areas of work in the social and human sciences, delegates recommended to:

a) Strengthen:

- Ethics of science and technology, including bioethics;

- Social transformations and social inclusion policies, especially as they relate to rapid urbanization and migration;
- Social science knowledge networks and research;
- Youth as a catalyst for societal change.

b) Maintain:

- Social impact of global environmental change;
- Human rights in UNESCO's fields of competence, with focus on human rights based approach;
- Anti-doping in sport.

4 - Culture

With regard to the Programme and Budget commencing in 2014, the delegates:

- highlighted the fundamental role of culture as an enabler and driver of development, the importance for social cohesion and the achievement of MDGs and the need to develop culture and development;
- stressed the continuing importance of activities in the area of intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity.

Among the core areas of work in culture, delegates recommended to:

a) Strengthen:

- Culture and development, including activities related to creative cities and cultural industries;
- Tangible cultural and natural heritage;
- Intangible cultural heritage;
- Sustaining and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions;
- Intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and a culture of peace and non-violence.

b) Maintain:

- Preservation and protection of cultural property and fight against illicit traffic in cultural property.

One delegate emphasized the importance of UNESCO's role in promoting cultural rights. Support was expressed for arts education for critical thinking and creativity, individual development, cultural identity and social cohesion, and the development of cultural industries.

5 - Communication and information

With regard to the Programme and Budget commencing in 2014, the delegates:

- stressed the relevance of UNESCO's work in the promotion of knowledge societies;
- noted the importance of activities in this sector to the other areas of UNESCO's work.

Among the core areas of work in communication and information, delegates recommended to:

a) Strengthen:

- Universal access to knowledge and the right to information;
- Freedom of expression and the promotion of free, independent and pluralistic media, including training of journalists;
- Preservation of documentary heritage, especially through the Memory of the World Programme.

b) Maintain:

- Civic participation and gender-responsive communication for sustainable development.

One delegation stressed the importance of bridging the knowledge gap.

C – Strengthening delivery and programme management

With regard to strengthening delivery and programme management, the delegates recommended:

1 - Working closer to the field:

- Making UNESCO's field presence and programmes more responsive to national needs and priorities, in consultation with the concerned Member States;
- Increasing decentralization and delegation of authority to Field Offices, with appropriate accountability mechanisms;
- Providing adequate resourcing, especially for regions where Member States have extensive remote areas;
- Enhancing of flexibility of programme implementation at regional and national levels;
- Improving UNESCO's efficiency and effectiveness in light of financial constraints.
- Utilizing UNESCO Country Programming Documents;

2 - Delivering on UNESCO Programmes

- Harnessing the potential of Category 2 institutes and centers, ensuring regional and thematic balance;
- Using sunset clauses, as appropriate;
- Further developing UNESCO's knowledge management policies and structures;
- Developing and implementing effective human resources policies and strategies for better management of the Organization.

3 – Intersectorality

- Abolishing or reducing the number of intersectoral platforms, with the understanding that UNESCO should enhance the intersectorality and flexibility of its programmes, especially in programme implementation at the country level.

4 – Strengthening Partnerships

- Supporting UNESCO efforts to work in partnership with NGOs, CSOs, IGOs and the private sector at international, regional and country levels;
- Developing appropriate and flexible structures and processes.

D – Role of the National Commissions for UNESCO

The delegates highlighted:

- The importance of the tripartite process to realize the full potential of the relationship between the Secretariat and the National Commissions;
- The need to recognize the unique role of National Commissions in the UN system;
- The need to reinforce cooperation among National Commissions and to strengthen the assistance provided by National Commissions of more developed countries to other National Commissions in the region;
- The importance of involving National Commissions in the design and delivery of UNESCO's programmes and in decision-making processes;
- The need to enhance the Headquarters' capacity to support National Commissions;
- The requirement of building National Commissions' capacity in order that they may play a full role for their Member States and for UNESCO;
- The importance of the role of National Commissions in increasing UNESCO's visibility and impact, and of building the capacities of National Commissions to that effect.

The meeting expressed its warm appreciation to the Government and National Commission of Viet Nam and to the authorities of Thanh Hoa Province for their generous hospitality and the excellent support provided to the consultation meeting which contributed to its success.