



**GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
UNESCO-PARIS**

48th anniversary of the G-77 and China



PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROUND TABLE

**« WHAT FUTURE AND WHAT CHALLENGES
FOR UNESCO? »**

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Coordinator of the Organizing Committee for the Round Table of the G-77 and China

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Preface

Dear reader,

The Proceedings of the Round Table which was organized by the Group of 77 and China on 14 June 2012, on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the creation of this Group, are made available to you in two of the six working languages of our Organization, in French and English.

It is both an honour and great pleasure for me to hand over through this document, the substance of all the interventions that have been pronounced on the 14th of June 2012.

I would like to take this occasion to thank and congratulate the Chairperson of the Organizing Committee of this Round Table, H.E. Dr. Rebeca SANCHEZ BELLO, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to UNESCO, for the quality of the work accomplished.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms here the unique, democratic, constructive and inclusive characteristics of the programme of activities in the different sectors of UNESCO.

Good reading to each one of you, and I hope that reflection will continue to be pursued within our noble Organization.

Dr. Gisèle Marie Hortense OSSAKEDJOMBO-NGOUA MEMIAGHE

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate and Representative of the Gabonese Republic
to UNESCO and to OIF
Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China, Paris Chapter

Introduction

We are confronted with growing tensions and international conflicts, for which we cannot ignore the danger. When the situation becomes more difficult for the peoples of the world, we need a lot more of clarity and firmness, in order to have a humanistic vision capable of responding to the uncountable challenges of the world of today, giving as much as it is necessary.

“When you don’t know where you are going, look back where you come from” according to a Senegalese proverb.

UNESCO has been created as an Organization working mainly for intellectual cooperation, one of its essential aspects, that has been maintained throughout its history. Certainly, the action of UNESCO cannot be exempted from an intellectual preliminary reflection, resulting from dialogue and exchange of divergent points of view. As Julien Huxley, its first Director-General said: *“the action of UNESCO supposes a philosophy, a coherent general doctrine that enables to employ a particular view”*, or in the words of the great catholic humanist Jacques Maritain, after the 2nd General Conference of the Organization: *“The agreement of spirits can maybe affect not the affirmation of a same conception of the world, but the affirmation of the same unity of convictions that drive the action”*.

Several world political figures agree that UNESCO represents a universal effort of critical thinking to get to a pluralist vision of the world, recognizing that the Organization remains to its convictions, because it knew how to adjust to the changes without giving up its specificity and its *raison d’être*.

In 1991, the Executive Board recommended *“the creation of a forum of reflexion Ad hoc composed by a limited number of women and*

men distinguished in the fields of competence of UNESCO, coming from regions all over the world.”. This idea could have been inspired by the International Commission of Intellectual Cooperation of the Society of Nations, ancestor of UNESCO, of which some of its members were: Albert Einstein, Henri Bergson, Sigmund Freud, Maire Curie, Rabindranath Tagore, Gabriela Mistral, Paul Valéry, Miguel de Unamuno, Thomas Mann, Aldoux Huxley.

The Resolution that has been presented by Germany and France had as an objective to reaffirm the specific role of UNESCO to be the “conscience” within the system of the United Nations and to contribute to the aspiration of the founding fathers of the Organization: to create a forum of reflection for the Organization of debates and intellectual dialogues in a global scale, to highest level possible and free from institutional restraints. It’s all about going back to the essential.

In this spirit, the Group of 77 and China, in view of the difficult crisis that the Organization is facing, clearly intellectual and institutional, decided to organize a Round Table to discuss the future and challenges of UNESCO during this crucial period for the Organization.

Member States must unite to save the intellectual, ethic and moral heritage of this institution, that keeps within its walls a long history of knowledge, solidarity and love for Humanity.

This publication contains the interventions delivered at the Round Table entitled “*What future and what challenges for UNESCO?*”, which should enrich our reflections and our debates.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Permanent Delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to UNESCO for having financed the printing of the Proceedings of the Round Table in French and in English, and also to the Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to UNESCO for having financed the Arab interpretation during the Round Table. I would

like to thank as well the members of the organizing committee of the Round Table, the Permanent Delegations of Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Gabon, Iran, Madagascar and Nicaragua, for their commitment in the preparation of this event and all the speakers, intellectuals, researches, journalists, scholars and Ambassadors for their participation in our Round Table and the quality of their interventions.

Rebeca SANCHEZ BELLO

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Bolivarian
Republic of Venezuela to UNESCO
Coordinator of the Organizing Committee for the
Round Table of the G-77 and China

Opening Session

Opening of the Round Table by H.E. Dr Gisèle Marie Hortense Ossakedjombo-Ngoua Memiaghe

*Ambassador, Permanent Delegate and Representative of the Gabonese
Republic to UNESCO and to OIF, Chairperson of the Group of 77 and
China, Paris Chapter*

Madam President of the General Conference,
Mr Assistant Director-General of Education, representing Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,
Excellencies, Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates, my dear
colleagues,
Speakers and guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It has become accepted practice to celebrate, on 15 June of each
year, the date of the foundation in Geneva of the Group of 77 by, as its
name suggests, 77 developing countries.

Today, the Group of 77 and China, which form a supra-regional
group affiliated to the United Nations and UNESCO in accordance with the
provisions set out in the Basic Texts of UNESCO, is made up of 132
Member States, including my country Gabon, which is its Chair in 2012.

Halfway through our term of office and after a lengthy period of
inactivity, we hosted the Forty-third Annual meeting of the
Chairs/Coordinators of the Group of 77 and China Chapters in Paris on
16 February 2012, which I had the honour of chairing. The Geneva,

Nairobi, New York, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Washington Chapters participated.

During that meeting, the following recommendations, among others, were adopted:

- (1) Strengthening of South-South cooperation through programmes of the Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation for the South (COSTIS),
- (2) Strengthening the role of the Group of 77 and China in order to improve the living conditions of populations in the countries of the Group of 77 and China.

You will understand, ladies and gentlemen, that it is as Ambassador, Permanent Delegate and Representative of the Gabonese Republic to UNESCO (Organization to which the Group of 77 affiliated) and to the IOF, that I take the floor to open this Round Table.

The main role of the Group of 77 and China is to assist countries of the South in developing a common strategy to promote their collective economic interests and to strengthen their bargaining power on major international economic issues.

The Group also endeavours to promote South-South cooperation, as mentioned earlier.

Faced with the impact of the current financial crisis resulting from the admission of Palestine to UNESCO, the interruption of contributions from some Member States and the consequences on programme delivery, **the Group of 77 and China deemed it necessary to lead a discussion on the theme “What Future and What Challenges for UNESCO?”**

Answers to the questions asked in our main theme and sub-themes will be given to us in speakers' statements on the five sub-themes indicated in the programme that you have received.

We hope that this Round Table will provide solutions to the various questions raised.

This is an opportunity to come up with a declaration by the Group of 77 and China for the 190th session of the Executive Board.

I would like to emphasize here the importance, in my view, of the choice of main theme and the sub-themes, which arose from the five meetings of the Organizing Committee for this Round Table, meetings of the Bureau of the Group of 77 and China, and Plenary meetings of the Group.

The aim of this Round Table is therefore to develop a forceful position for the Group of 77 and China that seeks to enable the continued viability of UNESCO's programmes, which are useful for our populations, thus contributing to sustainable development in our countries by achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Group of 77 and China considers that points of view need to be gathered from various sources, from both inside and outside UNESCO, which is why you have all been invited to this Round Table.

For, as a wise Gabonese proverb says: "the river meandered only because it wanted to follow its path alone instead of joining forces with others so that, together, they can forge a straight path to quickly reach their goal."

Today, UNESCO and the Group of 77 and China need your strength to reach their common objective: maintaining UNESCO's programmes and activities and making them even more effective.

I thus declare this Round Table open today and I give the floor to Mr Lahcène Bessikri, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Algeria to UNESCO.

* * * * *

Tribute to the Group of 77 and China by Mr Lahcène BESSIKRI

Deputy Permanent Delegate of Algeria to UNESCO

Madam Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China,
Madam President of the General Conference,
Mr Representative of the Director-General,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The subject of my address, as you have read in the programme, is a tribute on the occasion of the forty-eighth anniversary of the creation of the Group of 77, whose first charter was adopted in Algiers in 1967.

The world has changed considerably since 1967. The Group was established in a difficult context, after various African countries' independence, at a time when, as regards the world economy, there was talk of a new international economic order and a new world information order. The countries of the South therefore came together in a homogenous and coherent force to put in place programmes, Chapters and ministerial meetings. They even organized summits of heads of State. There have been several such summits, which have been called South-South summits.

Within the United Nations system, the Group has also established itself in practically all the agencies such as the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP), UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The Group is also very active at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

What interests us here is the link between UNESCO and the Group of 77. The Group was founded to defend the values of sharing culture and the right to education for countries of the South. It should be noted that, despite global changes and the world moving from being unipolar, to bipolar, to multipolar with emerging countries, we have observed the stability and continuity of the Group within UNESCO.

It is important for me to tell you that the spirit of the Group of 77 within UNESCO is positive. We do not operate in a spirit of confrontation, but rather in one of dialogue and exchange. As evidence, over the last few sessions of the Executive Board, many projects have been adopted in the name of the Group of 77 with the backing of UNESCO within the framework of its programmes, in particular COSTIS and the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (IFPC).

To conclude, I would like to say as a tribute to the foundation of the Group of 77 that the delegations that we represent and the diplomats we are, let us maintain a spirit of dialogue with all of our partners and the delegations from other regions of the world. I believe that we must keep this idea in mind at all times.

In short, the Group of 77 and China sends you a message of peace, dialogue, listening and respect, without using words that hurt.

* * * * *

**Message by the Director General of UNESCO,
H.E. Ms. Irina BOKOVA**

**Delivered by Mr. Qian TANG, *Assistant Director General for
Education, UNESCO***

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank you for this opportunity to share my views at this important meeting. This meeting is a moment to celebrate the 48th anniversary of the creation of the Group of 77 and China. This Group has had a powerful and welcome impact on the course of global developments and on the strategies of international organizations, including UNESCO.

This meeting is especially timely as it comes when UNESCO is deliberating a new medium-term strategy. This strategy must find answers to questions that are critical to the future of the Organization – questions about programme priorities, about structures, staffing and the means to deliver, about the current financial situation.

At this critical juncture, I believe it is vital to understand clearly the nature of the challenges that UNESCO faces, and to develop this understanding together. In this respect, I wish to underline that current financial difficulties should not obscure the achievements of the Organization. The mission and mandate of UNESCO have perhaps never been in such demand as they are today. This message rang loud and clear from the 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference. This was the same message I took away from my meetings just a few days ago with the Heads of State of Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, Benin and Gabon. All called on UNESCO to support their efforts in building a culture of peace, in strengthening education for citizenship.

The regional consultations currently underway and the high rate of responses to the questionnaire on the C4 – all of this points to a historic level of commitment by States today.

Since the 36th General Conference, two new members have joined the Organization – South Sudan and Palestine. This is a mark of confidence from countries that know the urgency of peace and development and that turn to UNESCO for support. This has strengthened the universality of UNESCO, to which the G77 and China contributed significantly. Within the United Nations system, UNESCO's flag flies higher than perhaps ever before – the Organization is becoming ever more visible and influential.

The United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has turned to the UNESCO to take forward important initiatives in the sciences and in education. UNESCO is gaining ground in its case to integrate culture into the global development agenda. Joining all of the dots paints a clear picture – a picture of leadership, of relevance, of rising impact.

There is nothing here that could be likened to a “moral crisis” or a “declining trajectory.” This is not to say that UNESCO does not face difficulties. It does. These difficulties flow from the consequences of a decision Member States have taken according to the rules and regulations, in ways that are valid for all Members. We must overcome these difficulties together. For my part, I acted immediately on two lines. First, by launching the Emergency Fund, which now amounts to some US\$ 46 million, to support the implementation of the C5 programme that Member States have approved. Second, by accelerating the reform of the Organization.

With the support of all Member States, I have placed reform at the heart of my mandate, following the recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation. The current situation calls for quickening the pace of reform. To this end, I proposed a Roadmap, approved by Member States,

with clear timelines and targets. I have also created a Working Group, led by the Deputy Director-General, to identify measures for improving efficiency and reducing costs.

The next step is to define the priorities of UNESCO and its strategy for the next eight years. At this stage, the Secretariat expects from Member States a clear vision of the overarching directions for UNESCO. This is why this meeting of the G77 and China is so important. The Organization needs strategic clarity today in order to take the necessary next steps forward.

I will make my preliminary proposals to the next session of the Executive Board. The schedule is precisely ordered – respecting this calendar is a key ingredient for coherent results and success. From this process of deliberation will emerge a clear picture of the major changes the Organization must undertake.

We must seize this opportunity to redeploy our skills as necessary and to build an Organization in the image of the world's diversity. Might an overhaul be required? Certainly, this is the moment to reflect on the role of the Organization and its functions in the world today. Member States know well this is not the first time UNESCO engages in such an exercise.

Each time, the Organization has risen to the challenge before it and overcome it in the spirit of unity and dialogue, never in division or invective. Each time, the Organization has responded by respecting the responsibilities and functions of each of its organs, in ways that were transparent and guided by mutual trust.

Today once again, we must make the most of all UNESCO's partners – including but not only private partners – to strengthen the Organization. We must focus on our strengths -- we must go back to basics. This is the importance of the two priority themes of the culture of peace and sustainable development. 'Sustainability' is written into

UNESCO's genetic code. This is the great innovation of the UNESCO Constitution, which crafted an Organization designed to create the conditions for lasting peace.

Today, at a time of such rapid change, what are the forces that make peace lasting? What are the foundations for development that is sustainable?

For UNESCO, one answer is equity and inclusion – the inclusion of girls and women in schools, the inclusion of all women and men in networks to share knowledge, the inclusion of young people in social life.

For UNESCO, one answer lies in the ability of women and men to withstand the pressure of change and to make the most of its opportunities, to participate fully and according to their aspirations, thanks to quality education, to respect for culture as a source of dignity and mobilization.

For UNESCO, all forms of governance must build on dignity and rights, on local factors, on cultural diversity, on freedom of expression.

UNESCO's contribution is all the more essential today, at a time when the world is debating the contours of a new global development agenda to follow 2015.

In all of this, the G77 and China plays a major role, as will all groups of UNESCO.

Unity in diversity, coherence despite differences – these are the twin pillars that make up the strength of multilateralism.

Both are essential for UNESCO today.

* * * * *

Opening address by H.E. Ms. Katalin BOGYAY

President of the General Conference of UNESCO

Madam Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China,
Mr. Assistant Director-General for Education,
Dear Fellow Ambassadors,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Guests,

My first engagement with Group of Seventy-Seven and China was in Budapest in 2009, at the World Science Forum. This was a meeting organized by COSTIS in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on South-South cooperation in science and technology. I felt really privileged to have the opportunity to host all the representatives of this group of countries in the beautiful capital of my homeland, because I really wanted to listen, to understand, learn, and be inspired by the new ideas. And I am happy that next year the Budapest World Science Forum will travel to Brazil, and have an opportunity to tackle problems in science from a point of view that certainly differs from the one we have in Europe.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate G77 and China with the anniversary. Secondly, I would like to applaud the group for taking this initiative meant to create an environment for collective thinking. It attests to the fact that G77 and China is serious about its commitment towards this Organization, and wants to play an active and constructive part in its future. And thirdly, I would like to thank you for inviting me to listen to your perspectives and to share my own views.

There are times for action, and there are times for reflection. The balance of doing and thinking is a key element in our work. Naturally, we are the movers and the shakers, and it is good to stop for a moment and reflect.

But for me, it is an imperative that everyone in UNESCO thinks together, in the spirit of unity. All the Members of UNESCO hail from different parts of the world and bring with them different backgrounds, knowledge, outlooks on life. We all can learn from each other and share important values and ideas with one another. UNESCO stands for opening people's eyes and minds to the diversity and beauty of our planet, transcending by far one's own cultural or national boundaries.

This diversity fuels a creative energy, which, when channeled into the right direction, can be instrumental in realizing our central aim – to build lasting peace. Peace based on mutual understanding, the realization of our common destiny, and international solidarity is more powerful than any ideology of division, hate, and war.

We cannot talk about UNESCO without putting it into the context of the world we live in. The conditions that brought about UNESCO's existence – lack of peace and security, illiteracy, unethical application of scientific advancements, the need to safeguard our cultural heritage, and the need to foster international intellectual cooperation, to name just a few, are still part of our reality. The disheartening news of unabated violence from many parts of the world affects all of us deeply, and reminds us that for many people, culture of peace remains a distant dream.

But UNESCO should represent an alternative to the world of power politics. UNESCO is a vision of a peaceful world, based on the respect of fundamental international norms and principles. We have the power in this house to transform minds towards peaceful coexistence and to inspire the global consciousness among all people. This power derives from the equality among nations, based on the principles of democracy and

fairness.

Because under this roof, everyone matters, and matters equally. This equality also extends to our responsibilities and duties towards UNESCO – the equal responsibility to adhere to its Constitution. It is a shared duty that we, consensually, have accepted.

The imperative to realize UNESCO's vision of positive peace through international cooperation is urgent, because we have become so interdependent through the social, economic, and technological systems of our own creation. It would be difficult to name a pressing social challenge today that does not call for a coordinated international cooperation to address it.

UNESCO as an Organization needs to prove, every day, its relevance in the face of frequent and rapid social transformations in a complex global environment. For as Benjamin Franklin has said, "when you're finished changing, you're finished". UNESCO needs to prove, through the evidence of measurable impact that it is responsive to changes in the external environment, and sufficiently flexible to keep pace with the emerging challenges.

We have to face the challenges, make a thorough diagnosis of problems, and take actions.

This Organization should be based on trust, solidarity, and the capability of working together in partnership. These are the basic principles that I believe should serve as the compass in our work!

I never shy away from topics that provoke honest discussions and this mentality of mine comes from my professional background; the instincts of the journalist compel me to dig deeply and to maintain commitment to transparency and openness. But it also comes from the times I remember very well – when a dictatorship did not allow us to speak

or even think openly; when every phone conversation was conducted with the knowledge that someone was listening.

So I cherish the freedom to think freely. Questions left unanswered and problems swept under the carpet have a tendency to come back in an exaggerated shape. They also tend to create gossip, and gossip creates more gossip, which eventually comes to resemble a disease that can poison any healthy environment.

I truly believe that we do not have to think the same way, or to feel the same way. Internal disagreements and differences in opinion are natural, even healthy, so no offence should be taken at thoughts and opinions that diverge from our own. To the contrary – this is the beauty of human communication. At times, difficult conversations are necessary to clarify outstanding issues, to reach an understanding among different views and standpoints.

The secret lies in listening. We need to listen to each other, and not to talk only.

The secret also lies in acknowledging the reasons and motivations behind our actions: why are we doing it?! I hope that today's agenda is to work towards a common vision based on which we can create a list of possible solutions! But we have to act in a united manner – east and west, north and south – Member States and Secretariat, all the constituent members and parts of this organization.

If the agenda is to create division, I can not identify myself with it. Nothing that fosters division in our noble Organization can possibly cure our problems. Thinking and acting in the spirit of unity is needed, bringing together all Member States, the Secretariat, the Director- General, the senior management, and the field offices. We need to tap into the collective brainpower of so many creative, talented and committed people. Because the answers to our problems cannot be self-serving, they should

be oriented towards solving common problems from a global perspective.

My father was a doctor in a village. He had a very close relationship with his patients. He always told me that no matter what medication or treatment is prescribed, unless the patient wants to be cured, the remedies will not work, and the health will not be restored.

So psychology matters. While we focus on the problems before us, it is important to recognize the important accomplishments, the success stories, the tangible results achieved by our Organization in the difficult circumstances, under the leadership of the Director-General. If we all want our organization to remain healthy - it will. If our attitude is doubtful and the energy – negative, we will never see our Organization healthy. Because there have always been, and will continue to be problems. To overcome them, we need to talk openly and seek the solutions together.

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Reading of messages from various notable people
H.E. Dr. Rebeca Sanchez Bello

*Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
to UNESCO, Coordinator of the Organizing Committee for the Round
Table of the G-77 and China*

Madam Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China,
Madam President of the General Conference,
Mr Representative of the Director-General,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As the coordinator of the Organizing Committee for this Round Table, I would like to emphasize the importance of holding such events, which are favourable to reflection and debate on the role that our Organization should fulfil in today's world.

A UNESCO that is the conscience of humanity, that fosters knowledge, sharing and dialogue and is a special voice for building peace, must itself make such concepts a reality internally. We must therefore communicate so as to share our ideas on what the future of our Organization should be like for each one of us, whether Member States, the Secretariat or UNESCO staff.

It should be recalled that the review, by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, of the management and administration in UNESCO in October 2011 **urged the Member States and the Secretariat of UNESCO to engage above all in a crucial debate on the Organization's priorities**, since the issue influences many other aspects of its management. This Round Table should be an apt opportunity to prepare the ground for such a debate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour and pleasure of reading to you three messages from eminent people, who unfortunately are unable to be among us today, and to share their vision of "the future and the challenges for UNESCO". These three people served UNESCO and its noble ideals for many years in different capacities.

The first person, **H.E. Mr Federico Mayor**, Director-General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999, wished to share with us the following thoughts on the themes that will be discussed today:

"I consider [that the Constitution of UNESCO] gives not only the responses to UNESCO's problems, but also to global problems ...

In its preamble and Article 1, it enshrines “democratic principles”, the equal dignity of all human beings, freedom of expression and educated humans being “free and responsible”.

The solution to the world’s problems, at the local and global levels, is democracy. For this reason, the marginalization of UNESCO and the United Nations system in general must be countered through the re-establishment of active and efficient multilateralism. In the 1980s, the United States of America’s Republicans created plutocratic groups instead of the United Nations. How can seven, eight or 20 rich countries manage a world of 196 countries?

Fortunately, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Central Asia, India and several African countries remain beyond the reach of the latest actions of western “globalizers”. The time of silence and submission is over. The time of “peoples” (from the Charter of the United Nations) has now come. Things must change ... and the *Constitution* of UNESCO has the solutions.”

The second person, **Professor Pierre Sané**, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences at UNESCO from 2001 to 2010, sends us the following message:

“I would very much have liked to be with you on the occasion of this conference and at a time when UNESCO is experiencing a series of existential challenges.

I believe that in-depth reflection is required and that it should take place within each nation and involve bodies beyond National Commissions.

Long-term radical solutions must be found to the problems that you have identified. Such solutions must come directly from each State to the General Conference without the mediation of the Secretariat but, if possible, by passing through the regional organizations.

Perhaps, however, UNESCO is not yet ready for reconstruction? The crisis is not pushing the Organization off a cliff but rather firmly down the slope of a well-controlled, slow death.”

The third and last eminent person to send us a message is **H.E. Mr Ahmad Jalali, President of the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO:**

“The themes that you have chosen for discussion are indeed crucial and merit serious attention as regards the current crisis in the world in general, and UNESCO in particular. I am pleased that the important and effective Group of 77 and China is participating in discussions on the means of facing these crises through such a well-organized event. I wish to congratulate you on holding this rich programme of discussions and on inviting pertinent speakers.

When I was active in various roles at UNESCO, I suggested setting up open discussions about the future of UNESCO, among which was a draft decision on “the future of UNESCO” that I recommended to the Asia and the Pacific (ASPAC) Group, with a long explanatory note, before it was approved by the General Conference in 2005.”

We hope that we can count on the presence at a future Round Table of these three eminent people, who have each marked, in their own way, the history of our Organization through their unfailing commitment to the ideals of UNESCO.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I also have the honour and the pleasure of reading to you a short extract from a message from the Chair of the Group of 77 and China in New York, **H.E. Mr Mourad Benmehidi**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations, on the occasion of the forty-eighth anniversary of the creation of our Group:

“Unity and solidarity for the development of the South are the watchwords and even the pillars of the Group of 77. Since its foundation, the Group has not only played an important role in development and international cooperation, but it has also been a significant initiator of ideas, concepts and development projects. The main strengths of the Group have been its unity and cohesion, its vision of a fairer and more equitable world economic order, its Member States’ commitment to improve the living conditions of their people and their dedication to mutually beneficial cooperation through South-South cooperation.”

To conclude, I would like to thank all of the members of the Organizing committee for this Round Table, as well as the members of my delegation for their excellent work in organizing this event.

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Part I

Answers to the moral and financial crisis of UNESCO

Mr. Eric GEOFFROY

Professor at the University of Strasbourg

Madam Chair of the Group of 77 and China,
Madam President of the General Conference,
Mr. Representative of the Director-General,
Ambassadors,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The moral and financial crisis that UNESCO is going through is a telling symptom of the global crisis of meaning that is currently affecting humanity. According to the great spiritual traditions, we are experiencing the end of a major cycle in humanity. This appears all the clearer since the corollary of this “descent” at the end of the cycle is an acceleration in the global processes at work in the world. For example, how we experience time and space is completely different from how our grandparents did, and the computer revolution is undoubtedly one of the main transformations that humanity has known. In fact, we are directly witnessing the failure of the type of “modernity” imposed on the world by Europe beginning in the sixteenth century and later by the United States in the twentieth century. This modernity – for various human civilizations have proposed other kinds of modernity in the past – is ultimately schizophrenic because it promises material, technological and scientific “progress” without any concern for the spiritual development of humanity. Thus, Emir Abdelkader, founder of the Algerian state in the nineteenth century and, especially, a spiritual Muslim anchored in the universal, observed the Europeans’ technical progress and warned them that “heaven” would close over them.

The human conscience today, trained by this Western model while noticing its increasing aberrations, has proved, for the moment, incapable of developing a global ethic founded on what I call “spiritual humanism”. This failure can be seen every day in the geopolitical arena.

Whether one likes it or not, whether one is aware of it or not, however, we are in the midst of a paradigm shift. After experimenting with mythos – the era of myth – and with theos – the era of theology – humanity must now go from logos to holos, or “universal conscience”. We must – for we hardly have the choice – free ourselves from the tyranny not of reason as such, but of instrumentalized “reason”, of a logos subservient to utilitarianism and to partisan and unilateral profit. We must divest ourselves of our one-eyed – for one-dimensional – vision of the world, in

order to recover a vision “in relief”, in which reason and intuition, universal awareness and local awareness, experimentation in the world of phenomena and inner experience intersect verticality and horizontality. This is already occurring, but with major tensions due to the significance of the stakes. The holistic conscience knows that we are all interdependent, and that to hurt others is to hurt oneself. The Sufi Ibn ‘Arabî (d. 1240) told us that we were under the illusion of living in autonomous bodies or entities, whereas we were really all connected by the unique and complex web of life. The famous “butterfly effect” has been explored for a long time by mystics of all traditions.

We therefore have no other choice but to abandon the pyramidal model based on merely “having”, on injustice, competition, duality and a hypertrophy of the mental calculator and instead to adopt the model of the circle, which gives priority to “being”, equality (there is neither first nor last in a circle) and the principle of a generous Oneness that encompasses the multiplicity of the living. This second model gives a right to every level of being. In the history of humanity, the civilization arising from Western modernity is the only one to have denied the existence of aspects of being other than material ones.

It is true that religions themselves have at times lapsed into what the Tibetan lama Trungpa called “religious materialism”. They sometimes impose a vision that reduces and distorts reality as much as techno-scientific positivism. Will spirituality distinguish itself from established religions and take more diffuse, more secular forms? It is a movement that seems at work today. While some authors such as the French metaphysician René Guénon (d. 1951) hoped that the East would fertilize the West so that the latter might rediscover a balance between spirit and matter, it must be said that the consumerist temptation now affects all human societies, each one according to its own evolutionary cycle.

In truth, what we call postmodernity signals the end of certainties. This is one of the advantages of the computer revolution: the hypocrisy of

the system of world governance is revealed a little more every day. Pretences fall and, to use a Sufi expression that also belongs to the physician Bernard d'Espagnat, "the veiled reality" is unveiled. One can even precisely measure today people's anxiety caused by unbridled globalization and the imperialism of techno-capitalism, as well as its impact on the psychic and physical health of humans, not to mention the other kingdoms.

Spirituality seeks to open up humans' cognitive field to the universal, to the presence of others, whoever they may be. In a context in which markers are crumbling and multipolarity remains geopolitically muddled, spirituality teaches us to decondition our false identities, which are produced by the ego. I am thinking, in connection with UNESCO, of State nationalisms that do so much damage in the world today. Spirituality also teaches us to leave behind exclusivist binary logic (yes or no, you or me) to reach an inclusive supra-logic called the "included middle" (tiers inclus) by some physicians: yes and no, you and me. For, ultimately, whether we call it the Principle, God or something else, it governs us.

Those who feed on the current politico-economic system of governance know only too well that, because of the hegemony of this system, humanity is heading for a fall. They even call for a global republic, a universal council of wise people. We are certainly all full of contradictions – and not just them – but working on oneself is urgently required to facilitate the transition between this world that is ending and the one that must be born. Working on oneself, as we know, is a prerequisite for all other spiritual progress, and this applies equally to the individual, the State and humanity as a whole.

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H.E. Mr. Jean MUSITELLI

Member of the French Conseil d'État, former Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of France to UNESCO (1997-2002)

I should like to thank most sincerely the organizers of the Round Table for inviting me to these halls that echo with memories of the intense moments that I experienced here. I would like to congratulate warmly the Group of 77 and China for taking the initiative to launch a far-ranging and timely discussion, thus demonstrating your countries' attachment to UNESCO, this unparalleled institution that France is proud to host on its territory.

You have asked me to talk about the moral and financial crisis. There are surely internal reasons relating to the Organization behind this crisis. It is not my role, as an external observer, to analyse them however. It seems to me that this crisis reflects above all the current state of the world, which is not brilliant, either in moral or financial terms.

Our international society, if we look at it objectively, resembles a jungle more than the community that it claims to be. The brutality of power struggles too often trumps the virtues of dialogue. Our globalized civilization has too much of a tendency to cultivate the illusion that technology will solve problems that are the sole responsibility of humans.

In this context, UNESCO illustrates the necessity of a preserved enclave in which vital issues relating to the future of humanity, such as education, science and culture, can be thought about and debated away from any economic conditioning, ideological instrumentalization or hegemonic aims; an enclave in which appropriate rules can be drawn up collectively for the good of the greatest number.

Globalization has had contrasting effects on UNESCO. On the one hand, the cultural planetary landscape in which the Organization operates, once shaped primarily by State policies, is now structured by markets and networks, entities that are not known for the transparency of their operations nor their concern for general interests. For Edgar Morin, an old friend to this Organization, “globalization, far from invigorating a planetary humanism, encourages, on the contrary, the abstract cosmopolitanism of business and a return to closed particularisms”. This context raises, in radically novel terms, questions about access to culture, sharing knowledge, the freedom to create, the circulation of works and of knowledge, and the fairness of exchanges, which are at the very core of UNESCO’s mission.

Yet globalization, as it is taking shape under our eyes, can also offer UNESCO, if it knows how to seize it, the opportunity to play a leading role. Globalization redistributes power among players. New countries come to the forefront. Globalization also shuffles the cards of intelligence. After being, in a first phase, identified with the Westernization of the world, globalization has become truly multipolar. This does not mean that harmony and equity will automatically arise from it. The multipolar world can take a supportive or competitive, cooperative or competitive, chaotic or organized form. The task of UNESCO is, precisely, to orient globalization in the right direction, towards dialogue, cooperation and regulation.

How should UNESCO go about meeting this challenge? How can it influence the course of events on its shoestring budget (let alone when the United States is withholding its contribution to punish it for admitting Palestine as its 195th Member State) and with its vacillating will, when faced with the firepower of giant firms such as Google, Facebook and Apple? It will succeed only if it is forced to rethink lucidly its objective and methods.

UNESCO has always wondered whether it is first of all an

intellectual forum or an operational organization. It must clearly be both and dialectically structure these two functions. It is not, however, an academy, nor a dispenser of subsidies in the name of humanitarian urgency. As early as 1947, the philosopher Jacques Maritain, in a speech given at the General Conference in Mexico City, pointed out that “agreement between minds can be reached spontaneously, [...] not on the affirmation of one and the same conception of the world, of man and of knowledge, but upon the affirmation of a single body of beliefs for guidance in action”.

That is what UNESCO should be: intelligence in action. One expects the Organization to be a producer of standards and a conductor of international intellectual cooperation; expects it to combine, with the utmost efficiency in its fields of competence, the prescriptive and the operational, principles and action.

Despite its limits, UNESCO has demonstrated throughout its history a real capacity to adapt and to bring creative responses to the challenges of its time. The example of world heritage, an acknowledged flagship activity, is a convincing illustration of this synthesis of conceptual development and application in the field. Let us also remember the importance of the Organization’s standard-setting work over the last 15 years, in particular the adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights in 1997, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, then the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005, and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003.

UNESCO must also resist the temptation to have its finger in too many pies and instead concentrate on what is essential. It should stop accumulating micro-programmes to satisfy immediate needs, to the detriment of the long term. At the 36th session of the General Conference in November 2011, a host of piecemeal programmes once again

appeared. This could be perceived as a sign of vitality, but also an example of costly dispersion, an incapacity to prune dead branches and a problem in setting and ordering priorities.

Choosing priorities means being able to intervene in key areas, those that determine the evolution of the world. It means applying one's strength where there is the best chance of obtaining a tangible result, tackling the major challenges of today armed with the universalist humanism that inspired the Constitution. I shall give some examples.

UNESCO should seriously consider the status of knowledge in the digital world. Who will determine it? Knowledge producers or the digital industries? Who will be the prescribers of the new ecology of knowledge? Who will draw up the protocols and monitor the applications? The illusion that the mere mastery of a technological tool gives everyone and anyone access to knowledge must be denounced. Remember that there is no knowledge without critical thought and no education without transmission, that is, without a human relationship that supports it and gives it meaning. The temptation to replace teachers and educators with computers must be resisted. UNESCO must set itself the objective of ensuring homo numericus remains homo sapiens.

UNESCO should also make sure it understands the effects of the arrival of a globalized education market. For a market entails the encounter of solvent supply and demand. We are thus witnessing the gap widen between the privileged who have access to the most sought-after training and qualifications on the job market and those who, because of a lack of resources, can only receive second-rate training. The recent arrival of "education hubs", platforms for higher education that seek at great expense to attract the most prestigious universities, is one illustration. One can, of course, be glad that the geography of knowledge is diversifying and becoming more international. The risk, however, is that through investment in educating increasingly high-performance elites, the education of disadvantaged populations will be neglected. For our world

needs, it seems to me, to raise the average level of education of all of its inhabitants in order to ensure progress and democracy, rather than produce elites who are overeducated but cut off from reality. The outcome can be seen in the financial sector.

A third decisive issue is the education of girls and women. Gender inequality in access to education is one of the major scandals of the world today. Two thirds of illiterate people in the world are women. Yet it has been shown that raising the level of girls' education is one of the most effective driving forces for social progress and economic development. Such inequality in access to knowledge is all the more intolerable when it comes in the form of a plain and simple ban on attending school or university. UNESCO is better placed than any other organization to seize this problem and rally international opinion against this modern form of obscurantism.

The culture sector has also been shaken by the multiform impact of globalization. Fifteen years ago, we launched here the famous slogan "culture is a unique commodity". The result was the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, to which UNESCO rallied and which considerably influenced the balance of power between culture and commerce, the latter having sought to subject the former to its laws. Today, the question that arises relates to the future of cultural diversity in the digital universe. While digital networks enable spaces for creation, dialogue and freedom to be created, in particular in non-democratic regimes, they are also cannibalized by commercial interests seeking to have vast pools of captive and passive consumers. Public authorities seem at a loss faced with large multimedia conglomerates that are constantly restructuring and reinventing themselves. These questions will receive satisfactory solutions only through international cooperation of which UNESCO, backed by the 2005 Convention, must be the leader. Confronted with the failures of the market and the omnipotence of the oligopolies, collective rules are indispensable to ensuring free and unrestricted access to knowledge, freedom of

expression and creation, respect for privacy and protection of copyright.

The world arena has become more complex and less predictable. More than ever, we need strong, effective and well-coordinated multilateral institutions to face the global challenges assailing humanity, as well as joint organizational rules, negotiated collectively, in order to rebuild international legality on more supportive and better accepted foundations.

For UNESCO to regain confidence in itself (and thereby overcome its moral crisis) and regain the confidence of public and private donors (and thereby have a chance of resolving its financial crisis), it must be more ambitious, more imaginative and more demanding as well as more disturbing. The Organization should not hold back from rattling established interests or challenging the status quo, which only benefit the rich and powerful.

To this end, UNESCO must express itself on its method and political will. In terms of method, it needs to draw up a list of priorities centred on a limited number of flagship programmes that strike international opinion with their relevance and real impact. As for the political will, it must be capable of bringing together the maximum amount of energies for a shared objective. I am happy to note that the Group of 77 and China have amply demonstrated, by holding this Round Table, their desire for a strong and respected UNESCO that, refusing to accept the fallout from unbridled globalization, is capable of influencing the course of events towards the common good of humanity.

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The reconstruction of UNESCO in the face of current challenges

H.E. M. Olabiyi Babalola Joseph YAI

Ambassadeur, Délégué Permanent du Bénin auprès de l'UNESCO

H.E. Mr Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yai

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Benin to UNESCO

I. Introduction

I must at the outset refute the argument that it is not proper to speak at UNESCO about a “moral and intellectual crisis” and that the Organization is at the very most facing financial problems due to circumstances.

I also refute the thesis that bluntly denies that there is any crisis, which is supposed to exist only in the minds of pessimistic diplomats from the South. However, this sort of denial concerning UNESCO does not stand up to closer study, even though, if repeated often enough, it may take in honest people well-disposed towards UNESCO, including within our own Group (G-77 and China).

Leaving aside those – few in number, I trust – who prefer to bury their heads in the sand, I believe that you have to have either an extremely short memory or little familiarity with the life of UNESCO to put faith in the argument that UNESCO is not being consumed by a moral and intellectual crisis – and therefore an existential one. But I spoke of **refutation**. I want to take three symptomatic examples as the basis of my refutation.

1. Peter Smith case

At the 176th session of the Executive Board in March 2007, the report by the External Auditor, the late lamented Philippe Séguin, revealed:

In conclusion, our audit shows that UNESCO had occasion to pay \$2.1m to a consultancy firm selected in breach of the rules and regulations. This failure to comply with the rules was deliberate and did not arise from defective procedures. The possibility of reforming the Education Sector on the basis of existing reviews and in-house expertise was ruled out. The amounts paid were substantial, over a period of more than 18 months, and were not negotiated in any verifiable manner.

This was, put plainly, fraudulent misuse of Member States' money for the benefit of a firm called Navigant which had no expertise in education or any other UNESCO field. People who have looked into the matter more closely say that the firm belonged to the girlfriend of the Assistant Director-General for Education. Further investigation has shown that this senior UNESCO official was convicted at both first instance and appeal by the courts of the state of California for racism in a university of that state, where he was employed.

Do we not have good reason to speak of a crisis when the sanctuary of UNESCO is open to thieves and racists? And the crisis becomes even more worrying when we know that no action has been taken against this senior official for such a serious abuse of office. Worse yet, the Administrative Officer (AO) whose honesty, uprightness and attachment to proper observance of procedures resulted in the discovery of his superior's misconduct suffered constant harassment and threats on the other hand and was eventually transferred. Some six months later, this conscientious officer was actually separated from the Organization following terrible pressure and blackmail to force him into accepting, in fewer than five days, one of three posts offered with no specific duties for his category or grade

– in short, he was to be paid to do nothing, failing which he was given to understand that he would lose some or all of the rights acquired during almost twenty-five years of faithful service at UNESCO. Steadfast in his principles, the officer preferred separation, agreeing to a drastic cut of thirty thousand United States dollars (US \$30,000) a year in his retirement pension, not to mention the incalculable moral sacrifice that he is continuing to make even now. Knowing that this officer, Rumman Rahim by name, is a citizen of Bangladesh, while the former Assistant Director-General for Education, Peter Smith, was a citizen of the United States of America, we may safely infer that there is one rule for some and another for all the rest at UNESCO: you can be racist and violate the Organization’s rules with impunity if you come from a “rich” country; and you can be honest and scrupulously respect the Organization’s rules and yet be harassed and bullied by the Secretariat management, while Member States show indulgence or indifference, if you come from a “poor” country. It is this picture of injustice, arrogance and punishment of the weakest – poles apart from what UNESCO is supposed to represent – that is shocking, indicative of the crisis and the need to refound our Organization.

2. Pulping of books and archives

At its 179th session, the UNESCO Executive Board, in its decision on the “Performance audit 2006-2007 on UNESCO’s publication activities”, declared that it was “deeply disturbed by the inappropriate and unauthorized destruction of a large volume of historical and literary works published by UNESCO, without carrying out any kind of consultations with Member States in order to determine the fate or alternatives for the distribution of these works” (179 EX/Decision 31).

A large volume indeed, since it comprised more than 94,500 works, of which a substantial proportion concerned the

- *General History of Africa,*

- *General History of the Caribbean*, and
- *History of Humanity*.

They were conveyed to Belgium at great expense and crushed, in a world hungry for reading matter and books, especially in our countries, and by our Organization mandated under Article 1, paragraph 2.(c), of its Constitution to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge “by assuring the conservation and **protection of the world’s inheritance of books** [...]”.

This twenty-first century auto-da-fé – not in some obscurantist state in the so-called Third World but at the heart of an organization that is supposed to be the brain of the United Nations system – speaks volumes about our degeneration.

The same Executive Board decision “takes note of the Director-General’s intention to clarify the facts concerning the destruction of the publications, identify the chain of responsibility, and take all measures necessary to ensure that such a situation never occurs again”. To date, “the Director-General’s intention to clarify the facts” has not been translated into action. This might be explained by the fact that one of the people responsible for the auto-da-fé is of the same nationality as the Director-General. Here again laxness, irresponsibility, injustice and impunity have prevailed.

3. **De facto right of veto at UNESCO**

For ten years now, a group of States, mainly from the OECD and including founding Members of UNESCO, has been forcing a **zero nominal growth budget** on the Organization. The reason given by these Member States to justify this drastic new budgetary policy is that until the end of the twentieth century (1998) the Organization’s Administration was too lax and chaotic. Whether or not this criticism is well-founded, the intention to reform was valid and welcome. The new Administration then introduced current business management standards into UNESCO. There

thus appeared the now cardinal concept of “results-based management” (RBM). The intellectual failure of which we are all guilty, including G-77 members and China, is not subjecting this RBM concept to rigorous analysis, which would have revealed its limitations and unsuitability. For it is obvious that an educational or cultural programme cannot be run on the same line as a factory. Moreover the results that may be expected from a programme in the field of education, culture or human sciences cannot be easily measured, especially with a two-year budget cycle such as UNESCO’s.

In any case, within a few years the then Director-General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, had put the Administration and UNESCO’s finances back on course to the satisfaction of the most exacting States. Since the accusation of laxness on the Organization’s part no longer stands up, it is hard to understand why the same Member States insist on imposing a zero nominal growth budget on UNESCO for a prolonged period. This is paradoxical behaviour on their part: the States that impose business management standards on UNESCO must know that any business operating a zero growth budget over a long period is doomed to go under. The same States that are forcing the humiliation of zero nominal growth upon UNESCO’s regular budget have made sure that extrabudgetary contributions, of which they are the main source, have overtaken the regular budget in volume. They thus increase their leeway for imposing the programmes that they prefer and using UNESCO to promote bilateral cooperation policies. These practices and the recent decision by the United States of America to suspend its contributions to the regular budget suggest that, as they have no right of veto at UNESCO, some States have decided to employ methods that give them a **de facto right of veto**.

How then can we read these strategies and subterfuges, which occur only in our Organization in the United Nations, other than as an intent to stifle UNESCO and programme its destruction and, therefore, as a manifest lack of faith in its ideals?

These three examples, and I could give many others, show that UNESCO has begun, like the proverbial fish, to rot from the head down ... and from the heart.

We therefore have good reason to talk about a crisis and a refounding, since the very foundations of UNESCO are being attacked. This is a summons to engage in “the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth” (sixth preambular paragraph of the Constitution) to find a solution to this many-sided crisis, three of whose aspects I shall now briefly discuss.

I take the liberty of dwelling on this pursuit of truth and cannot do better than repeat the unmatched adage of a former Director-General of UNESCO, J. Torres Bodet:

“The other name for UNESCO is truth.”

II. First aspect of the crisis: absence of genuine intellectual debate

UNESCO is increasingly being avoided by the best minds: the philosophers, scientists, distinguished economists and men and women of culture who used to see it as a rite of passage are now neglecting it more and more. We are struggling to play our role as a breeding ground for ideas, enshrined in the Constitution, because we have run out of ideas for imagining the world and consequently lack the intellectual tools for suggesting cures for its wounds. There are at least two reasons that may to some extent explain the loss of interest in UNESCO by intellectuals, scientists and men and women of culture: firstly, they identify less and less with our programmes, whose content in terms of humanism and the other values that governed the emergence of the Organization has decreased and been attenuated over recent years; secondly, it must be said, they do not regard the heads of our sectors and divisions as valid interlocutors for the simple reason that most of our officials would not rank as their peers in the best education and research institutions in the world.

One sign of this attenuation of values and decline in expertise is UNESCO's downgrading of the *UNESCO Courier*, the most iconic of its publications, at the start of the twenty-first century.

The Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS), formerly a hub of international thought and new ideas, has been hounded by repeated attempts at destabilization. Some Member States have even tried to kill it off by suggesting that it be moved to the Sciences Sector in the hope of burying it there.

The Sector has now become so weak that UNESCO has dropped the ICPHS (International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies) and its celebrated journal *Diogenes*, which was published under the auspices of the ICPHS with our Organization's support. This abandonment is a strong indication of UNESCO's decline and the rise within it of a worrying philistinism.

The Director-General is well aware of the Organization's intellectual deficit. By reviving the idea of a **new humanism**, an idea already put forward within UNESCO in the 1960s by the Brazilian Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro, she doubtless intended UNESCO to assume its intellectual role. The Director-General's project was and is still relevant. If it had been implemented, in line with others of a similar nature, such as the "*Rabindranath Tagore, Pablo Neruda and Aimé Césaire for a Reconciled Universal*" programme, it would have been a first step towards the intellectual **aggiornamento** that UNESCO so badly needs. Unfortunately, the management team has to date proved incapable of suggesting a forum and thinkers able to give this project a content appropriate to the times in which we are living. Thus the "new humanism", a fine idea on the Director-General's part, has remained a catchword in UNESCO, still waiting to become a concept whose content could make it an operational programme.

The situation is not much brighter for our governing bodies. The Executive Board, which not so long ago was renowned for its debate, has

been overtaken by what the German philosopher Hartmut Rosa calls “acceleration”: much is said about **consensus** in the Executive Board, and rightly so, but the truth is that we do not always give ourselves enough time to reach a genuine consensus. It is a truth as old as the hills, but still relevant today, that democracy and consensus are time-consuming matters. Africans are well aware of this; they have traditionally organized and attached great importance to **palavers**, which lay emphasis on listening, on taking time to listen and on the force of argument. In regard to modern societies and international organizations such as ours, Hartmut Rosa says, with reason: “Democratic (deliberative) decisions and decision-making make it necessary to identify and organize all groups concerned, frame programmes and arguments, articulate the collective will and, last but not least, collectively seek the best arguments. In the late modern conditions of postconventional pluralism and global complexity, this process actually takes even longer.” Yet the Executive Board takes literally Benjamin Franklin’s famous motto “time is money” and pays little heed to the adverse effects of our self-imposed time structures on democracy and consensus within the Organization. Thus Member States are building monologue on monologue without any real exchange. At most, they may talk individually to the Secretariat during the general policy debate, which is nevertheless a cornerstone of the Organization’s approach. We spend less and less time on discussion of ideas and instead take refuge in battles over procedure, thus obliging the Secretariat to engage in unproductive “copy and pasting” from session to session rather than – as we might expect – spurring, supporting and collaborating in serious reflection.

III. Second aspect of the crisis: one-dimensional hyperpoliticization

For some years now we have been witnessing a one-dimensional hyperpoliticization of the Organization and an increasingly obvious attempt by certain States to take it hostage and divert it into the field of politics. Far be it from me to propound the naïve idea of an aseptic UNESCO perfectly immune to politics. What should be reiterated today is that, in the minds of its founding fathers and mothers, **UNESCO, of all the organizations in**

the United Nations system, was the one in which politics and purely political considerations were to be kept to a minimum, while intellect, ethics, moral conduct and aesthetics were to be magnified. So much for the spirit. But there is also **the letter**. We cannot do other than quote the important fifth paragraph of the preamble to our Constitution.

“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, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.”

It is this paragraph – less quoted perhaps because less convenient – that underpins the logic in the ritually quoted, “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”. It states what might be called the character of UNESCO. It is an implicit criticism of the tendency of some States, especially those belonging to the OECD, most of which were founding Members of UNESCO, to make use of our Organization for their own narrow ends and of their itch to impose their own views and wills and introduce thinly veiled bilateralism into multilateralism, which is tantamount to weakening the latter. The wheeling and dealing of some States with regard to the UNESCO-Obiang Nguema Mbasogo International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences (renamed the Equatorial Guinea Prize on the Africans’ initiative, by way of concession) is a typical recent example of what we call hyperpoliticization. This prize was duly established by the Organization in compliance with all existing procedures, but when the prize jury met and selected the prizewinners for the first year, all of a sudden these States put pressure on the Director-General to prevent the award of the prize and mobilized international non-governmental organizations that had no connections with UNESCO, some of which were persuaded of dubious practices because of links to oil interests in the prize’s donor country. This prize was designed by its donors to provide relief for people suffering from malaria, AIDS and other such diseases worldwide. As the first African

programme-related prize and one that was generously endowed, it received unanimous support from African heads of state, many G-77 States and China. Its critics, who have the power of both money (which they refuse to give UNESCO) and the media on their side, claimed that it was inappropriate to UNESCO because of the corruption and human rights violations that are supposed to lie behind it. It is easy, however, to demonstrate the fallaciousness and indefensibility of this line of reasoning. If we took this as our yardstick, the Organization would have virtually no prizes. To be persuaded of the hypocrisy and fallaciousness of this argument, we need only consider the origin of UNESCO's most prestigious prize: the L'Oréal Award.

In an article in *Le Monde* of 8 July 2010 by Nicole Vulser and revealingly entitled "L'Oréal, a century of dark beauty", we read the following about Eugène Schueller, founder of "l'Auréale", which subsequently became L'Oréal: in the 1930s Eugène Schueller was an active member of the extreme-right underground movement the Secret Revolutionary Action Committee (CSAR), better known as La Cagoule. He was one of the main donors to this organization, which defined itself as "racist" and "authoritarian" and was led by Eugène Deloncle. Deloncle and Eugène Schueller together founded the Mouvement Social Révolutionnaire, which had been approved personally by the head of the Gestapo. Its programme was to "build the new Europe in cooperation with national-socialist Germany [...], pursue racial regeneration of France and the French [...], give Jews kept in France a punitive status to prevent them from polluting our race".

As to André Bettencourt, husband of the current owner of L'Oréal Liliane Bettencourt, he "**wrote a regular column in his youth, from 1940 to 1942, in the weekly *La Terre française* published by the occupiers, which supported the collaborationist and pro-Nazi policy of the Vichy regime. The son-in-law of the founder of L'Oréal put his name to anti-Semitic attacks of the sort to be found in Number 13 of December 1941: 'A Jew will tend to be more miserly than a Christian'. He also advocated 'active denunciation of enemies of the Vichy regime'.**"

This edifying story could not have escaped the notice of the group of States that is haughtily and hypocritically making itself out to be the world's conscience and the sole herald of human rights. This less than brilliant aspect of L'Oréal has not passed the Africans by. By way of instruction, I feel that I must give an African example of good practice in contrast to the hyperpoliticization mentioned above. In an article published at the same time as the debate about the UNESCO Obiang Prize, the *Guardian*, a British daily, reported on the scourge of arms and ammunition trafficking to Africa. The Nigerian authorities had thus inspected a ship in the port of Lagos containing several tonnes of weapons and ammunition. France, Germany and Greece were involved. The same newspaper, a few issues later, highlighted the systematic plundering of the fishery resources of West African States. Western European States and Japan were implicated. Here the situation of African fishermen has deteriorated so much that one of their number, when interviewed, readily predicted the imminence of piracy to uphold the law off the coasts of West Africa, as in the case of Somalia. These African States would have preferred to have the benefit of their fish stocks and received ships laden with books and teaching aids rather than weapons intended to destabilize them and fuel fratricidal wars. Their representatives at UNESCO could therefore legitimately have accused the States responsible for the above acts of violating their human rights to peace, education and development. The Africans have nevertheless judiciously avoided such political one-upmanship. Countries which, after four centuries of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade and one century of colonialism, neocolonialism and apartheid, have had the courage and nobility to talk of "dialogue, truth and reconciliation" know that they must avoid drawing attention to this far from brilliant aspect of our relations with the West or the Nazi nature of the primitive accumulation of capital that gave rise to the L'Oréal Award, if they are not to hyperpoliticize UNESCO and if they are to continue to have, together, the "strength to face tomorrow".

It therefore must be acknowledged that in UNESCO no single electoral group and no single Member State has a monopoly of either

respect for or violation of human rights. Furthermore, every civilization, as we know, has its barbarous underside, and we know above all that **Europe** (for it is of this continent, its associates and its accomplices in UNESCO that we are speaking), as a great French poet has aptly pointed out, **“is responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses in history”**. These are all truths that we are duty bound to point out to the geographical and geo-economic West, not to give it a bad conscience and even less to relativize human rights but to urge it and all of us to show more humility in the Organization and to invite it and all of us to adopt instead the ethos of **“dialogue, truth and reconciliation”** rather than the hyperpoliticization which some Member States want to force upon us and which we must resist to ensure UNESCO’s survival.

IV. Third aspect of the crisis: staff demoralization

There was a time when quintessential UNESCO officials were distinguishable from their peers in the United Nations system by certain characteristics. Highly specialized expertise in their chosen fields, which was taken for granted, was allied with sound general knowledge in the international sphere as well as a strong sense of ethics, an acute awareness of the state of the world and its suffering and commitment to doing something about it. Far from being remote from reality, members of the UNESCO Secretariat were persons of science and conscience. It is sad to see that UNESCO is losing this type of official by the day. The situation is explained in large part by the surreptitious recruitment of nationals of “rich” countries for more than one decade and a failure to respect – if not systematically violate – the principle of geographical distribution, as well as favouritism and inconsistencies in the promotion policy. The victims, it must be stressed, are mainly from G-77 countries and China. It is therefore hardly surprising to find that professionalism has suffered: there is less science and even less conscience. The old demons – absenteeism, sexism and even racism – are once again raising their hideous heads. Disillusioned and frustrated, many decent officials are leaving the Organization if they can do so. The rest have become

resigned. Thus a general feeling of demoralization has taken hold of the Organization's staff and is tending to endure.

V. Intellectual and moral refoundation of the Organization

Let me reiterate that we are talking about refoundation: so-called reforms or patchwork solutions will not be equal to this crisis. Furthermore, as we have been plunged into this crisis as a result of a departure from the values and principles laid down in the basic texts serving as our guide, it follows that respect for both the spirit and the letter of UNESCO's Constitution is the surest antidote. To take this as our inspiration is to start "where the future begins".

First of all, the Organization's ethical and intellectual dimensions must be restored to make it the preferred forum of the best minds in the world. It must be cured of its unacknowledged Western standpoint, which means that it has only an intellectual interest in holders of or specialists in ideologies perceived as a threat to the West or in the intellectual traditions of countries whose economies are challenging its hegemony. The ongoing globalization is so complex that in order to conceptualize and tame it we must "seek the symbiosis of the best of all cultures" as Edgar Morin has recently suggested. No intellectual tradition, philosophy or school of wisdom will be superfluous for accomplishing this task of UNESCO's.

VI. Evaluating the Japanese amendment

The Japanese amendment was implemented at the 27th session of the General Conference in 1993, nearly two decades ago now.

It will necessary, as part of a refoundation, to **evaluate the Japanese amendment** in order to determine more clearly its advantages and possible limitations. Without prejudging the outcome of that evaluation, it should be borne in mind that our Constitution refers to governments and to **peoples**. It is high time for our Organization to give

the latter aspect a modern complexion by inviting civil society to play a greater role, including in its governance.

VII. A fair budget

The Organization needs a new budget policy in which Members' influence will depend less or not at all on the amounts that they contribute and will not expose the Organization to the political vicissitudes of a few of its Members. UNESCO's current budget structure and approach, whilst favouring the countries of the North, creates the illusion that our Organization has become the "rich States' burden", the equivalent in a multilateral world, *mutatis mutandis*, of the ethnologists' "white man's burden". We therefore need a fairer regular budget together with extrabudgetary contributions that are less biased and as they are provided by all groups, are therefore more balanced. We simply need the will.

VIII. Need to correct regional distribution imbalances among UNESCO Secretariat staff

The quadripartite distribution of the Organization's staff, on which the Director-General reports regularly, is too crude an instrument for clearly determining the representation of States and groups of States within the Secretariat. It is a particularly misleading model as it brackets together States that do not belong in the same group and conceals significant imbalances. The Delegation of Benin has therefore undertaken a closer study of the matter and reached the following key findings:

- the proportion of nationals from Group I and industrialized countries in general increases disproportionately in the upper echelons of the Secretariat;
- sixty per cent of ADGs come from OECD countries;
- by comparison with other groups, the countries of the South have few nationals in P-4 and P-5 posts, which are

nevertheless key positions for planning and implementing activities.

We therefore recommend that:

- (1) an effort be made to achieve balanced geographical representation both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- (2) geographical distribution be reported more transparently, in greater detail and with more clarity in order to improve the portrayal of group distribution within the Secretariat (staff, consultants and trainees) and, in particular, in every division and office both at Headquarters and in the field;
- (3) an audit of imbalances in geographical distribution within the Secretariat (staff, consultants and trainees) be undertaken, especially for distribution of senior posts.

The ritual reflection on “relations between the three organs” between General Conferences will be meaningful only if the Organization ensures fair representation of Member States within the Secretariat, which is the most permanent organ and is responsible for day-to-day implementation of the Organization’s programmes.

IX. Readjustment within the United Nations system

The international, inter-agency dimension of the crisis must be discussed in order to identify members of the United Nations system that are encroaching on UNESCO’s areas of competence; further reflection is required on ways and means of achieving readjustment and new complementarity within the system.

We are too often regarded as the poor relation of the United Nations system and have ourselves internalized this image, sometimes even to the extent of calling for a leadership role in fields that fall within our fields of

competence naturally and of right. At the time of writing, the establishment by the United Nations Secretary-General of a global initiative on education (Education First), headed not by the Director-General of UNESCO but by someone from outside the world of education, is a good illustration of this unfortunate tendency to poach on our Organization's reserves and marginalize it within the United Nations system.

X. Conclusion

In China and the G-77 States, philosophies, world views and ideologies advocating openness to other people, dialogue and non-violence abound. They include:

- the *huehuetlatolli* or sayings of the ancients, from pre-colonial Mexico;
- India's *ahimsa*;
- *Sufi wisdom*;
- the Yoruba's *iwa pele*;
- China's *Tao* ... and the list is obviously not exhaustive.

Cast in the mould of these philosophies and schools of wisdom, our representatives at UNESCO have often given "free rein" to Member States whose recent history encompasses conquest, colonial oppression, the will to power and cultural hegemony in the guise of universal ideas. Let us be clear: we are not proposing a clear-cut view of the geography of UNESCO's Member States, but simply an equal share in the Organization's history. Owing to our feeble resistance to the repeated battering of the principles enshrined in our Constitution, we may have unwittingly contributed to UNESCO's decline. We are now faced with an existential crisis. The G-77 States and China would themselves have invented UNESCO if it had not been established shortly after the Second World War. The ethos of "dialogue, truth and reconciliation" is the modern distillation of our civilizations' ancient philosophies and schools of wisdom. This ethos is very much present in all cultures and civilizations, including those that are now hegemonic, although its influence and advancement

depend on the given historical situation. The important thing is that it is shared by most well-meaning men and women irrespective of state, culture or civilization. The fact therefore remains that we have a special responsibility and perhaps even, we dare say, a mission. This is not too strong a word. This noble mission is to save UNESCO, the dog given a bad name in order to hang it. It would be naïve not to see in the machinations of some States a measure of lassitude towards the Organization. These States are almost openly declaring that UNESCO has reached the end of the road. The Organization is accused of doing too much. It is whispered that its fields of competence ought to be curtailed: it should be restricted to a specialist role as a provider of education and/or a manager of world cultural heritage, for example. It is therefore not overstating the case to say that there is danger in delay.

UNESCO must “***show intellectual sovereignty***”, as one African put it (referring to Africa). Our group has a duty to **raise the crisis as an issue** and to ensure that it is discussed in all of the Organization’s groups, electoral or otherwise, and that clear decisions are taken by the Executive Board and the General Conference. **I believe that our group has the sacred mission of breathing new life into our common Organization.**

This is the price of UNESCO’s survival and renewal.

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Mr. Jean BRICMONT

Professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain, writer

UNESCO’s Constitution refers to two concepts – “peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations” and “universal respect for [...] human rights” – against which some in the West have for a few

decades been urging the unilateral military “right of humanitarian intervention” and the “responsibility to protect”. They oppose peace and collaboration among nations in the name of human rights.

Their main target is the idea of sovereign equality among nations, on which today’s international law is founded. Proponents of humanitarian intervention – one of the best-known laying claim to the title of film-maker, armchair warrior and philosopher rolled into one – decry this right by claiming that it allows dictators to “kill their own people” at will.

One of the chief justifications of the sovereign equality principle is that it provides some protection for the weak against the strong. The United States cannot be forced to change its monetary or energy policy whatever the consequences for third countries. In the concept of sovereign equality, the word ‘equality’ is just as important as the word “sovereign”. A world in which sovereignty is flouted is inevitably a world whose inequality reflects the balance of power between States.

Yet the founding purpose of the United Nations was to save humanity from the “scourge of war”. This entailed strict respect for national sovereignty so as to prevent major powers from intervening militarily in the domestic affairs of weaker countries on some pretext or other, as Germany did by citing the need to defend “oppressed minorities” in Czechoslovakia and Poland, dragging the rest of the world into war.

Decolonization heightened the importance of the sovereign equality concept. For the countries that had shaken off the colonial yoke after the Second World War, the last thing they wanted was to suffer fresh interference in their domestic affairs by their former masters. This fear explains why the countries of the South universally reject the “right” of humanitarian intervention.

Meeting in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in February 2003 shortly before the American attack on Iraq, the Non-Aligned Movement declared: ‘The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the Movement’s commitment to

enhance international cooperation to resolve international problems of a humanitarian character in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, and, in this regard, they reiterated the rejection by the Non-Aligned Movement of the so-called “right” of humanitarian intervention, which has no basis either in the Charter of the United Nations or in international law.’¹

The main failure of the United Nations is not that it has not stopped “dictators from killing their own people” but rather that it has not saved humanity from the “scourge of war” by preventing repeated violations of international law by powerful states: the United States in Indochina and Iraq, South Africa in Angola and Mozambique, and Israel among its Middle Eastern neighbours and in the Occupied Territories, to say nothing of all the coups organized from outside as well as threats, embargoes, unilateral sanctions, bought elections, etc. Millions of people have died as casualties of these repeated violations of international law and the principle of national sovereignty. We should never forget these deaths, but the supporters of intervention always do.

United States intervention in the domestic affairs of other states takes many different forms, but it is continual and often attended by disastrous consequences: we have only to think of the crushed hopes of peoples who might have benefited from the progressive social policies initiated by leaders such as Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala, João Goulart in Brazil, Salvador Allende in Chile, Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua,

1 Final document of the Thirteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, Kuala Lumpur, 24-25 February 2003, paragraph 354 (available at <http://www.un.int/malaysia/NAM/finaldoc.html>).

all of whom were victims of coups d'état or assassinations supported by the United States.²

But the disastrous effects of intervention policy do not stop there: every act of aggression by the United States causes a reaction. Deployment of an anti-missile shield results in more missiles rather than fewer. Bombing of civilians, whether deliberate or due to “collateral damage”, produces more armed resistance, not less. Attempts to overthrow or subvert foreign governments produce more repression, not less. Surrounding a country with military bases leads to more military spending by that country, not less. And possession of nuclear weapons by Israel encourages the other countries in the Middle East to acquire such arms.

Moreover, proponents of humanitarian intervention never explain what they want to replace conventional international law: sovereign equality can be laid down as a principle, but how do you frame the principle of humanitarian intervention?

When NATO exercised its self-proclaimed right of intervention in Kosovo, the Western media applauded. But when Russia exercised what it considered its right to protect the population in South Ossetia, the same Western media universally condemned it.

There is a dilemma here: either any country with the means is granted the right to intervene wherever a humanitarian argument can be made in defence of such intervention, and it is each against all, or else

2 See William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and C.I.A. Interventions Since World War II*, Zed Books, London, 2003, for a detailed history of United States intervention.

such action is limited to those states which have the capacity and arrogate the right, and we end up with a de facto dictatorship in international affairs.

To this, the supporters of intervention generally reply that these military interventions must be undertaken not by a single state but by the “international community”. Unfortunately, the ‘international community’ does not actually exist. The concept is used by the United States to describe any short-lived coalition that it may be leading. NATO’s unilateral abuse of United Nations resolutions on Libya has made it impossible to build a genuine international community that might, in theory, introduce an impartial responsibility to protect, valid for everybody, including, for example, the Palestinians.

The recent Libyan adventure has also illustrated a fact that the advocates of intervention fail to mention: given that wars with a high death toll are politically unacceptable to Western populations, any interventions with ‘zero deaths’ (on their part) can be waged only through mass bombing, which requires a sophisticated military apparatus. People who champion such interventions also inevitably support, although often unwittingly, the United States’ colossal military budgets.

It is therefore paradoxical that it is often the social democrats and Greens in Europe who call most frequently for “humanitarian interventions”, when they would be the first to protest if Europe were to introduce the drastic social spending cuts necessary to establish a military apparatus comparable to that of the United States.

It is true that the twenty-first century needs a new form of United Nations. Not a United Nations legitimizing interventionism with new arguments such as “responsibility to protect” but an organization providing at least moral support to those seeking to build a world not dominated by a single military power.

An alternative to intervention policies ought to use public opinion to bring about strict observance of international law by Western powers,

implementation of United Nations resolutions on Israel, dismantling of the empire of United States of America bases, the end of NATO and the end of all real or threatened unilateral use of force as well as operations promoting democracy, colour revolutions and political exploitation of minority-related issues.

Since wars “begin in the minds of men”, UNESCO should consider one of its priority “adult education” tasks to be education for peace. This calls in particular for the development of critical thinking with regard to war propaganda: Timisoara, the Kuwait incubators in the first Gulf war, weapons of mass destruction in the second, the Racak massacre and the Rambouillet “negotiations” leading to the war over Kosovo³ and a great many other events are presented one-sidedly by the Western media in order to condition the population into accepting the inevitability of war against “absolute evil” or the “new Hitler”. It is probably too early to comment with any degree of certainty on the recent tragic events in Syria,

3 Appendix B of the all-or-nothing agreement presented to the Serbs provided, amongst other things, for the following: Article 8: NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e. Serbia and Montenegro at the time] including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, manoeuvre, billet, and utilization of any areas or facilities as required for support, training, and operations. Article 9: NATO shall be exempt from duties, taxes, and other charges and inspections and custom regulations including providing inventories or other routine customs documentation, for personnel, vehicles, vessels, aircraft, equipment, supplies, and provisions entering, exiting, or transiting the territory of the FRY in support of the Operation.

See http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ksvo_ambouillet_text.html for full text.

but we may note that for the Western press it is never too early to condemn one side and one side only. Anybody in the West who tries to qualify or cast doubt on the official version is immediately accused of being a Holocaust denier, conspiracy theorist or anti-Semite. A peaceful world needs less biased sources of information than those provided by the Western media and calls for a new world order in terms of information – one which UNESCO should be working to create, with the help of the Group of 77 and China.

It will be objected that a policy of respect for national sovereignty would allow dictators to “kill their own people”, which is true. But a genuine alternative to intervention policy, a policy of peace, would also have other effects. If intervention policy were to be abandoned, the various opposition groups within the countries targeted by the policy would no longer be perceived and repressed as so many fifth columns. A climate of international trust and cooperation could be established – vital for managing global problems, including those relating to the environment. And gradual disarmament would release immense financial and also scientific resources for development.

The ideology of humanitarian intervention belongs to a long history of Western predation on the rest of the world. When the colonialists arrived on the shores of Africa, Asia and the Americas they were shocked by what we would today call “human rights abuses” and what they described at the time as “barbaric customs”: human sacrifices, cannibalism, foot-binding, etc. Again and again, indignation at these practices, whether sham or genuine, was used to justify Western crimes: the slave trade, extermination of indigenous peoples, and systematic theft of land and resources. This righteous indignation has survived to the present. It underlies the right of humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect, themselves accompanied by considerable indulgence towards oppressive regimes regarded as friendly as well as indefinite militarization and massive exploitation of the labour and resources of the rest of the world. After several centuries of hypocrisy it is perhaps time for Westerners to think about substituting cooperation for intervention.

Far from being utopian, a policy of non-intervention matches the tide of history. At the beginning of the last century, the larger part of the world was under European control. Decolonization was the greatest social and political transformation of the twentieth century, and this transformation is continuing today with the rise of the emerging countries. The problem now facing the West is not how to control the world again through humanitarian interference but how to adjust to its own inevitable decline – an adjustment which will very likely be neither easy nor pleasant.

Those who promote the right of intervention describe it as the beginning of a new era, whereas it is in fact the end of a long history. From an interventionist point of view, this doctrine is a retreat from the rights invoked by conventional colonialism. What is more, millions of people, including in the United States, are increasingly rejecting war as a means of settling international issues and thus, in practice, supporting the position of the non-aligned countries, which want to “enhance international cooperation to resolve international problems of a humanitarian character in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations”. They are often accused in their own media of being “anti-Westerner”. But they are the ones who, by embracing the aspirations of a major part of the human race, are perpetuating what is valid in the Western humanist tradition. They are setting out to create a genuinely democratic world – a world in which the sun will finally have set on the American empire just as it did on the old European empires.

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Part II

Governance, Management of Human Resources and the need for equitable geographical representation of Member States in the Secretariat

Mr. Sidiki COULIBALY

President of the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU)

Madam Chairperson of the Group 77 and China,
Distinguished Members of the G-77,
Honorable Delegate (s),
Dear Colleagues of the Secretariat,

It is not without emotion that I take the floor before the eminent personalities gathered here to mark the celebration of the 48th anniversary of the Group 77 and China, among whom I would like to thank, most sincerely, H.E. Mrs. Ambassador, Permanent Delegate and Representative of the Gabonese Republic to UNESCO and to OIF, Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China and all members of this Group, especially the Coordinator of the Organizing Committee for the Round Table of the G77 and China, H.E. Ms. Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to UNESCO, who honored us on inviting the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) at this ceremony.

This is the first time I have the privilege to represent ISAU at such

an honorable celebration. Please allow me to express ISAU's apologies for not having been able to provide the Organizing committee with the title and summary of our intervention by May 31, since prior authorization of the Director General only reached us yesterday, June 13, and compelled us to observe the strictest discretion on all official matters.

Since I was asked by the organizers of the Round Table to address the theme "Governance, Management Human Resource and the need for equitable geographical representation of Member States in the Secretariat", which I agreed to with great pleasure, I would like to recall that for the founding fathers of UNESCO, "a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic agreements of governments ...would not...lasting...» Because "...peace must be ... founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind", which totally rejects any "denial of the democratic principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect of men".

The Organization's Secretariat was designed as a key element of the new multilateralism, founded in 1945. It consists in principle of Staff having the required expertise in its different fields of competence, diverse origins and nationalities and coming from all regions of the world. This is not the case today as for the geographical representation of Member States, as shown in a recent study by the Permanent Delegation of Benin to UNESCO, available in this room.

It is our Secretariat, meant to be truly international in its geo cultural diversity and expertise, which is now the target of a small group of States, in response to a temporary budget crisis they generated themselves. Micro-managing, replacing independent International Civil Servants with the highest standards of integrity and technical competence by precarious contractual employees coming mainly from the North, dismantling somehow the Secretariat, would deprive UNESCO, the United Nations' Intellectual Agency, of its *raison d'être*.

The formidable weapon chosen is that of financial blackmail, that of the refusal to pay for mandatory contributions, to impose cuts in the budget, cuts in the Programs and cuts in the Staffing: prescribed as much fat cutting measures in 189 EX /Decision 15 (II) of the Executive Board and its roadmap.

This "Decision" is unconstitutional, contrary to Rule 34 A of the Executive Board's Rules of Procedure, and it drowned out the Director-General's exclusive legal responsibilities and prerogatives regarding Human Resources Management. ISAU is firmly opposed to it, together with a strong support from staff that has already been mobilized successfully. An opinion poll last February also confirms the demoralization and the crisis of confidence currently prevailing in the Secretariat.

Member States, and particularly those of the Group of 77 and China, should clearly understand that they are facing a historic choice: assume collectively the responsibility to meddle in the management of human resources, to micro-managing the Secretariat and its staff in breach of the Organization's Constitution; or defend and restore the basic foundations, the values and principles of the international civil service, which are of utmost importance for the implementation of a fertile multilateralism in the service of their peoples.

"The time of silence, [of apathy or] and submission are gone", to quote Mr. Federico MAYOR, former Director-General of UNESCO in his message which has just been delivered. ISAU therefore places great hope in a wide support "to counter the marginalization of the United Nations System in general and UNESCO in particular, with restored, active and efficient multilateralism" (quote from the same message), i.e. a multilateralism that guarantees sufficient funding for implementing our Organization's activities, and the future of its international civil service.

Because staff members are quite ready to support a reform that -in

full transparency, rigor, respect for rules and procedures in force— aims at revitalizing the Secretariat, to make it more effective, more efficient and really liable throughout an operational system of accountability for the Governance and at all levels, to achieve the savings needed for the stabilization of UNESCO and its adaptation to these challenging times.

As a result, ISAU hopes that Member States of the Group 77 and China will support the repeal of 189 EX/Decision 15 (II), or that they will request the International Court of Justice for an advisory legal opinion concerning the refusal to honor mandatory contributions to the budget of the Organization, essentially for political reasons. We also request them to invite us to a briefing meeting before each session of the Executive Board, to help preserve the UNESCO and its best asset, the Staff of the Secretariat.

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Mr. Ronan GRIPPAY

President of the UNESCO Staff Union (STU)

Madam President of the General Conference,
Madam Chair of the Group of 77 and China,
Ladies and gentlemen delegates,
Dear colleagues,

First, I wish to thank on behalf of STU, all Member States of the Group of 77 and China, and in particular the Permanent Delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for their invitation to participate in this roundtable, as well as the Director General of UNESCO for giving me authorization to take the floor. It is an honour to be able to speak today

and to bring you our perception of the situation.

In the course of its history, UNESCO has been through many crises - political and economic - and gradually transformations have taken place within to enable it to respond. Now it is facing an unprecedented crisis that combines two aspects: the one economic and the other political, closely linked together.

A new challenge has arisen, not only for Member States but also for staff: how to respond to this crisis without devaluing the institution, its missions and its place in the United Nations system?

For years, the issue of the Organization's governance has been at the heart of debates. This crucial point is still not resolved and confusion reigns. More than ever, answers must be found to the question of governance, and indeed governance itself must be defined: what does governance mean? The notion covers the way the institution is run and a range of concepts such as access to information, the fight against corruption, openness and accountability, efficient resource management, professional culture, recognition of future generations, protection of the environment and sustainable development.

In these terms, the topic of "responsibility" appears to us as central, and herein lies the current weakness of UNESCO and many agencies of the United Nations system.

What controls are in place? Who controls? What are the reporting obligations? Who sanctions and how? At what grades? All these questions have not yet been answered and the diagnosis is unclear.

However, it is not the role of Member States to define and control the governance of the Organization but that of the Director General, according to the Constitution. The danger lies in the temptation to take this role and thus to override a mandate, or rights, such as through the

decision on human resources that you adopted at the last session of the Executive Board.

Responsibility for the management of the Organization lies with the Director-General, but a whole chain of responsibilities must be established with a clear system of rights, duties and penalties. Poor governance occurs when a link in the chain ceases to respect these principles and the mechanisms of sanctions do not work: it is then that there is a drop in productivity, followed by a failure to take decisions that paralyses the whole system. Nobody is responsible anymore, nobody takes responsibility anymore. There is also the issue of room for creativity. What possibilities are there for freedom to create and innovate in a rigid framework?

All these questions are echoed across the agencies of the United Nations system but they cannot find identical answers. Indeed, UNESCO is a purely intellectual organization whose only value is its staff and expertise, unlike other agencies such as the World Food Programme, whose objectives, among others, are the distribution of food and products to people. The responsibilities and consequences are not the same. Governance must be adapted to the goals and missions of each organization while following a common framework and rules.

We also often note a lack of consistency in the responses of individual Member States depending on the organization of which it is a member: better coordination of the various delegations of the Member States should be established for a greater harmony of positions within the United Nations system as a whole.

In the case of UNESCO, much progress has been made in recent years with the establishment of a system of ethics control, an internal control service (IOS) and a mechanism of internal justice (Appeals Board) but despite this, many efforts are needed to achieve a fairer and more efficient system. Due to the lack of governance, UNESCO has become a

huge administrative machine, too heavy and less effective because of the proliferation of blockages and lack of smooth procedures.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to further develop the issue here but I will cite some examples of improvements to be made: limiting the duration of appeal procedures for both parties, accountability of managers and the Senior Management Team, control of application of the decisions of the Director General in the services, greater independence and safeguards for the mandate of IOS and the Ethics Office so they are not manipulated by the Administration, accountability of the entire staff to ease bureaucratic procedures, transparency in information and communication, information sharing, and so on.

The staff is the main resource of the Organization and today it can no longer do more with less. Unfortunately, this resource is still too badly exploited. It is important to note that steady progress has been made in the Organization's human resources in the past few years, and procedures have been put in place to improve dialogue with staff, particularly through the staff associations, with monthly meetings, advisory committees, sharing and consultation on circulars. In this regard, STU has had the opportunity to compare UNESCO's human resource policies with those of many other agencies through the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) to which it belongs. It is striking to note that on many issues, UNESCO is at the forefront of progress on measures related to human resources. Often, other agencies are inspired by what is in place in our institution. UNESCO has good personnel policies but they are not properly applied.

However, there are still many problematic areas that must be addressed in order to improve productivity and operation of services. In particular, STU has demanded for years the introduction of a skills assessment for staff that would better identify their talent and potential, thereby promoting greater use of internal resources and recognition of colleagues. This skills assessment would also meet training needs and

thus open up opportunities for career development which hardly exist anymore, especially in these times of crisis. This is necessary to maintain staff motivation and later, to allow the necessary redeployment of staff. The mistake is to base the assessment only on the CVs of staff and not on their actual capabilities and potential.

Another important issue concerns staff recruitment and the role of the Bureau of Human Resources Management: because of the crisis, and more generally in future plans, staff are increasingly being recruited on temporary contracts which no longer guarantee the continuity of services, and the very values of the international civil service, namely, integrity and independence. Today, too many temporary staff members are employed in posts performing core functions of the Organization, thus undermining its structure and mission. Gradually, the institutional memory is being lost. The other danger is the gradual disappearance of geographical balance and distribution to which these temporary jobs are not subject.

Because of the crisis, recruitment is now blocked. However, increasingly, specialist staff, recruited as such on their qualifications and skills, with a high degree of requirements, are gradually becoming programme and project managers. Specialization is giving way to generalization. This demotivates the most competent of them and a great danger threatens UNESCO: more and more colleagues are thinking about leaving, or are actually leaving the Organization to work elsewhere in their area of expertise. UNESCO will gradually lose its valuable staff, its only resource. How should we respond?

Regarding equitable geographical representation, it is necessary to remember that there are two distinct categories of civil servants at UNESCO: the so-called "GS" (General Service) and the "P" (professional). 'GS' posts are locally recruited positions covered by different rules from those of the "P" posts, especially as regards management responsibilities, salaries and geographical mobility. These posts are not subject to geographic representation and represent almost 50% of the Organization's

total staff. For "P" posts, only some meet the criteria of representativeness. Because of the crisis, as we have already said, with the freezing of posts, geographical representativeness is threatened. Indeed, the departure of a colleague leaves a vacancy, which is then frozen, unbalancing the geographical distribution system in place.

How should we address this concern? STU proposes that Member States create a special fund for this. This fund would help to fund internships at UNESCO for students from under-represented or poorly represented countries, and thus, by offering a "fellowship" to come to Headquarters or to field offices, these students could acquire skills and then apply for vacancies, with equal opportunities to other candidates from overrepresented countries.

Geographical balance is important but STU also emphasizes gender balance and diversity within our Organization, at Headquarters and in field offices.

Finally, I will conclude my statement by quoting some passages from a speech by FICSA, 20 years ago to the day, when another crisis was hitting the international organizations:

[Staff members do not understand why it is that a renewed dependence on the UN system coincides with attempts to cut back staff salaries and strength. These actions lead staff to believe that their governing bodies are unduly influenced by political considerations brought to bear by a handful of the wealthiest countries whose leaders would rather not see a unified and strengthened international civil service. For, as we all know, a strengthened United Nations system is not considered by some countries to be in their best national interest as it will lead to a weakening of their power on the international stage. [...]

Our salary system is based on principles - enunciated by Mr

Noblemaire and Mr Flemming -, to ensure that our conditions of service remain competitive enough to keep us on the job and for our organizations to be able to, recruit the best people. Just as they have lost sight of other principles, some of our decision-makers have chosen to close their eyes to these principles. In word, they invoke the principles' names; indeed, they ignore the principles' content to reach a predetermined reduction in our salaries and pensions. Thus staff cannot listen to their words but must see to their acts. We must work hard to counteract the deterioration of our conditions of service and show that we stand for those two principles as well. [...]

There are very serious attempts at the moment to cut General Service salaries and pensions. This would eventually undermine the ability of the organizations to recruit and retain the highly qualified local staff needed to carry out the organization's programmes. [...]

Career development entails not only security of tenure but also the assurance that opportunities will be offered to update skills and learn new techniques through training. Unfortunately, in times of financial crisis, training programmes are cut back in the name of economy. Staff sees this as false economy, a withdrawal of investment in the system's most valuable resource.[...]

There is only really one issue at hand - the excellence of the international civil service. Inherent in this concept of excellence is our organizations' ability to deliver top-quality programmes to our Member States. Staff wants to be instrumental in relieving the suffering of three-quarters of the world's population. Staff wants to leave a healthy globe as a heritage to our children. Staff wants to see all peoples of the world working together, not in strife, but in peace. But for staff to transform their principles into reality, they need true leadership, committed to principle, and actions that support their mandate. You cannot ask staff to help your countries

without also enabling them to do so through adequate support and financial commitment.]

You will notice that 20 years on, the same questions are raised, the same problems reappear.

Remember, UNESCO staff is wealth and this wealth deserves to be appreciated.

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Reflections on the real priorities of UNESCO

H.E. Dr. Mohammad Réza MAJIDI

*Associate Professor, University of Tehran
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to
UNESCO*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me first to express my pleasure to be here among you today in this Round Table convened to address this timely and important topic. All of us know that some problems and difficulties exist in UNESCO, and it does not matter which title we apply to them - for example crisis, challenge or difficulty - but we know that the global expectations of this Organization are high. At the same time, we also know that in the approximately seven decades of the life of UNESCO this Organization has witnessed a golden era in which it enjoyed a good image in the minds of different generations,

and thus a positive view of this Organization has formed.

Now, what should be done, and what is our responsibility as the Member States, members of the Secretariat, and citizens of the global society? In the little time available it will not be possible to raise all the dimensions and aspects of the subject, as well as the factors and actors effective in this respect. Instead, we can raise some points and questions so that future debates can be held on this basis. Perhaps a view from outside can help us in self-criticism and identifying vulnerabilities. In more than twenty years as a university professor or in different academic and administrative fields and also as the representative of my country to UNESCO, I have been directly and indirectly engaged with UNESCO and its different subjects and I should confess that a proper conception of UNESCO as a cultural institution exists in the minds of people that should be strengthened. These endeavours show that a public concern does exist for contributing to UNESCO to regain its real status, because this House belongs to all of us.

During several decades, many great works have been accomplished, and as was mentioned in the report published on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the establishment of UNESCO in 2010, this Organization deals with 65 different subjects. This shows that a great endeavour is being carried out, but, on the other hand, the expectations at the level of world public opinion exceeds it, namely this expectation that UNESCO should be a laboratory of ideas and a house of culture. We should evaluate whether the variety and diversity of subjects helps the main mandate of UNESCO and what is stipulated in its Constitution, or if it rather engages this Organization in detailed and executive affairs, preventing it from engaging in overarching macro studies. This is an opportunity to address some of these points and examine whether the financial problems or crisis can be an opportunity rather than a threat for this Organization.

UNESCO requires permanent intellectual, scientific and cultural

consultation comprising scientists, scholars and thinkers on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and reflecting a spectrum of ideas and preferences.

If we wish UNESCO to play a key role in the establishment of peace in the minds of men as stipulated in its Constitution, the concept of justice should be reflected in UNESCO's thought and practice. From World War II until the present day, the concept of justice has not been duly approached; if UNESCO wishes to act according to its Constitution and move towards the objectives elaborated by its founders it should promote the exchange of ideas on the basis of justice avoiding one-dimensionality and monologue, and we should not limit ourselves to one sole discourse framework. As the American-Chinese philosopher Tu Weiming says, and I quote, "...for the well-being of the global community we need to go beyond the enlightenment mentality, in other words, secular humanism". As justice has a pivotal role in our world, it should therefore be promoted in international forums and in UNESCO in particular so that a comprehensive response to the current challenges can be provided.

In my opinion it would be beneficial for UNESCO to conduct an evaluation aimed at identifying vulnerabilities, namely a form of self-criticism from an intellectual point of view; and for this to occur formal and informal discussions on the different themes and fields of competence of UNESCO should take place. This will also enable us to feel that we are once more living in a scientific, cultural and intellectual environment rather than a political one; we should not lose sight of the fact that the United Nations has different political bodies and UNESCO differs in terms of its mandate and character from the UN New York, Vienna and Geneva offices.

Some of the important points for us to evaluate are in what position we currently stand, in which direction we are heading, what obstacles are facing us, and whether they are solely of a financial nature – that is to say, tangible – or whether they are rather intellectual, moral and spiritual, that is

to say, intangible. We believe that while material instruments and hardware are needed, financial obstacles can nonetheless be overcome through recourse to ideas, reflection and intellectual discussion.

I would like to recall the well-known and so-called golden era of UNESCO at the intellectual level under the leadership of the Director-Generals Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, who served from 1974 to 1987, and Mr. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, who served from 1987 to 1999; what I wish to draw attention to is the fact that during this period also the Organization was subject to financial restrictions and problems but, despite them, we saw that considerable intellectual and scientific work was nevertheless carried out in UNESCO. I believe that this can act as an inspiration to us today. The experience in my country also shows that during three decades, despite all the financial sanctions and political pressures applied to Iran, we have experienced enormous advances in all scientific and technological fields.

The current challenges which UNESCO faces in fact provide us with an opportunity to rethink and reconstruct UNESCO. Can we ask whether UNESCO is distanced from its real priorities, and what are the expectations of UNESCO? The use of different vague and unclear phrases and expressions does not necessarily equate to breathing genuine thought and intellect. Approximately seven decades has passed since the creation of UNESCO and during this time international conditions have dramatically changed; thus we should evaluate the current environment in which UNESCO is acting, and on the basis of these new conditions elaborate a redefinition so that we would be able to revive the positive expectations and hopes that we have of UNESCO.

We hold the belief that UNESCO's strengths outweigh its weaknesses and, likewise, the opportunities that face UNESCO are greater than the challenges with which this Organization is confronted. In fact, all of us who work in UNESCO or who are interested in this Organization, whether as delegates, members of the Secretariat, or as

scholars or intellectuals interested in the subjects covered by this House, should work towards the enhanced visibility and splendour of this Organization. Every individual has their own responsibility in this regard, and for this reason it is essential that the staff of the Secretariat be selected on the basis of their capacities, capabilities, knowledge and administrative and intellectual potential.

Do you not think that the literature used in UNESCO should differ from the literature used in other United Nations institutions? And do you not think that it would be more appropriate for the literature of our Organization to be wholly based on culture and science, and completed by dialogue and an exchange of ideas? To this end, it would be beneficial to reflect on the essential messages of the MacBride report published thirty years ago, entitled "One World, Many Voices". As one contemporary Iranian poet has written, "We should wash our eyes and change our vision".

While we are rightly emphasising UNESCO's visibility, the characteristic which should be subject to greater emphasis is that of being influential and effective. One thing which would be beneficial to the aim of promoting the effectiveness and influence of UNESCO is the elaboration of global reports on the most important subjects we are faced with in today's world, such as global peace, human security, justice at the international level, and so forth. While we have formulated many attractive expressions, now is the time to put these fine words into practice and translate them into action. It should go without saying that these reports should reflect all cultures, beliefs, religions and should be both universal and multi-dimensional.

Finally, I would like to say that it is not possible to fully address such important and complex subjects within the current time constraints of seven or ten minutes; thus, my aim was to draw attention to some points and to raise some questions for reflection which I believe are worthy of further in-depth discussion and debate on the role and status of UNESCO

in international cultural interactions, especially in the field of cultural dialogue. I would also like to congratulate our Group of 77 and China for initiating this debate as a positive step towards strengthening our Organization in the face of the current challenges.

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Mr. Michel COLLON

Writer, independent journalist

Madame Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Friends,

I should like to follow on from the contribution by my friend Jean Bricmont, with which I am in full agreement, by providing some facts about the link between peace and disinformation.

The world is uneasily witnessing more and more war. We were promised a new world order of peace and harmony. Wars are proliferating essentially because the driving force of the economic system is profit maximization with competition between multinationals. This system means that those at the top make those at the bottom work as cheaply as possible, as long as possible and in the worst possible conditions with one result in particular: when you have squeezed people dry, to whom are you going to sell? As this problem is insoluble as long as those at the top keep their privileges, the answer is to use accumulated capital lying idle to plunder the resources of the South: oil, raw materials and labour. This only widens the gap between rich and poor, and since, obviously, those at the bottom do not always see eye to eye, this inevitably leads to the proliferation of wars that we are seeing today. They are wars for profit and

also wars between multinationals of the major powers to deny competitors the raw materials that they are all seeking to control and thus use for blackmail.

One obvious example of this is the United States, which has repeatedly waged war with its allies over the past 20 years with the basic aim, as we have explained in our book *La Stratégie du Chaos*, of encircling China and preventing a South-South alliance between China, Africa and Latin America. The idea is to keep the countries of the South in thrall to monopoly and blackmail with no viable alternative. But if we want to talk about this, we are totally shut out from the media in the North. Jean [Bricmont] and I will never appear on television news to explain that what is said to justify a war is simply propaganda on the part of those waging it and that there are other sources of information.

As I am always pointing out, wars start not with bombs but with media lies. Public opinion in the North must be manipulated to believe that these are not economic wars, wars for money, wars for oil or wars for other commodities but humanitarian wars for democracy, to prevent a serious risk of terrorism, etc. The same tricks are wheeled out for every war. It is possible to identify in past wars and, unfortunately, those in preparation, five principles of war propaganda: (1) Hide economic interests; (2) Hide the background; (3) Transpose victim and aggressor; (4) Demonize and show atrocity pictures; if the latter are lacking, look in the archives for another story in another country at a different time to strike fear into the public in the North and make it believe that it is being protected from a serious danger; (5) Last but not least, monopolize and obstruct debate. Since there are two sides to a conflict, there are necessarily two points of view. What would we think of a judge who said “*Let me hear what you have to say*” to one party and “*Be quiet*” to the other? That is the media in the North.

This comes as no surprise. The problem is not new; there is nothing democratic about our media system in the North. MacBride has already raised the issue in this Organization [UNESCO]. The media system is

closely linked to the multinationals in order to sell the policies of these multinationals, the ensuing poverty and the resulting war. When we look at who is providing information in the North, we find Mr Lagardère, for example, with the largest media monopoly in France: television channels, radio stations such as Europe 1, a whole string of dailies, magazines, *Paris Match*, *Marie Claire*, *Entrevue*, *Parents*, *Télé 7 Jours* ... the list goes on; almost half of French publishing houses, including Hachette, children's textbooks; outlets such as Relay that you find in airports, stations and elsewhere. It is a press empire committed to manipulation, because Mr Lagardère is at the same time the main arms dealer in France and Europe with Eurocopter, Eurofighter and drones manufactured with Israel. How can we believe that such people would provide us with information on the wars from which they derive their profits? There is the further fact that, in France, information is the monopoly of three families: Lagardère, Bouygues (with TFI) and Dassault (with *Le Figaro*). All these people collaborate with Israel, supplying it with arms and the means to pursue its colonization.

We are therefore faced with a media system incorporated in a war machine inside a multinational machine. War is clearly a war of information as well, and I believe, without a UNESCO specialist, that one essential task is to provide media education. Just because we have seen something on television does not mean that it is true, and learning from earliest childhood to think critically about pictures seen on television and compare points of view is essential. And here we come up against the persistence of a colonial mentality and colonial arrogance that is quite striking in the media and among European intellectuals – at any rate those who appear on television. This has been well explained by the French intellectual Régis Debray. Speaking of these European intellectuals and media, he says: *“We have taken off our helmets but, underneath, our heads remain colonial; the world has to be in our mould if it is not to be found backward or primitive. If you are not Swiss, if you have not been plundering the planet for five centuries, if you have not learned to read and write, been*

industrialized and been brought under state control at the same time as us, you are barbarians.”

How is it possible for wars to be decided in the North by 1% of the world population, those who profit by them, against the interests of the 99%? For it is not in the workers' interests to pay with their taxes for bombs that will claim the lives of innocent victims, the world will be even more unstable afterwards, and all these people will be in competition with each other. And if the countries of the South are prevented from developing, this obviously means that there will be emigration and it will be said, as some in this country already do, that immigrants are the cause of everything, when in actual fact immigration is carefully encouraged in order to make working conditions worse and bring down wages. The problem, therefore, is that workers in the North vote for and approve of wars which are against their interests. The only possible explanation for this trickery is media manipulation. An attempt is made to frighten them and make them believe in a threat, the actual interests at stake are disguised, the background to the situation is concealed and information is monopolized.

The question that now concerns all of us is how to resist – a question already asked by MacBride in his time. In this connection, I should like to congratulate UNESCO for having supported the Palestinians and having helped in restoring their rights. At the same time, this matter illustrates a terrible contradiction between the will to liberate and the will to maintain hegemony. How is it possible for the leading world power to support, including by financial blackmail, a state that stole the land of an entire people sixty years ago and which has violated every one of the principles laid down in the Universal Convention of Human Rights? Every article has been flouted. How is it possible for the greatest power on the planet to support the most racist state in the world? This demonstrates that there is a fundamental conflict between the propensity to freedom and the propensity to hegemony.

I am going to talk about the only thing I really know. I am no UNESCO specialist, but if information is a war, if it is preparation for war itself, what are the forces in contention? We have the media of the South with TeleSur, as well as Russia Today, some Chinese media, etc. They are discredited in our media in the North and entirely excluded from the latter. This is the fifth principle of war propaganda: monopolize debate. Whom do we have in the North on the other side? Small groups offering alternative news, mainly on the Internet, with enormous potential but also serious economic problems. I shall take as an example the small alternative-news group that runs the MichelCollon.info website. We call ourselves Investig'Action. We publish a popular newsletter, have 10,000 readers daily, publish books and produce documentaries. The next documentary will be on the issue of African poverty and dependency. Our problem is that there are only three of us to do this work and it is clear that we have 20 important projects that have no chance of being completed. A whole string of other alternative media websites and initiatives are in exactly the same situation.

I think that the solutions, very briefly, are:

- (1) Greater cooperation between media in the South and alternative media in the North. We should not always give the establishment its say. We must seek out grass-roots voices, the voices of the people at the bottom.
- (2) Secondly, I was in Venezuela last week and I was able to talk to the "Madres del Barrio", women who used to be totally forgotten, excluded, homeless and with no education. This is an extraordinary emancipation movement which has meant that they now actually participate.

It is my dream that these women and the masses in countries of the South could use the Internet, which is a medium that lends itself to combating the information monopoly, to talk directly to people in the North through e-mail, chat, Skype and various means to tell them, "*The wars*

being waged or prepared against the people in the South are also wars against you, and it is in all our interests to unite to rid ourselves of the disinformation that divides us, sets us against each other and drags us into endless wars.”

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Part III

Responsibility of the South countries to save UNESCO

H.E. Dr. Dayan JAYATILLEKA

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sri Lanka to France
Permanent Delegate to UNESCO*

Looking at it from the point of view of the South, I see that UNESCO has the strength to regain the initiative. This is demonstrated with the vote on Palestine. We did something that almost nobody else has done for quite some time. Let us never forget that potentiality. Let us never be trapped in negativism and fatalism. Recognizing that potentiality, however, does not preclude us from also recognizing the crisis of UNESCO and the crisis the South faces within UNESCO.

UNESCO has become a target. This is not the result of conspiracy but the result of a systemic re-modeling; a byproduct of the world system. UNESCO has been transformed from a subject into an object. We can see this transparently if we examine the dismantling of the institutional spaces for thinking within UNESCO.

Over a period of years, the institutional spaces for the practice of philosophy, of ethics, of reflections, of ideas --the 'laboratory of ideas' function of UNESCO-- has been dismantled and dispersed. One could put it up on a chart and track this dispersal, diversion and dismantling.

UNESCO has been and is being gradually lobotomized and we have done nothing so far to challenge this! While the function of reflection,

of deep thinking has been atomized, on the other hand UNESCO is been transformed and is sought to be transformed into a soft power accessory, an auxiliary of the hegemonic centers and ideologies. This is why UNESCO identified itself uncritically with the one dimensional conception of the Arab Spring: not a critical one, not a dialectical one, not a deep thinking reflection but precisely a one dimensional conception.

So UNESCO has been politicized but in one sense-- and we have not resisted or challenged this. We must stop this transformation of UNESCO, this conscious transformation of UNESCO, into a mere conduit and disseminator of hegemonic ideologies which also appropriate notions of Human Rights and distort them as part of an interventionist project. This global interventionist project has been discussed today by Prof Jean Bricmont and Michel Collon among others.

The philosophical function of UNESCO almost no longer exists. Michel Colon quoted quite accurately from Régis Debray. Régis Debray lives in Paris and I know he is somewhat reclusive but still, Régis Debray is one of the many outstanding intellectuals who we do not see at UNESCO. I do not know if he would come if invited, but has anyone invited him? Why is it that UNESCO in 1951 had Jean Paul Sartre discussing the ethics of violence but UNESCO in 2012 does not reach out, for most of the time, to the outstanding intellectuals within Paris and in France, let alone in the rest of Europe--because there are no budgetary constraints really in doing so, but it is not done.

So the thinking function, the critical thinking function, the function of reflection is deliberately being 'disappeared'. Now is this the result of financial crisis? Yes and no because well before the post-Palestinian induction cuts, the budgetary issue has been used in a neo-liberal manner, as it has been in some of our countries at certain times where budget cuts are made. Now who decides on the priorities? Certain programs, institutional spaces are dispersed, are cut back in the name of rationalization. But it is really a counter-reformation that has been

proceeding, a long counter-reformation within and of UNESCO, taking it away from the founding values and functions that inspired the organization.

The task for the South is to counter that counter-reformation.

For lack of time I will refer to only one very serious problem. UNESCO has also been subject to a massive ideological barrage as a result of which we do not look at our own history in a balanced and critical manner. I refer to the period in which UNESCO was at the forefront of the battle for a new international information order-- and the importance of information, of examining the hegemonic structures of global information as part of the striving for peace and against war, has been mentioned by Michel Collon among others, today.

UNESCO shies away as if Director-General M'Bow was Satan Incarnate! It is possible that there were certain excesses, certain unilateralism, and certain over-emphases during that period, but today while we must firmly uphold the struggle for the freedom of expression and the rights of individual journalists, we must simultaneously look at the hegemonic structures and global information order. This is a critique and project which UNESCO stood at the forefront of, but we are not doing this, we have not done this, we have been almost brainwashed or hypnotized into thinking that this was a dark age of UNESCO and that we must never go back there. But that is surely part of our heritage that we must be proud of, and we must look back at the Sean Macbride report, reflect upon that period where UNESCO put the study of the international information order on the agenda.

So in conclusion, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose a few ideas. One, a very prosaic one: closer, structured cooperation between G77 and China and the Non Aligned Movement within UNESCO. There is surely an overlap but there has to be closer structured liaison and coordination. Two, as I said before, we must reexamine or reintroduce into

the agenda the theme of information and its unequal sources and structures; the unequal exchange for information between North and South. Three, we must take up the flagship theme of the New Humanism but we should do it from the point of view and perspective of the Global South. In my own reading, the first time I came across the phrase new humanism, not in capitals, has been in the unabridged Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci and I suggest that the countries of the Global South have a session in which the New Humanism would be looked up from the perspective of the regions of the South, and of the South as a whole.

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Ms. Chloé MAUREL

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While UNESCO's initial activities were focused primarily on Europe, they gradually extended to non-Western countries in Asia, Latin America, the Arab States and Africa. This expansion took place notably under pressure from the representatives of these countries of the South, who criticized UNESCO's initial Eurocentrism. Countries of Europe and North America tried, in vain, to curb this development.

How did the countries of the South steadily gain influence over UNESCO's activities and policies? To what extent did these countries join forces? What initiatives did they promote? And what challenges does UNESCO currently face that the countries of the South can help to address?

During the first decade of its existence, UNESCO was primarily composed of Western countries, several of which were colonial powers such as France, the United Kingdom and Belgium. They were not

particularly supportive of UNESCO's activities in their African and Asian colonies, fearing that UNESCO might pose a threat to the continuation of the colonial system.

The accession of countries of the South to UNESCO was gradual. In 1946, when UNESCO was established, there were 16 non-Western Member States, mostly Latin American countries. There were only two African Member States: Ethiopia and Liberia. In 1960, there was a turning point: several African countries emerging from decolonization joined UNESCO between 1960 and 1962 (18 in 1960), significantly changing the configuration of the Organization. Today, countries of the South have reached a numerical majority.

The countries of the South quickly grouped together and organized to put forward their common demands. At the General Conference session of 1948 they agreed on a common candidate for the post of Director-General: the Mexican Jaime Torres Bodet, who they managed to get elected with support from France. The Mexican was upheld as the representative of the smaller States against the Australian candidate, who was initially backed by the United States of America.

In 1974, another candidate from the South was elected to the post of Director-General: Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal. Mr M'Bow was committed to defending cultural identities, particularly in Africa. Asserting himself as the spokesperson and defender of what were then called Third World countries, he promoted the concept of the "cultural dimension of development" and emphasized the importance of mastery of technology and information for countries of the South. Mr M'Bow's focus on developing countries and multicultural approach were criticized by Western countries.

The increasing importance of countries of the South at UNESCO during the early decades resulted from their effective efforts to group together and express their common demands. They joined forces (first

Latin American, then the Arab, Asian and African States) to call for the election of a Director-General from a developing nation, recognition of their languages, the holding of conferences in their countries and an equitable geographical distribution of UNESCO staff by nationality. Already at the General Conference session of 1947, Mr Radakrishnan of India deplored the inequality in the distribution of posts in the Secretariat, which overwhelmingly favoured Western nationalities. Countries of the South also called for the decentralization and regionalization of UNESCO's activities.

The countries of the South were especially able to make significant demands on UNESCO during the 1960s and 1970s, a period when UNESCO was at the height of its influence. The countries of the South sought then to transform the Organization into "an instrument of cultural decolonization". They lobbied for a marked increase in the budget and its greater focus on developing countries. They also requested greater representation in the Executive Board. Although supported by the Director-General of UNESCO, René Maheu, they faced the reticence of Western countries fearing an increase in UNESCO's budget.

At the same time, as the Cold War was moving into developing countries during this period, the States of the East and West competed to attract sympathizers from among the countries of the South. In 1960, the Soviet delegation proposed replacing the post of Director-General with a collective leadership comprising three directors with equal powers, one representing the people's democracies, another representing the neutral countries and a third representing Western nations. This visionary proposal won approval from countries of the South but ran into opposition from Western states.

The Eastern Bloc countries at UNESCO supported draft resolutions on the condemnation of colonialism and racism, while the United States of America preferred to position itself as provider of material support and technical assistance. Thus, the first United Nations Development Decade,

launched at the beginning of the 1960s, appears to have been initiated by President Kennedy.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, control of information was an important issue for countries of the South at UNESCO, giving rise to the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The countries of the South called for a better distribution of the production and dissemination of information worldwide. They denounced the domination of information by a few large Northern news agencies and demanded a more egalitarian, balanced and democratic system, which would enable the people of countries of the South to participate in the production of knowledge and information. Spurred on by these demands and by Director-General M'Bow's commitment to the cause, the Organization convened an international commission in 1977, chaired by Ireland's Seán MacBride (founder of Amnesty International and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974). The commission issued a report in 1980 on the problems of information and communication in the world, entitled "Many voices, one world". This document provided up-to-date information on the North-South inequality in the flow of information, access to information and production of information in favour of the major Western powers and proposed proclaiming the right to communication as a new social right. The countries of the South took up these proposals at the UNESCO General Conference. Opposition came, however, from Western countries, particularly the United States of America, anxious to maintain their control over the mass media and communication. The United States of America violently contested NWICO on the grounds that it allegedly sought to establish totalitarian control over the press and freedom of expression by governments and to restrict individual freedom. In face of threats by the United States of America to freeze payment of their financial contributions and to withdraw from the Organization, UNESCO abandoned the project, much to the disappointment of many countries of the South.

Pressure from Western powers thus prevented UNESCO from working effectively to promote a balanced international production and

circulation of knowledge that would be fairer for countries of the South.

Despite this setback in the field of information, from the 1960s onwards, countries of the South did manage to guide UNESCO towards the promotion and preservation of their cultures. The scale of UNESCO's action in Africa starting in the 1960s is emblematic of this shift. This action primarily concerned education (with the establishment of several teacher-training institutes, programmatic conferences such as the regional conference on education held in Addis Ababa in 1961, and educational radio and television programmes). It also concerned the use of scientific and technical knowledge to work towards economic and social development, with the concept of "endogenous development" promoted by UNESCO.

Action was also taken in the cultural sector, with UNESCO endeavouring to collect, preserve and promote cultural expressions, especially those of the peoples of Africa, which were particularly threatened. This growing concern for the preservation and promotion of African cultural identities, cultural knowledge and cultural heritage was driven in particular by Africans, such as Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who urged UNESCO to prevent the destruction of an immense oral heritage. Thus, from the 1960s onwards, UNESCO has collected and transcribed African oral languages.

This concern for African cultures and knowledge is marked by the influence of the Négritude and Pan-Africanist movements. This is demonstrated by the historiographical work "General History of Africa", spearheaded by UNESCO from 1965 to the 1980s and contributed to by major African historians such as Joseph Ki Zerbo.

In this spirit, in 1978, Mr M'Bow went as far as demanding the restitution of African objects and works of art "stolen" by Westerners. This claim, however, met with opposition from Western States, and the determined position of the Organization's Director-General caused

controversy and criticism in the West. The United States of America and Western European States denounced UNESCO's turn towards "Third-Worldism".

Thus, the countries of the South played an increasing role in UNESCO over the years. They grouped together and called for UNESCO to defend their interests more effectively. UNESCO's action for Africa increased dramatically over the years. The African Director-General of UNESCO from 1974 to 1987, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal, represented a victory for the countries of the South. Little by little the countries of the South have gained ground within UNESCO and have managed to challenge Western domination and promote significant changes and interesting innovations within the Organization.

What are the current challenges for UNESCO, which the countries of the South could help meet?

Firstly, reaffirming the universality and legitimacy of UNESCO vis-à-vis other bodies

UNESCO faces competition from other bodies such as other international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and private foundations. Examples include the International Development Association, which works under the World Bank, NGOs such as the Red Cross, foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the bilateral programmes of certain States such as the United States Agency for International Development. UNESCO must reassert itself, through the membership held by countries of the South, as the most democratic and universal and thus the most legitimate body to take action in the fields of culture, education and science. In the education sector in particular, UNESCO must defend its role in the study and proposal of educational policies worldwide. Other bodies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) appear to have taken this role

now, by publishing statistics, setting standards and formulating recommendations. UNESCO is nonetheless operationally more universal and democratic than the OECD, so it is up to UNESCO to take the lead in this field.

Similarly, in the field of promotion of cultural diversity, another institution is encroaching on UNESCO's remit: the World Trade Organization (WTO). While WTO regulations are binding, with a capacity of sanctions, UNESCO's standard-setting instruments have no binding force. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, ratified in 2007, is a very important instrument, and it is a great victory for UNESCO to have established this Convention. However, several factors undermine its effectiveness. Its main weakness is that it does not call into question commitments to WTO, because it does not provide for the exclusion of cultural goods and services from WTO agreements. Indeed, the Convention even states that cultural goods and services are of an economic nature. Therefore, UNESCO does not reject the commercial view of culture, which runs counter to the stated objective of the Convention. Moreover, media pluralism was removed from the Convention's objectives; the concept of protection has been deleted from the definition of diversity; constraints are optional, penalties for violations are absent, monitoring and the dispute resolution mechanisms are weak. Article 20 of the Convention is particularly ambiguous: it states that nothing in the Convention "shall be interpreted as modifying rights and obligations of the Parties under any other treaties to which they are parties". The power of the Convention is therefore actually very limited with regard to WTO. In the face of pressure exerted by the United States of America the text of the Convention was heavily watered down.

Liberating UNESCO from the private sector and economic liberalism

The second very important point is to free UNESCO from the private sector and liberal economic policies. This is a longstanding issue

that concerns the whole of the United Nations system. In 1978, the Swiss NGO working towards equitable North-South relations “Berne Declaration” published a booklet entitled “The infiltration of multinational corporations into the United Nations”. The publication denounced increasing attempts by powerful transnational corporations to influence the decisions taken by different bodies of the United Nations system. Over the years, this trend has only got worse: the United Nations has developed increasingly close ties with corporations and private interests. The trend is worrying because it surreptitiously leads the United Nations to place economic interests above human interests (“Profit over people”, as Noam Chomsky put it).

In the 1990s, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali increasingly involved transnational corporations in international decision-making. In 1995, at the World Economic Forum in Davos (the place is itself a symbol) he made statements regarding the promotion of closer associations between the United Nations and multinational corporations.

His successor, Kofi Annan, pushed more strongly in this direction, with his plans to reform the United Nations inspired by the new public management trend. This concept, developed in the United States of America, calls for private-sector administration methods to be applied to the public sector, including giving precedence to performance targets and cost control and promoting the development of public-private partnerships, and the liberalization and outsourcing of public policy through the establishment of autonomous private agencies. In applying these principles, United Nations institutions have outsourced a significant part of their programmes and activities to private companies. The results are generally poor: the institutions pay a higher price for lower quality work.

The evolution of the United Nations towards liberal economic policies is clearly illustrated by Kofi Annan’s report “Entrepreneurship and privatization for economic growth and sustainable development”(1998). The United Nations’ Global Compact, launched by Kofi Annan in 2000,

aimed to give a central place within the United Nations to transnational corporations, which would grant them an important decision-making role almost equal to that of States.

The Global Compact project attracted strong criticism from social NGOs and citizens' movements. The proposed partnership between the United Nations and transnational corporations did not refer to any clear legal framework and provided no precise means or rigorous mechanisms to control compliance by the corporations to the commitments that they would have agreed to make. Since the departure of Kofi Annan in 2006, a dampener seems to have been put on the Global Compact project. Ban Ki Moon has nonetheless continued the trend. This is noticeable at UNESCO, too, where outsourcing and public-private partnerships have been developed. It is up to the countries of the South to defend the more progressive principles of the UNESCO Constitution against private interests and liberal economic doctrine.

Thus, the role of countries of the South is crucial to enabling UNESCO to overcome its difficulties and fully realize its progressive role in tomorrow's world.

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Closure of the Round Table

Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China, Paris Chapter

Madam President of the General Conference,
Assistant Director-General for Education, representing Ms. Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,
Ambassadors, Permanent Delegates to UNESCO,

Dear colleagues,
Distinguished speakers and guests,

We have now reached the end of today's Round Table debate. We should like first of all to thank all the participants for their time, for responding to our invitation and for the quality of their respective Round Table presentations and contributions.

We should also like thank the Round Table Organizing Committee, in particular the colleagues and Ambassadors of Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Iran, Madagascar, Nicaragua, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and all of their teams who have spared no effort to ensure the success of this forum.

The action of the Group will continue, with a statement by the Group of 77 and China at the upcoming 190th session of UNESCO's Executive Board and through the work of the follow-up committee to be set up after this Round Table and the working groups that already exist in UNESCO's five fields of competence.

I hereby declare this Round Table closed and I thank you for your kind attention.

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