



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

General Conference

38th Session, Paris, 2015

inf

Information document

38 C/INF.9

6 November 2015

English and French only

Oral Report

by Mr Mohamed Sameh Amr
Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO

within the context of the introduction to the General Policy Debate
at the 38th session of the General Conference

Reports by the Executive Board on its own activities and on
programme implementation in the 2014-2015 biennium

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

3 November 2015

Mr President of the General Conference,
Madam Director-General,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to present to the 38th session of the General Conference the oral report of the Executive Board on its own activities and on programme implementation for the 2014-2015 biennium.

The written report for this item is contained in document 38 C/9.

Part 1 of this document contains the report of the Board on its own activities for the biennium, including its methods of work, while Part 2 outlines the implementation of document 37 C/5, together with results achieved in the previous biennium.

In this regard, I am also pleased to introduce to the General Conference the Report of the Director-General on the Activities of the Organization in 2012-2013, as contained in document 38 C/3, which is customarily presented by the Chair of the Executive Board.

During its 194th session, the Executive Board examined document 194 EX/4-Draft 38 C/3 and decided to convene between Board sessions meetings of the Preparatory Group to consider in close collaboration with the Secretariat ways to improve the format of results reporting, making it more efficient and better adapted to the new four-year programing cycle.

At its 195th session, the Executive Board endorsed the new proposed approach to reporting, and at its 196th session, the Director-General presented the first Programme Implementation Report (PIR).

This document represents a step forward in reporting on programme implementation, demonstrating progress towards results achievement.

It also contains relevant information that the Board can use for its discussions on programme implementation.

By its 195 EX/Decision 4 (5) transmitted to the General Conference, at its 38th session, in document 38 C/22, the Executive Board recommended that the General Conference endorse the new format of the EX/4 and C/3 documents and reporting cycle on programme implementation.

As with the previous biennium, 2014-2015 continued to be a challenging period for UNESCO where much of the work of the Executive Board was directed to strengthen the vitality of the Organization in its efforts to face a difficult budgetary situation.

It is important to note that throughout this biennium, the Board took decisions it considered appropriate to assist the Director-General in fulfilling the 37 C/5, while also ensuring that she strive for greater impact and sharper delivery of UNESCO's programmes within the Member States, while also preserving and strengthening the relevance of the Organization for the future, despite our budgetary constraints.

During this period, the Board expressed its appreciation to the Director-General for her efforts to implement the programme and to achieve the 37 C/5 expected results despite significant budgetary cuts.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

The Board noted key achievements realized in all programme areas – following its prioritization of key programmatic areas, as well as recognizing the progress made in reforming the Organization as a whole.

We also encouraged the Director-General to continue her efforts to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of each of the Major Programmes.

The Board also noted that some activities – by necessity – had to be discontinued or postponed. Corrective measures, including strong extrabudgetary resource mobilization; a strengthening of partnership development; the willingness of Member States to provide secondments, and increased cooperation with external partners were initiatives that the Board gladly welcomed.

Programme implementation throughout the biennium was challenging. However, the Board observed that programme implementation in each of the sectors was always generally on-track.

We also welcomed the Director-General and her team's dedication to execute the Programme, despite the challenges they faced.

The Board, together with the Director-General and the Assistant Directors-General, systematically assessed each of the programme priorities with a view to continuing to sharpen the Organization's focus.

The Board also continued to encourage the implementation of the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa and the Gender Equality Action Plan – GEAP 2, noting that both have helped to strengthen UNESCO's two global priorities.

During the first half of the new four-year cycle (2014-2017), the Executive Board continued to monitor the progress of programme implementation, as well as the reform initiatives undertaken by the Director-General as a follow-up to the Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO (IEE).

Emphasis was placed on defining a new format of results reporting with a view to aligning it with the new programming cycle, and also to help serve as basis for strategic decision-making by the Executive Board concerning programme implementation matters.

Additionally, the Executive Board examined a number of items pertaining to each of the Major Programmes.

I would invite you to examine in greater detail all of the progress made during the biennium for each programme sector, as outlined in document 38 C/9.

Let me also mention the attention the Board made to the Organization's participation and engagement in the United Nations-related processes leading to positioning UNESCO's core mandate areas in the post-2015 development agenda.

In this regard, it examined a series of reports presented at each session by the Director-General on UNESCO's engagement and participation in the global and regional processes leading to the United Nations Summit, held in New York last September, during which the post-2015 development agenda was adopted.

Leading up to the United Nations Summit, the Board:

- supported a stand-alone goal on education (ED), and amended an overarching goal of ensuring “equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030”;
- expressed the need for a stand-alone goal on water (SC), including access to water and sanitation, integrated water resources management, and disaster risk reduction; as well as for biodiversity;
- highlighted the need to prioritize the marginalized and vulnerable groups of society (SHS), to ensure equality and equity, as well as to empower youth;
- strongly pledged for the recognition in the post-2015 development agenda of the key role of culture (CLT) as an enabler and a driver of sustainable development; and also
- emphasized the need for including freedom of expression (CI) and media and for reducing the digital divide.

It is my belief that these requests have been at least partially fulfilled by the 2030 Agenda.

Board Members also considered it important to develop steps and strategies to achieve the SDGs, as well as to define a framework for action at both regional and national level to monitor the implementation of the targets.

It provided a series of strategic guidelines to be implemented by the Secretariat with a view to further raising the awareness of Member States and ensuring that the thematic areas of education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information were properly reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

Distinguished delegates of the General Conference,

Let me now turn to other areas of relevance to programme implementation, for which the Board took action, namely: firstly, our examination UNESCO’s comprehensive partnership strategy, secondly, the state of progress of the reform of the field network; and finally, the improved management of extrabudgetary funds.

1. A comprehensive reform of UNESCO field network was approved by the General Conference at its 36th session. While phase one of the field reform was implemented in Abuja, Dakar, Harare, Nairobi and Yaoundé, and another 11 national offices, unfortunately, the current financial constraints of the \$507 million expenditure plan of 2014-2015 did not allow for the implementation of the field network reform in other regions. We were continuously kept up-to-date on reform progress throughout the period. The Board also sought clarification pertaining to the accountability and responsibility frameworks of field office directors. We also requested that performance agreements be developed for all Directors/Heads of field offices, with clear performance objectives and targets, and accompanied by consistent performance indicators – in order to ensure this accountability and responsibility. Finally, the Board raised its concerns relative to the size and sustainability of the current field network within the expenditure plan and emphasized the importance of UNESCO’s presence in the field along with other United Nations agencies.
2. UNESCO’s Comprehensive Partnership Strategy was crafted in response to the recommendations made in the Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO (IEE). The first-ever biennial report on the comprehensive partnership strategy, was presented to the Board at its 195th session. It contained an overview of the evolution and implementation of the strategy

as well as a consolidated report of progress against expected results. The Board acknowledged the importance of viewing the comprehensive strategy in a transparent manner and encouraged the Director-General to continue reflecting on its enhancement. The Board also requested that it be annexed to the 38 C/5 with targets and expected results for each category of partner covered by the Comprehensive Partnership Strategy, and to present to the next biennial report to the Executive Board at its 199th session.

3. A “Revised Action Plan for improved management of extrabudgetary funds” was presented to the Board during its 195th session. It gave an updated presentation of the processes in place to implement the guiding principles covered by the original Plan issued in 2006, and included updated processes for budgeting and cost recovery that were not included in the original plan. The Board emphasized the need for a coherent and transparent approach in the management of extrabudgetary resources, considering their growing role in comparison with available funds under the regular programme and bearing in mind that many programmes were now relying entirely on voluntary contributions. The importance of strengthened planning, implementation and monitoring, and full alignment with the C/5 and C/4 documents was underscored.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

While the Board constantly requested the Director-General and her team to continue with their efforts towards greater impact of programme implementation within the Member States, on your behalf, we were also aware of the need to undertake a serious examination of our own working methods, with a view to achieving efficiencies and cost savings and to maintain our position as global leader in our fields of competence.

It was felt that with improved governance mechanisms we will not only be a better and more efficient Organization, we will also be a more attractive organization to external partners and potential donors.

This sentiment was confirmed by the External Auditor and during the past months an effort has been made to make this a reality through the work of an Informal Taskforce on Governance.

At its 197th session, the Board formulated a recommendation to the General Conference to examine further ways and means of improving our governance structure.

At the same time, it also recommends that the Board meet more often on a trial basis in the coming biennium to better follow up, monitor and prepare decisions, to better involve non-members of the Board and to improve the working relations with the Secretariat.

Also, within the framework of the Board’s celebration of UNESCO’s 70th anniversary, it decided, during its 194th session, to make full use of its role as an intellectual and cultural hub to organize a series of events and debates under the banner “UNESCO at 70: Future Prospects”.

The objective of these debates was to promote the Organization’s mandate and to enrich UNESCO’s contribution to the post-2015 development agenda. High-level personalities and experts from all disciplines and regions addressed the Board during a good number of meetings that provided insight and perspectives on subjects relevant to UNESCO’s fields of competence, thus enabling Members to make more informed programmatic decisions.

Further information pertaining to the Board’s methods of work are outlined in Part 5 of document 38 C/9.

And finally – also with a view to celebrating our 70th anniversary – an extensive renovation of Room 10 was undertaken.

This renovation project was welcomed and approved by the Headquarters Committee in 2014, with works taking just a little under three months during the summer period in 2015. The renovation aimed at modernizing the equipment used, while also improving ergonomics. This work would not have been possible without the generous support of Member States and private partners, and also the efforts of the Director-General and the Secretariat who brought this proposal to fruition and carried out this project within a very restricted time frame.

Dear Delegates of the General Conference,

Before concluding my introduction to the General Policy Debate, I would like to point out that during the 2014-2015 biennium, UNESCO completed its transition to the four-year programming cycle, aligning its strategic planning and management framework with that of the United Nations system at large.

The Organization is continuing its push for reform in line with the recommendations of the Independent External Examiner (IEE), in order to strengthen its results and impact for Member States.

The Executive Board repeatedly expressed concern about the possible continued non-payment of assessed contributions by Member States. It also recognized the negative impact that such a cash flow shortfall has on UNESCO's ability to deliver effectively in its areas of competence, especially during a time when the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development was being approved at the United Nations.

The Board continued to insist that all critical reforms be implemented to carefully ensure a balance between the immediate need to continue adjusting programme implementation within the current and possible future financial reality we live in while also looking towards our future long-term needs to strengthen our capacity to fulfil obligations set out in our Constitution, as well as within the vision and mission statements outlined in the Medium-Term Strategy (37 C/4), and now also with a view to fully participating in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

With these words, I am pleased to announce that the Executive Board recommends to the General Conference that it endorse our Report, as outlined in document 38 C/9.

Thank you.