

Hundred and fifty-fifth Session

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**THE CULTURE OF PEACE AND UNESCO's ACTION
IN MEMBER STATES**

SUMMARY

The present document was prepared in support of the item proposed by Uzbekistan concerning the culture of peace and UNESCO's action in Member States.

The culture of peace and UNESCO's action in Member States

1. At this 155th session of the Executive Board, there are two other documents which deal specifically with the culture of peace. These are the Consolidated report to the United Nations on a culture of peace (155 EX/49) and the Evaluation report on the transdisciplinary project 'Towards a culture of peace' (155 EX/48).
2. *In document 155 EX/49* the Director-General has presented a new consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. This new version includes elements taken from the contributions of Members of the Executive Board, submissions from Member States and contributions from the United Nations system and other organizations. The document gives a succinct coverage of UNESCO's actions in Member States with examples coming from global, regional and national levels.
3. *Document 155 EX/48* covers aspects of the origin and evolution of the culture of peace and its conceptual framework. It also looks at the main lines of action of the transdisciplinary project and the strategies which are used in its implementation.
4. This document complements the other two documents and presents a brief vision and nature of the culture of peace, the basic principles which are being used in developing its programmes and the evolution of the culture of peace as a global movement. It also gives an indication of a possible role for UNESCO in the further development of culture of peace programmes and activities.
5. Creating enduring bases of peace in the minds of men and women is UNESCO's fundamental mission. The Organization is called upon to respond to the major challenges facing humankind today, such as the prevention of violent conflicts, poverty alleviation, and respect for democratic principles. It is only the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind' which will enable us to meet such challenges effectively. The Culture of Peace Programme is UNESCO's response of a transdisciplinary and integrated set of activities to meet these threats to peace.
6. A culture of peace is both a process and a product. It is a process of confidence-building and co-operation between peoples. Thus the manner of the preparation and execution of activities is important for contributing to this. Representatives of a wide range of opinions are centrally involved in project activities. A culture of peace is also a product in that it represents the situation of an ideal relationship between peoples and countries. Just as the culture of peace must be defined in relation to a constantly changing world, it too is a dynamic and constantly changing notion.
7. The basic principles on which the activities for a culture of peace are based include:
 - (a) support for values, attitudes and everyday behaviours which reinforce non-violence and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every person;
 - (b) the practice of human rights in daily living;
 - (c) promotion of intercultural understanding, tolerance and solidarity;

- (d) preventive action, through democracy-building and poverty eradication;
- (e) learning to manage conflicts, resolve them by peaceful means and prevent their violent destructive manifestations;
- (f) sharing knowledge and free flow of information and ideas;
- (g) a process not imposed from outside but growing out of the beliefs and actions of the people themselves;
- (h) full participation and empowerment of women.

8. In putting these principles into action the activities of the programme are conducted in countries emerging from conflict as well as countries where there is fear of potential violent conflict. Further, activities are conducted in countries of all regions, and from both the North and the South. Among the areas dealt with are the following:

- (a) the planning and execution of national culture of peace programmes which are intersectoral and focus on UNESCO's fields of competence. Within countries, co-ordinating bodies made up of a wide range of opinions or interests and incorporating the NGO community are key to the success of the project activities. These projects can, for example, provide human rights training to journalists, technical assistance in devising peace curricula, training activities with parliamentarians, forums on governance and democracy, endogenous development training for mayors, etc. Their thrust is mainly in educational activities, especially those which promote reconciliation;
- (b) a focus on specific themes which are critical for allowing societies to learn to live together. Some of the topics which have been developed include non-violence in schools and the surrounding communities, the contribution of the media to peace-building, the contribution of the armed forces to a culture of peace and the socio-economic reintegration of vulnerable groups especially child soldiers, the demobilized and returning refugees;
- (c) the development of networking and information exchange, so as to link institutions, organizations and individuals working around the world for a culture of peace;
- (d) the co-ordination of peace-building activities within UNESCO and the United Nations system and the mobilization of a wide range of partners in support of the programmes.

9. It is also important to note that a culture of peace is multidimensional and global in scope. It is linked to security, both political and economic, to sustainable development, to democratic governance and to the development of global solidarity. These are values which are essential to UNESCO's mandate. It is important that situations which threaten or imperil these be met in meaningful activities undertaken in a spirit of preventive action. When the focus is on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance this indicates that the war has had a negative impact. It is therefore urgent to initiate preventive action.

10. Beginning with the fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1995, a culture of peace has been seen increasingly as a priority not only by UNESCO, but also by the

United Nations system as a whole. The following decisions have been devoted to a culture of peace, most of which, as indicated, requested the Director-General of UNESCO to co-ordinate with the United Nations Secretary-General in providing a follow-up report:

United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/173 called for a report on educational activities in the framework of the UNESCO transdisciplinary project entitled 'Towards a culture of peace', which was submitted as document A/51/395;

United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/101 requested a report including the preparation of elements for a draft provisional declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace, which was submitted as document A/52/292;

ECOSOC resolution 1997/47 requested the General Assembly to proclaim the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace with UNESCO as focal point and requested a report on preparations for the Year which has been submitted as document E/1998/52;

United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/13 requested a consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace which has been submitted to the General Assembly (that report is also before the Executive Board in document 155 EX/49);

United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/15 proclaimed the year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace;

ECOSOC resolution E/1998/47 noted with satisfaction the report on the state of preparations for the International Year and stressed that 'the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence is a process of great historic significance';

ECOSOC resolution E/1998/L.14/Rev.1 recommends to the General Assembly the proclamation of an International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010).

11. This interest of the United Nations system coincides with a growing conviction that it is more humane and efficient to prevent violent conflicts than to intervene after they have already occurred. Hence, United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/13 calls for the promotion of a culture of peace 'as an integral approach to preventing violence and conflicts'.

12. The proclamation of the International Year for the Culture of Peace with UNESCO as focal point gives the Organization a unique opportunity to mobilize Member States with the help of the United Nations system and the full range of its institutional partners (National Commissions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society) in the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. The fact that it is the millennial year, the year 2000, will be used to raise public awareness of the need to make the next millennium a historical turning point in the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence.

13. One characteristic of the culture of peace which it is useful to highlight is the importance which the governing bodies of UNESCO give to its linkage with development. The very function of the United Nations is to prevent war at its source through sharing. Development is not sustainable if it is not in a context of social justice. Development if it is

just and sustainable is essential for the culture of peace and must be guided by values - the human dimension of development has to be more than economic. It also has to be intellectual and moral.

14. Thus, the full acceptance by the United Nations of the culture of peace and it being considered in the programmes of agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations family is particularly significant. This implies a new approach in the United Nations, an anticipatory and preventive role to take action which addresses the root causes of violent conflict.

15. The growth of activities in a culture of peace is particularly noteworthy as shown by:

- (i) the number of countries in which actions for a culture of peace are taking place and the growing number of requests submitted to UNESCO;
- (ii) the variety of NGOs, intergovernmental and governmental organizations and community and other groups which are undertaking these actions in collaboration with UNESCO or independently.

16. The results achieved from activities by these groups is also most significant:

the conduct of the activities reveals an adherence to the broad principles of a culture of peace which were set out earlier;

the number of groups and persons contributing to or benefiting from these programmes represent a wide cross section of all communities.

17. The challenges to peace and development are manifold and the types of programmes being developed under a culture of peace will need to address these vigorously. The root causes of conflict have to be tackled in significant activities.

18. As far as UNESCO is concerned one of the most promising modalities is the establishment of meaningful partnerships. A large number of partners are enumerated in the two other documents on culture of peace which are before the Executive Board. However, one group which will be more and more associated with our actions is regional organizations - such as OAU, OAS, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, Pacto Andino, Council of Europe. In working with these organizations it is important that actions are undertaken with the principal beneficiaries.

19. Culture of peace activities are most significant when nationals play a leading role. The National Commissions are, once more, particularly relevant. Through its networking and information exchange the major concern will be education and sharing knowledge to better understand, foresee and prevent violent conflicts and consolidate peace in a democratic framework.

20. Within Member States it is anticipated that the major emphasis will be on activities building up to the year 2000 and then continuing with long-term prevention actions. Society at large will be challenged to develop activities which respect principles of co-operation, social justice and wide participation. The involvement of individuals from all walks of life and of all ages at local and community levels is essential. Further long-term actions which are heavily reliant on education and communication skills are the most important to be supported.

21. All depends on the political will. The best tribute to the future generations is to start the new millennium with a non-violent approach and a commitment to a culture of peace.