



Report on a rationalization of  
the proceedings and documentation of the  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization's General Conference

by

Lucio Garcia del Solar  
Joint Inspection Unit

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies (the Committee of Fourteen), in chapter IX of its second report (A/6343), took up the problem created by the growth of conferences. One of the heaviest burdens imposed on the organizations are the sessions of the legislative organs which are a source of increased expense to them and to the Member States which have to send delegations.
2. The Committee of Fourteen, in pursuit of its general aim of standardizing the practices of the specialized agencies, recommended (A/6343, para. 104(b)) that their legislative bodies should hold biennial sessions. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) fulfils this requirement and convenes its General Conference every second year.
3. But this Conference, which is the longest of the legislative assemblies held by the larger specialized agencies, appears to encounter difficulties in efficiently discharging the responsibility assigned to it by the Constitution.
4. This was noted by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which made the following recommendations in its "Review of the administrative and management procedures concerning the programme and budget of UNESCO" (A/6905, paras. 76-83):
  - "(a) That the General Conference focus attention on its primary responsibility of determining the policies and the main lines of work of the Organization, as called for by the Constitution of UNESCO (article IV.B.2)
  - (b) That the General Conference improve the method and content of its guidance in formulating directives for future programmes."
5. Recommendation (a) implies that the Conference, which should constitute the main source of guidance in determining the organization's policy, fails to concentrate on this task and disperses its efforts on the excessively detailed treatment of problems which, though important, could well be dealt with more expeditiously. Recommendation (b) explicitly calls for

a greater and more methodical effort by the General Conference to formulate long-term plans.

6. The analysis of the working methods of the Conference that follows will indicate many of the reasons why it is encountering difficulties in complying with recommendation (a).

7. With regard to ACABQ's recommendation (b), this has been a matter of special concern to the Director-General, who has never concealed his desire that the General Conference should devote part of its time to the provision of guidelines for long-term action. Thus, UNESCO has been the first of the specialized agencies to adopt, on the initiative of the Executive Board, the recommendation of the Committee of Fourteen (A/6343, para. 71) on the adoption of a six-year programming cycle (Resolution 33.1 of the fifteenth session of the General Conference).

8. Nevertheless, as will be seen later, the arrangements under which the General Conference operates make it impossible to achieve the best results in this respect at the present time.

9. This report sets itself two purposes which correspond to the objectives, in terms of general policy, which the Committee of Fourteen would like the members of the United Nations family to achieve, namely greater economy in the use of the funds placed at their disposal and greater efficiency in the execution of their activities. As applied to the General Conference of UNESCO, this means a rationalization of its working methods so that its deliberations become more purposeful and effective and its decisions be more in conformity with the task assigned to it by the Constitution. Such rationalization may also make possible a reduction in the duration and hence the cost of the Conference.

10. Unfortunately, it is not possible in a report of this nature to draw a clear distinction between a study of a reduction in the length of the Conference and a study on more effective deliberations: the two aspects of the problem are closely related and the recommendations which will be made are aimed, simultaneously, at contributing to both objectives.

11. It is equally impossible to recommend measures of rationalization without implying certain sacrifices which, it is to be hoped, will not be interpreted as affecting the Secretariat's praiseworthy desire that the practices of the Organization should be in a style consonant with the important tasks in which it is engaged or, in some cases, as curtailing the sovereign rights of Member States. Quite to the contrary, it will be noted in this last respect that certain recommendations, especially those relating to the documentation which the Executive Board submits to the General Conference, are intended to strengthen the role played by Member States, through the executive body, in the examination and implementation of the programme and budget prepared by the Secretariat.

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12. The arrangements for the General Conference are based on parliamentary techniques which correspond in broad outline to those applied in the United Nations General Assembly and the legislative meetings of the other larger specialized agencies. These techniques have been preserved more or less unchanged through the years, despite two factors: the growth of UNESCO's activities; and the fact that its programme, due to the wide range of subject matters it covers, is the most complex of the United Nations family.

13. The acknowledged need to improve or rationalize the working methods of the UNESCO General Conference led to the establishment after the twelfth session of an Ad Hoc Committee of the Executive Board to consider what changes should be made in the functions and obligations of UNESCO organs and what practical measures were needed to enable those organs to discharge their functions and obligations more effectively. In a working paper prepared for the Ad Hoc Committee (66 EX/AD HOC/2), which appeared in July 1963, the Chairman of the Executive Board said "that the General Conference was so inundated with documents and details that the smallest and newest delegations felt lost. In one or two important matters such as the budgetary ceiling, on which their votes were decisive, and in some matters of detail for those possessing special knowledge, they made their weight felt in the debates; in other cases most of those delegations can

have little influence on the outcome of the Conference as at present organized". Five years after this expression of opinion UNESCO has still not found lasting solutions to these problems.

14. The timely decision of the Executive Board to keep the Ad-Hoc (now called Special) Committee in operation is a praiseworthy step. The work accomplished by that Committee since its inception fully justifies this decision, for it has taken a realistic approach to the practical problems of a procedural nature for which the Executive Board has special competence. Its limited membership has given the Committee cohesion and enabled it to deal with its work in a businesslike fashion; recently its membership was increased from thirteen to sixteen and its terms of reference were extended to cover the study of important questions raised by the reports of the Director-General in connexion with the execution of the programme.

15. The Special Committee submitted to the Executive Board at its seventy-eighth session a report (78 EX/2) largely concerned with the organization of the General Conference's work and based mainly on a study of the replies of some Member States to a questionnaire (CL/1886).

16. The above report and the discussions held on it in the Committee, and afterwards in the Executive Board, reveal three main sources of concern:

- (1) The need to rationalize the documentation which the Secretariat prepares for the Member States and which then serves as working material at the General Conference;
- (2) The disproportionate workload placed on the Programme Commission - as compared to that of other organs - whose proceedings determine the length of the Conference session;
- (3) The difficulties experienced by Member States and by the Secretariat in defining clearly what constitutes past, current and future programmes. These difficulties lead to the adoption of decisions which vary from one session of the Conference to the next with regard to the manner and forum in which these various phases of the programme should be tackled and discussed.



17. The three problems are interrelated. It will be seen that the disproportionate workload of the Programme Commission is largely due to the nature and volume of the documentation before it (including hundreds of amendments to the current programme and budget) which encourages unnecessarily long debates. It is also felt that the difficulties experienced in finding expeditious ways of organizing the discussion of the past, current and future programmes in the Programme Commission prevent this Commission from shortening its proceedings.

18. Bearing in mind essentially these sources of concern and in the light of the results achieved through the implementation of the Executive Board's recommendations at the fifteenth session of the General Conference, we shall now proceed to analyse its methods of work.

## II. DURATION AND COST

19. The duration of the 1968 session of the General Conference obliged the delegations attending it to stay in Paris for five weeks; it consisted of thirty actual working days, including Saturday mornings except those preceding weeks which included a holiday. In the latter cases, Saturday was a full working day. By way of a comparison, the World Health Assembly invariably lasts three weeks and the International Labour Conference about three and a half weeks.

20. As a result, the fifteenth session of the General Conference cost \$1,217,399. For the biennium 1969-70 the cost (estimated on the same basis, i.e. excluding expenses for the utilization of Arabic) is expected to be 11 per cent higher.

21. The UNESCO Secretariat has proposed that the sixteenth session open in the afternoon of 12 October 1970 and close in the afternoon of 10 November. To achieve this, however, it contemplates a schedule of meetings which involves treating Saturday as a full working day. Under this plan the usual thirty working days would be reduced to  $25\frac{1}{2}$  and the Conference would last four weeks and one day.

22. The direct saving to the UNESCO budget from a reduction of one day in the planned duration of a session is estimated at approximately \$10,000. This represents the total costs for one day of all temporary staff (interpreters, translators, typists, clerks, etc.), plus a proportional reduction in overhead costs.

23. The corresponding saving for Member States in per diem for their delegations (calculated for 600 delegates at the current United Nations rate of per diem for France) might be of the order of \$15,000 a day or about \$105,000 for one week.

24. A week less spent at Headquarters, however, would not only represent an economic gain (an especially important factor for the delegations of developing countries), but would help meet the problem created for Member States by the undue length of time their representatives have to spend abroad. Thus it is sound practice for Ministers of Education and

senior officials to attend the UNESCO General Conference, and **yet** they cannot be expected to spend long periods away from their posts.

25. As the methods of work of the General Conference are at present conceived, it does not look as though the target of closing the sixteenth session on 10 November will easily be met. The difficulty of finding a way to reduce the number of meetings of the Programme Commission may be overcome to some extent by adopting certain measures which we shall consider later on. On the other hand, the agenda for the General Conference will be augmented by two items which may call for fairly lengthy consideration: (1) review of the first Development Decade, and (2) the contribution of non-governmental organizations to UNESCO's work (the latter item is taken up at intervals of six years on the basis of a voluminous document).

26. The daily work programme allows for a maximum of four organs to meet simultaneously, including a maximum of three organs with full membership. Even so, we believe that the Secretariat proposal for the opening and closing dates of the sixteenth session of the Conference, as approved at the fifteenth session, sets a target that should be attained.

27. However, we have serious doubts that many Member States will find acceptable the suggestion that Saturday afternoons should be treated as working time. True, this would save two days, since there are four Saturdays in the proposed period; but it would mean adopting a practice which has no parallel in the United Nations or the other larger specialized agencies. Thus, the World Health Assembly and the International Labour Conference do not normally meet on Saturday afternoons but treat public holidays as full working days. Legislative meetings require a considerable physical effort from the delegates and the Secretariat staff and a break of at least one day and a half is needed, if only to enable them to read the vast documentation before them.

28. On the other hand, we do not see why the inaugural meeting of the UNESCO General Conference should be held in the afternoon of 12 October, thus wasting half a working day. If the purpose is to have delegates meet beforehand to agree on certain arrangements, the opening session could start at 11.30 a.m.

29. Thus, if the four Saturday afternoons (two days) were subtracted from the working time and the morning of Monday 12 October was added to it, the number of working days would be 24 instead of the proposed  $25\frac{1}{2}$  and the delegates would spend only four weeks in Paris.

30. It is to be hoped that with the improvements in working methods under consideration by the Secretariat, plus the eventual suggestions of the Executive Board and those made in this report, the target of ending the sixteenth session of the General Conference in the afternoon or evening of 10 November will be met. This could save the Organization some \$50,000, as compared to the previous session, which would mean an additional economy to the one achieved through the elimination of summary records; finally, a further saving could be achieved by drastic measures to rationalize documentation.

### III. ABOLITION OF SUMMARY RECORDS

31. On a proposal from the Special Committee, the Executive Board recommended to the General Conference at its fifteenth session, and the Conference unanimously resolved, that the use of summary records of discussions held in commissions and committees be discontinued. The result of the discussions will be reflected in the reports of these organs, and the sound recordings of the statements made will be kept available in the archives of the Organization for those who would wish to consult them.

32. A word of praise for this decision is due to UNESCO, which has thus responded to a recommendation made by the Economic and Social Council and taken up in a report on documentation by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/68/5), by setting a most drastic precedent.

33. The decision, which will save the organization \$70,000, was put into effect at the fifteenth session. It met with no adverse comment from delegations and caused no inconvenience worthy of mention.

#### IV. DOCUMENTATION

34. The cost of documentation accounts for a very high proportion of the total budget of the General Conference: of an estimated \$1,527,174 for the biennium 1969-1970, \$1,238,000, i.e. 81 per cent, relates to this item. (These estimates include expenses for the utilization of Arabic.)

35. We therefore feel that the rationalization recommended in this regard would result not only in a more effective functioning of the General Conference, but also in increased financial savings.

36. The Member States are supplied in connexion with the Conference with a variety of documents. These may be divided into four categories:

(1) Firstly, a set of basic documents submitted by the Secretariat or by the Executive Board, namely:

- C/1 Provisional agenda;
- C/2 Organization of work;
- C/3 Report of the Director-General on the first half of the second year of the financial period; also his report on the first year, which bears no symbol;
- C/4 Evaluation of activities and estimate of future prospects;
- C/5 Draft programme and budget;
- C/6 Recommendations of the Executive Board on the draft programme and budget;
- C/8 Amendments submitted by Member States to the draft programme and budget;
- C/9 Comments of the Executive Board on the reports of the Director-General.

(2) A second type of documentation comprises the reports of subsidiary organs; documents on specific projects or proposals; documents on particular administrative and budgetary problems; draft resolutions, etc.

- (3) A third type consists of in-session documentation, in the form of draft resolutions submitted during the session; provisional records of plenary meetings, and the reports of organs.
- (4) The last type consists of documents circulated after the Conference mostly in printed form, such as the volumes of resolutions; the records; the approved programme and budget; the reports of the Director-General, etc.

37. The Executive Board, in studying the methods of work of the General Conference, looked into the various problems created by the documentation described under (1) above and in particular by document C/5, i.e. the draft programme and budget. It took this step in response to an expression of serious concern by Member States, which have on many occasions voiced their misgivings about the presentation and the cost of this document (\$105,648 for 15 C/5). We fully agree with this feeling and believe that its simplification may constitute a major contribution to increasing the efficiency of the Conference. We shall therefore examine it first.

(a) Document C/5: "Draft Programme and Budget"

38. While the presentation of the budgetary and statistical material in the annexes seems adequate, the examination of the body of this basic document is becoming more and more difficult, as far as the representatives of Member States who are called upon to study it are concerned. And this is not only on account of its steadily increasing length (document 15 C/5 had 940 standard pages, 220 more than 14 C/5).

39. C/5 is, of course, a technical document, but it should not be forgotten that the representatives of Member States who have to study it cannot follow the day-to-day work of the Organization as closely as the UNESCO Secretariat does, and that what is no doubt intelligible to the Secretariat, may be hieroglyphics for most delegates.

40. The detailed observations we have to make on document C/5 lay no claim to originality; the question has been dealt with at great length in UNESCO, and the need for major changes in layout was recognized in resolution 33.2 of the fifteenth session of the General Conference.

41. Introduction by the Director-General: Document C/5 begins with an introduction in which the Director-General states the theoretical arguments in favour of the Organization's programmes and his ideas on the proper approach to them. This introduction is of essential importance, since it sets forth the policy of the Organization and the Director-General states his arguments invariably with a rare authority. However, its sustaining interest is apt to be impaired by the wealth of explanations and detail with which the Director-General, in a commendable desire for substantiation, is apt to present them. Paragraphs 27 and 105 of 15 C/5 are cases in point. Moreover, some of these ideas, especially those of a philosophical stamp, may be found in other documents, such as the C/4, or in the statements made by the Director-General himself, or by the Chairman of the Executive Board or even the directors of the various substantive departments in the course of the session. In other cases, past resolutions are reproduced, some of them in extenso (paras. 67 and 123).

42. The introduction to document 15 C/5 is 80 standard pages long. In WHO, by comparison, the introduction to the corresponding document takes 25 standard pages; and in the United Nations 22 standard pages (English versions). True, WHO and the United Nations produce such a document every year and this may affect the length of their introductions. FAO, however, holds its Conference also every other year and the introduction to its Director-General's report takes approximately 35 pages. Does the multi-disciplinary nature of UNESCO's activities really justify this difference?

43. Chapters of the programme: Part II of document C/5 comprises the chapters dealing with the four main sectors of the programme: Education; Natural Sciences; Social Sciences, Human Sciences and Culture; and Communication.

44. The presentation of these chapters seems to suffer from two defects: the explanatory passages go into too much detail; and the various components of the sections are put together in an unduly complex fashion and do not form a smooth sequence. As a result, the chapters are not as intelligible as they should be.



45. Each chapter begins with some budgetary information, follows this with an introduction couched in general terms and ends in a long draft resolution addressed to Member States, which suggests general guidelines for activity in the sector concerned.

46. The Member States are then offered further material for general guidance under the heading "Suggestions for action by Member States and National Commissions".

47. The programme proper is set out in sub-chapters and sections. Each section is headed by estimates of its cost, followed by draft resolutions specifically authorizing the Director-General to carry out the work involved, or addressed to Member States. Each section ends with what is termed a work plan, containing a description of the tasks to be performed.

48. Introduction to each chapter of part II: In document 14 C/5, the four introductions (including the draft resolutions addressed to Member States and the suggestions for action) took up a total of  $21\frac{1}{2}$  printed pages. In document 15 C/5 the total increased to 31. For the Social Sciences, Human Sciences and Culture, the length of this passage increased from 4 printed pages to  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . Many of the ideas embodied in these introductions are worded almost like speeches (e.g. para. 1088); others reflect concepts already dealt with in the Director-General's introduction (paras. 569-570 of Chapter II/para. 99 of the Director-General's introduction) or are reiterated by the directors in their oral statements before the Programme Sub-Commissions when the chapter concerned is taken up for consideration there.

49. Draft resolutions addressed to Member States and suggestions for action by Member States and National Commissions: Member States pay little attention to these recommendations and suggestions: partly because both texts contain a great many generalities, most of which offer little new information to Member States; partly because patterns established in other texts are repeated.

50. Draft resolutions: The UNESCO draft programme and budget contains innumerable draft resolutions designed for conversion into instructions to the Director-General. These resolutions, together with others submitted by Member States (which are encouraged to do so because of the existence of such a system), are dealt with in detail, more particularly in the Programme Commission of the General Conference. Document 14 C/5 contained 109 draft resolutions which prompted the submission of a further 268 by Member States, usually in the form of amendments; in the case of document 15 C/5, the corresponding figures were 87 and 320. As can well be imagined, with such a profusion of texts there is no means of avoiding the traditional discussions about the wording of this or that paragraph, which greatly retards the process of reaching each decision in the Programme Sub-Commissions, and this, despite the very useful work done beforehand by the Resolutions Committee responsible for their screening. Finally, of the above total of 407 resolutions, the Fifteenth Conference adopted 181.

51. By comparison, the draft programme and budget document of WHO contains only one draft resolution, which sets the budget ceiling. The ILO, in its corresponding document, submits only one extremely brief draft resolution, also concerning the budget ceiling. At FAO the programme and budget document includes only two draft resolutions.

52. The texts of UNESCO draft resolutions are, moreover, often unnecessarily detailed. This characteristic takes on alarming proportions when they are presented during a session: for example, resolution 1.241 of the fifteenth session of the Conference on family planning spread out over 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  printed pages with 11 preambular paragraphs, 6 operative paragraphs and several sub-paragraphs. Indeed, in cases when several subjects have to be covered by a single text the draft resolutions take on the proportions of a veritable saga: for example, the draft resolution summarizing the general debate (4 $\frac{1}{2}$  printed pages) or, worse still, that on the future programme (24 printed pages), which is actually a programme description couched in the form of a draft resolution.

53. Thought might be given to an arrangement whereby the submission and approval of decisions in the form of draft resolutions would be confined to those cases where the texts summarize programmes that cover a variety of activities and chart lines of action, which would serve as a basis for instructing the Secretariat and enlightening Member States about a particular global programme. For example, there might be one draft resolution per sub-chapter of document C/5; one general draft resolution on the long-term plan, summarizing the results of the discussion in the Programme Commission and incorporating the useful ideas expressed by the heads of delegations in the debate on general policy; a few draft resolutions on such special items as UNESCO's contribution to peace, the elimination of colonialism and work on population problems, etc. Another draft resolution would obviously be needed to embody the decision on the budget ceiling. However, since the details are already given in the body of document C/5, the latter should be simplified: instead of taking up six pages (as did resolution 7.1 of the fifteenth session of the General Conference), it could be limited to a few lines as in the ILO, WHO and FAO.

54. With regard to the specific decisions to be adopted in connexion with the various sections of part II, it might be desirable to eliminate the draft resolutions altogether. The Commissions and Sub-Commissions, at the close of their discussion on the various sections, might adopt them instead and record these decisions in their reports. The approval of the Commissions' reports by the plenary Conference would provide the Director-General with the necessary authorization to execute the programme, and the present mass of resolutions would be drastically cut, except for those specifically presented by Member States.

55. These, of course, must always have the right to submit new proposals or to amend those contained in C/5. We trust, however, that the elimination of most draft resolutions from this document may encourage them to present their initiatives in a more practical fashion, thus speeding up their approval.

56. Work plans: These items too add to the bulk and complexity of document C/5. They inform the reader how it is envisaged that a project should be executed. There were 86 such plans in document 14 C/5 and 83 in document 15 C/5. It is of course useful to have such explanations; here again, however, many of them are so worded as to include elements of obiter dicta. Two examples in point: paragraphs 100 and 107 of the chapter on Education in document 15 C/5; they state merely general ideas which could be included in an introduction or in a brief explanation, given by the competent representative of the Secretariat when the item comes up for consideration.

57. In other cases, the same idea is repeated time and again. Thus, paragraphs 576 (a) and (b) and 577 (b) in the introduction to chapter 2 on Natural Sciences are repeated in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) of the resolution proposed in paragraph 706, only to reappear in sub-paragraphs (ii) and (iii) of paragraph 712, dealing with the work plan for teaching the basic sciences. Paragraph 1103 of the introduction to chapter 3 on Social Sciences, Human Sciences and Culture is to all intents and purposes repeated in the work plan relating to cultural policies, paragraph 1304.

58. We consider that the work plans should be greatly compressed, if not eliminated from document C/5 altogether. According to this revised presentation, after the budgetary information there would be a concise and accurate description of the projects, the details of their execution being given in summary form. Any additional explanations could be given, if requested, by the competent representative of the Secretariat in the Programme Commission and Sub-Commissions. The detailed information that figures at present in the work plans should be available in the form of individual background papers for restricted circulation - for the internal use of the Secretariat, and if and when required, by the Executive Board and the General Conference.

59. The approved C/5, however, should contain the detailed work plans, so as to enable the Executive Board to follow through the execution of the programme.

(b) Documents C/1: "Agenda" and C/2: "Organization of the General Conference"

60. These two documents are submitted to the General Conference by the Executive Board.

61. We have little comment to make on document C/1 except that it would seem more useful to show the proposed distribution of agenda items among the Conference organs in this document instead of in document C/2.

62. Document C/2, on the other hand, seems to go into too much detail and to give too many explanations and cite too many other texts. For example, the explanations given on the method of adopting the budget ceiling (document 15 C/2, paras. 12.1 to 12.8) are too long. Paragraphs 18.4 and 22.1 and the table annexed at the end are clearly redundant.

63. As a result, what should be the main purpose of document C/2 - the provision of useful advice to delegations on such matters as the need for punctuality at meetings, the time-limit on speeches, the selection of topics for the general policy debate and so on - is lost. If it is decided to rationalize this document, the latter could take the form of a circular letter or at least be accompanied by such a letter, which would have a sharper impact on Member States and might be more effective in inducing them to abide by the recommended rules while the Conference is in session. Such strictly practical advice might be repeated in the first issue of the Conference journal.

64. Furthermore, since document C/2 is concerned with the material aspects of the organization of the Conference, it might be more appropriate for the Secretariat to spend the necessary time preparing it, rather than for the Executive Board.

65. The ILO and WHO do not produce such a document. WHO issues an attractive leaflet which serves as a guide to delegations and which includes a set of items of practical advice, chosen pragmatically, on the lines of those given in document C/2. ILO offers practical advice in the convocation-circular letter and repeats them in a leaflet called "Memorandum".

(c) Document C/3: "Report of the Director-General"

66. The Director-General reports on the activities carried out by the Organization, firstly, in a document covering the first year of the biennium; document C/3, covering the first half of the second year, is then added, and the two documents are submitted to the Executive Board and supplemented by oral reports from the Director-General. After the General Conference, the entire report on the second year is issued.

67. The chapters dealing with the programmes are fairly matter-of-fact in style and give a comprehensive picture of the Organization's activities. Though they could be shortened, their length is understandable in view of the variety of UNESCO's activities.

68. The introductions provide a critical examination of the activities reported: these opinions of the Director-General should be especially useful for the evaluation role we propose that the Executive Board should play with the help of document C/9.

(d) Document C/4: "Evaluation of UNESCO's activities and future prospects"

69. This document - which was not issued for the fifteenth session of the General Conference - should become the basis for the formulation of the long-term plan.

70. C/4 was a sound evaluation document although it covered too wide a range of activities in the sense that it was meant to deal with past as well as future programmes.

71. We feel that it might be more appropriate for the Director-General to view C/4 exclusively as a forward-looking evaluation, charting courses for the guidance of the General Conference in discussing the long-term programme, with special emphasis on the last four years of the six-year plan and on the topics chosen by the Executive Board for the general policy debate. This arrangement would be consistent with the spirit and the letter of resolution 33.1 of the fifteenth session of the General Conference, which deals in detail with long-term planning.

72. Whenever possible, gross estimates of costs of proposed programme should be indicated in this document, as requested by the Committee of Fourteen.

73. As we suggest later, it would be the Executive Board's responsibility, in a special document (C/9) resulting from its examination of the Director-General's reports, to carry out the evaluation of the programmes already executed and in process of execution.

(c) Document C/6: "Recommendations of the Executive Board on the draft programme and budget"

74. The Executive Board has the heavy responsibility for examining document C/5 and for making recommendations to the Conference with regard to its contents; it can thus be of great assistance to the Conference by giving its views on the various aspects of the programme.

75. At the last Conference the results of this examination were embodied in document 15 C/6, which set forth the Board's opinions in two parts:

- (A) miscellaneous conclusions and recommendations (3½ pages); and
- (B) draft resolutions (12 pages).

76. In its present form, document C/6 seems to us somewhat too dry and meagre in substance for the Conference to be able to rely on it as much as it should, in examining the Director-General's programme and budget. Although the Board goes deeply into document C/5, it does not give the impression that it has done so, at least to the same degree as do, for example, the Executive Board of WHO and the Governing Body of ILO in the reports which they submit, respectively, to the World Health Assembly and the International Labour Conference, thus effectively guiding these legislative organs in adopting or modifying the proposals of the two Secretariats.

77. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions voiced the opinion, in paragraph 82 of document A/6905, that "it would appear that if the Executive Board's role in relation to the preparation of the draft programme and budget for the next biennium were

clarified, the Board should be in a position to devote more time to ensuring the effective and rational execution of the programme by the Director-General". We are inclined to feel that it is not so much the Board's role which needs clarification, as the documents which emerge from its deliberations, which should reflect the various opinions expressed in greater detail and in a more lively form.

78. If part A of C/6 were to be drawn up as we suggest, the Board's recommendations could be summarized in a few draft resolutions.

(f) Document C/8: "Amendments submitted by Member States to the draft programme and budget"

79. This document (which was not issued in its traditional form for the fifteenth session) used to contain the draft resolutions submitted by Member States before the Conference; each draft was accompanied by the Director-General's comments on their feasibility (14 C/8 was 67 pages long). For the fifteenth session, it was replaced by a document containing only an index of the draft resolutions. Since many such draft resolutions consist of amendments to those proposed in C/5, this new synthetic formula would become even more logical were most draft resolutions to be eliminated from document C/5.

80. All the more so, since most of these draft resolutions have little chance of being accepted as they are presented already after C/5 has been printed; moreover, they are discussed in the Programme Sub-Commissions only once the budget ceiling has been approved and since the budgetary arrangements do not include any contingency reserve to cover such additional proposals, they have to be either rejected or diverted towards the participation programme whose funds are very limited. This causes much frustration among Member States, who sometimes feel that though allegedly merely a draft, C/5 is "untouchable".

81. But we will not elaborate on this subject which falls outside the scope of our report and should perhaps be studied in connexion with problems of budget techniques and programme formulation.



(g) Document C/9: "Comments of the Executive Board on the reports of the Director-General"

82. Document 15 C/9 consists of three pages, two of them containing resolutions which to all intents and purposes merely take note of the Director-General's reports, and one dealing with a specific topic of current concern.

83. The General Conference cannot, of course, examine such detailed reports in depth; that, in our opinion, should be the task of the Executive Board. If the Board could find a way to do so, it would at the same time be performing the essential duty of evaluating past and current activities. This has been noted, by the way, by the Advisory Committee, when again in paragraph 82 of the previously mentioned document it said: "At the same time, the Advisory Committee believes that the Executive Board should also devote more time to evaluation of past programmes and budgets as a necessary guide in the formulation of future policies and programme."

84. The Board, conscious of this responsibility, acknowledges in a preambular paragraph of one of the resolutions reproduced in document 15 C/9 that "the reports of the Director-General are a key factor and essential aid to the implementation of the Board's responsibilities for the execution of the programme and that it has not been possible for the Board in the recent past to make full use of those reports for that purpose, and that it has thus not been affording the Director-General the close collaboration to which he is entitled in this common task". As a result of this expression of concern, the General Conference, at its fifteenth session, adopted resolution 33.3, conferring on the Board - and more particularly on the Special Committee - powers to give the reports the attention they deserve.

85. To this end, the Board could, during its spring session in the first year of the biennium, examine the reports of the Director-General on the two preceding years and issue a first C/9 evaluation document. At the spring session of the following year, it could examine his third report.

86. If this were done, document C/9 would assume its proper significance and provide the Conference with an evaluation of the Organization's past (and current) activities over three years (i.e. the sixteenth session would consider, in 1970, the Executive Board's evaluation of the activities pursued in 1967, 1968 and 1969).

87. This might be the best way of undertaking the much-desired evaluation of projects, thus providing the Director-General with guidance as to those projects which are outdated or "dead wood"; and in contrast to document C/5, which mentions here and there the elimination of a project as a fact, without explaining which projects are affected (para. 1077 of 15 C/5), the Executive Board would state its exact views on the subject.

(h) Presentation of documents

88. Unlike the United Nations and WHO, UNESCO does not print its basic documents in a series of uniform presentation. The Director-General's annual printed reports bear no identifying symbol whatsoever; the report on the half-year bears the symbol C/3; the draft programme and budget is bound differently, the documents of the Executive Board are not bound at all, possibly because they are made up of collated items.

89. We think that the documents would be easier for delegates to handle and for libraries to sort and file if their presentation were made uniform.

90. It would also be useful to number these documents in a sequence more in keeping with the chronological order of their discussion in the General Conference.

(i) In-session documentation

91. The volume of working documents issued during the fifteenth session of the General Conference increased by 15 per cent as compared to the previous session.

92. This overwhelming flood of documents is swelled further by the reports of the various commissions and sub-commissions, of which, moreover, there are often several successive versions.

93. The Programme Sub-Commissions, for instance, issue one or two provisional versions, which are subsequently amended and reproduced in final form; then a new report is issued in the Commission (cases have even occurred where this final report was preceded by yet another provisional version). In other words, three to five versions of reports containing basically similar material are issued. The situation is much the same in the working groups.

94. Furthermore, the reports themselves seem unnecessarily long and complex: the Programme Commission's report during the fifteenth session had 392 printed pages, 10 more than the previous Conference's version; the provisional versions included, every time, texts of budgetary provisions, proposed amendments and draft resolutions, some of which were being circulated also in separate papers. Were these omitted in the provisional reports, the latter would be obviously less bulky and, very important, the printing job would be greatly simplified.

(j) Post-session documentation

95. There is duplication in the reproduction of some of these documents too. Just after the General Conference, a document called C/Resolutions (Provisional) is issued, in mimeo, containing all resolutions adopted during the session. This is in conformity with rule 63, which sets a time-limit of one month after the closing of the session for circulation among Member States of the texts of these resolutions. About four or five months afterwards, a printed document is issued containing the same material.

96. Meanwhile, however, two months after the Conference, an important document, the Approved Programme and Budget, is issued: it, too, contains all the resolutions adopted by the General Conference. The three

collections are widely distributed (5,420 copies of 15 C/Resolutions, 5,700 of Approved C/5 and 9,900 of the printed volume of Resolutions).

97. We feel that one of these three documents should be discontinued: perhaps the C/Resolutions (Provisional), which has about 475 standard pages and costs \$14,500. Of course, to allow time for the Approved C/5 (which includes all the resolutions anyway) to be printed, rule 63 should be amended, extending to two months the time-limit for transmitting the General Conference's resolutions to Member States.

## V. PROCEEDINGS

98. We shall consider only the procedure followed at the plenary meetings of the General Conference and the meetings of the two main Commissions, the Administrative Commission and the Programme Commission. Though the two first-mentioned series of meetings call for some comments which may be useful in achieving the desired rationalization, in themselves they present fewer problems than the meetings of the Programme Commission. It should not be overlooked, however, that any progress made in rationalizing the plenary meetings and the meetings of other Conference organs may help indirectly to solve the problems created by the heavy workload of the Programme Commission.

### (a) Plenary meetings - general policy debate

99. As in all the organizations of the United Nations family, the so-called general debate provides the occasion for delegations to put forward general considerations about matters within the Organization's field of competence.

100. Since the larger organizations now have well over a hundred Member States apiece, this general debate has tended to increase in length. This tendency has made it necessary to take steps to guide the debate and prevent any deflection from its purpose. This has been no easy task, because the sovereign right to express opinion is exercised on this occasion at the highest level, very often by Ministers or Secretaries of State who, in the past, have tended to make statements of great length and detail about the action taken in their respective countries on matters within the organization's field of competence. Some of these statements have been made, clearly, for home consumption, with an eye to their publicity impact. On many such occasions the speakers have neglected to state their views on the organization's programmes and future activity altogether, although such statements represent for the Administration of that organization an important source of guidance and direction. In those organizations which have failed to lay down certain rules, this practice has resulted, and still results, in a slow-moving sequence of unrelated statements which are apt both to overwhelm and somnify the listener.

101. UNESCO, through the combined efforts of the Executive Board and the Secretariat, has managed to suggest and smoothly put into practice a set of rules which, without encroaching upon the sovereign right of Member States to express their views, have made it possible to channel the general debate in directions more in keeping with its essential purpose. We shall examine these rules below.

102. Time-table for the general debate: For the fifteenth session of the General Conference it was wisely decided to hold, from the very outset, a continuous series of meetings, this sequence being interrupted only to deal with any urgent matter which might arise. As a result, 19 meetings were held over a period of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  working days, after which two further meetings were held to consider and approve a resolution on the conclusions from the debate. Of the 125 attending Member States, 108 made statements in this general debate.

103. Punctual starting of meetings: At the fifteenth session of the General Conference, the aggregate loss of working time totalled 46 hours, 32 minutes. The average delay in starting the plenary meetings was 17 minutes; the meetings of the Administrative Commission started on an average 25 minutes late and this situation was repeated, generally speaking, in the Sub-Commissions of the Programme Commission, where the loss of time was all the more serious since these bodies have the heaviest workload.

104. These delays are due to the difficulty of having a quorum, especially in the Sub-Commissions and the Administrative Commission. Under rule 69 of the rules of procedure, a ten minutes' adjournment must be announced before the quorum requirement can be waived.

105. In the other organizations consulted, the standard of punctuality was found to be markedly higher. The meetings of WHO always begin precisely on time. It is constitutionally permissible for the committees of the Assembly to meet when one-third of the members are present, but attendance is usually greater, because the presiding officers and the Director-General observe a mathematical punctuality which impresses the

delegates, obliges them to be punctual in their turn, and so sets the pattern. The ILO has no quorum requirement for plenary meetings, so that the presiding officer can start a meeting even with a small attendance. Even so, the standard of punctuality is as a rule much higher than at UNESCO; as soon as the first speaker on the list is present - and the Secretariat sees to it beforehand that he is - the meeting starts.

106. In UNESCO a very determined effort should be made by presiding officers to enforce rule 69 which, if applied rigorously, would enable them to start meetings not later than ten minutes after the announced opening time. Furthermore, it might be useful to amend rule 69 to permit the chairmen of Conference organs to start their meetings as soon as one-third of the membership is present. Once delegates know that this is the rule and that it will be strictly enforced, they can be expected to be more punctual. Needless to say, this would apply only to the start of deliberations. The quorum requirements for voting, as set forth in rules 80 and 81, would not be affected.

107. Topics for the general debate: In order to encourage Member States to make their contributions to the general debate as useful as possible by avoiding descriptions of what has been done at the national level and by expressing, instead, their views on the general programme of UNESCO, the Executive Board instituted a system based on the suggestion of topics selected in advance. Member States wishing to make statements about their national activities were invited to supply such particulars separately in writing for inclusion in the record.

108. During the fifteenth session of the General Conference the delegations responded reasonably well to the Board's exhortations with regard to the contents of their speeches: of the 108 delegations, 51 refrained from any mention of national activities, as against 57 who mentioned them. This was only a slight improvement on the fourteenth session, at which national activities were mentioned by 60 Member States, but it is worth noting that the reference made to such activities at the fifteenth session were decidedly shorter and less detailed than earlier ones.

109. Thus the system seems to be beginning to work and should be maintained. However, we believe that the Secretariat should give this practice firmer encouragement by mentioning it in the circular letter referred to in other parts of this report.

110. For the fifteenth session seven topics were selected. This is a reasonable number, which does not impose too stringent a limitation on the freedom of expression of Member States.

111. Time-limit on speeches: The increase in the membership of UNESCO has so lengthened the general debate as to make it necessary to recommend restricting the time allowed for each statement. Pursuant to rule 71 of the rules of procedure of the General Conference, the Executive Board suggested a time-limit of twenty minutes per delegation. The suggestion was ably put to the General Conference by its President, accepted unanimously and successfully implemented: the average duration of the statements was  $18\frac{1}{2}$  minutes.

112. With a view to achieving the desired shortening by one working week of the duration of the Conference, it would be well to consider reducing this recommended time allowance further - to 15 minutes; this would bring UNESCO practice closer to the time-limits applied in the general debates of other organizations. WHO, at its twentieth Assembly, adopted a resolution suggesting a ten-minute time-limit for each speaker, the latter's attention being called by means of a signal lamp. The system was completely successful: during the twenty-first Assembly, the time-average for 87 speakers was 7 minutes and 36 seconds. It was furthermore calculated that were speakers to continue to address the Assembly from the rostrum, this would entail a time-loss of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  minutes per speaker and a total time-loss of about 4 hours for an average roster of 100 speakers; it was decided, therefore, that whatever their rank, delegates would speak from their seats.

113. In ILO the constitutional time-limit for speeches is 15 minutes, speakers' attention being called by both a light-signal and a bell. The rule is applied ruthlessly. This has made it possible for 12 speakers to address the Conference at each meeting and the number has occasionally



been raised to 13 if the Secretariat was able to estimate from the written text of the speeches that they would last less than the prescribed 15 minutes.

114. The greater the shortening of the general debate of UNESCO, the more opportunities there will be to put the available staff to work for the Programme Commission and its subsidiary organs.

115. The circular letter containing practical suggestions for delegations, to which reference has often been made, might also indicate the number of standard pages which a fifteen-minute statement, read out at intelligible speed, would represent -- this, in order to facilitate the work of the interpreters.

116. The heads of delegations and senior officials who make statements at the inaugural meetings of the Conference and at the opening and close of the general debate are in a position to make a major contribution to the shortening of plenary meetings.

117. At the fifteenth session, the inaugural address delivered by the outgoing President, the statements by the Chairman of the Executive Board on the same occasion and at the opening of the general debate, and the statements by the Director-General at the opening and close of the general debate together took up a total of 6 hours, 25 minutes. At the fourteenth session, the total time taken up by these statements was 4 hours, 32 minutes.

118. We appreciate that the inaugural meeting should be marked by an atmosphere of dignity and solemnity; that the statements made by the Chairman of the Board and the Director-General at the opening of the general debate are intended to inform the Conference of the philosophical approach taken by the executive organ and the administration to the past, present and future mission of UNESCO and of its operational interpretation; and that it is not easy for the Director-General at the closure of the general debate, with such a vast territory to cover and especially in view of the multi-disciplinary nature of the Organization, to condense his reply to what has been said by more than 100 delegations.

It should not be forgotten, however, that in addition to these oral statements, the Conference has before it a vast amount of working documentation (reports of the Director General, C/4, C/5, etc.) containing detailed and comprehensive explanations which sometimes have many points in common with the contents of these various statements.

119. Just as the representatives of Member States are recommended to observe a time-limit in making their statements, therefore, we believe that heads of delegations and senior officials should seek to reduce the length of their statements, too, it being understood that such forbearance should not impair their significance.

120. At WHO, for example, the ceremonial opening of the Assembly normally does not exceed 1 hour at the most; the outgoing President makes a statement lasting not more than 25 minutes, this being followed by statements of only 10 minutes each by the representative of the national Authority and the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The meeting starts at 10 a.m. sharp and rises at 10.45 a.m. in order to enable the President to start the business of the Assembly. At the opening of the general debate, the Chairman of the Executive Board speaks for 30 minutes and the Director-General for 15 minutes to introduce their respective reports. The general debate ends with a 30-second statement by the Director General. At the International Labour Conference, the opening ceremony is limited to an address by the Chairman of the Governing Body (20 to 30 minutes); the President is then elected and makes a statement of 15 to 20 minutes' duration. At the opening of the general debate, which in theory centres on the Director-General's report, there are no formal speeches at all. The Director-General makes a statement at the end of the debate which, by scrupulously observed tradition, lasts exactly 1 hour; this is his major policy speech, and his only statement at the Conference, apart from the one he makes in the Financing Committee.

121. In UNESCO, the adoption of a practice limiting the address delivered by the outgoing President to 20 minutes, this to be the only statement made at the inaugural meeting, would allow more time for the other

business that precedes the opening of the general debate. On the other hand, were it possible for the Chairman of the Executive Board and the Director-General to condense to, say, 45 minutes their opening statements in the general debate, without such forbearance affecting the importance of their contributions, this debate could start at the same meeting and the representatives of at least four Member States would have time to speak. Lastly, the Director-General might endeavour to envisage approximately similar standards for his statement in reply to the general debate, which accounted for almost an entire meeting at the fifteenth session.

122. Results of the general policy debate: At the close of the general debate, the conclusions reached are embodied in a draft resolution prepared by a drafting committee. The purpose of this proposal, as described by the Special Committee in its report, is to reflect "some kind of consensus of the views expressed by heads of delegations on different points, wherever such a consensus had emerged", so that the general debate should not remain "just a disconnected series of monologues".

123. We believe that this view of things denotes some confusion about the purpose of the general policy debate, which is due in part to the misleading name given to this phase of the Conference proceedings. In UNESCO, and in the other organizations as well, it would be better to use a title along the lines of "statements of general policy". For the purpose of this exercise is not to engage in a "debate" or to seek a consensus, but to enable each delegation to make known, through its most senior member, its basic ideas concerning the business of the Organization. Therefore, it is neither feasible nor indeed desirable to avoid monologues; the actual "debate" must start spontaneously in other settings, for instance when specific topics are taken up in the commissions.

124. This is not to say that, when the series of statements comes to an end, the appropriate conclusions should not be drawn by a single authority. This authority might be the Director-General who, as we have seen, speaks at the end of the debate.

125. On the other hand, we are not convinced of the feasibility of embodying these conclusions in a resolution. The report of the Special Committee says of the resolution which was approved at the fourteenth session, that "there had been some repetitions, inconsistencies and even contradictions between it and the texts on the future programme adopted by the General Conference on the report of the Programme Commission". The result is that the Conference is faced with the need to examine two extremely long draft resolutions, made up essentially of general guidelines, which require a sustained effort of imagination to avoid any duplication of ideas. Many of the paragraphs of resolution 8 of the fifteenth session relating to the conclusions drawn from the general debate would fit perfectly into the resolution on the long-term plan submitted by the Programme Commission.

126. In short, the practice of drawing formal conclusions from the so-called "general policy debate" in a draft resolution seems to present several disadvantages: the possibility of duplication; a further instance of the proliferation of draft resolutions; and the over-burdening of plenary meetings, for when a draft resolution is submitted it naturally leads to discussion in detail, over and above the discussions held at the many meetings of the drafting committee set up for the specific purpose of preparing this resolution. At the fifteenth Conference this procedure engendered a debate which took up two plenary meetings. None of the other agencies consulted follows this practice.

(b) The Programme Commission

127. "The precise powers of the Commission and its major aim are unclear. This question again needs to be carefully reviewed by the Executive Board in preparing for the next General Conference." The Deputy Director-General made these comments in his statement at the fifteenth session of the General Conference on the item concerning evaluation of the work of the Programme Commission.

128. There is no doubt that this Commission is the Gordian knot of the General Conference. The main problems it poses are the following:

- (1) As the body responsible for examining part II, the longest part of document C/5, i.e. the programme, which is the most complex in the entire United Nations family (at the fifteenth session, 300 printed pages out of a total of 378), this Commission is the hardest taxed of all the organs of the Conference.
- (2) This programme has to be examined in the light of past, current and future activities. Thus, the work of the Programme Commission is not limited to the study of document C/5, whose main purpose is to propose detailed plans of current activities and for those to be undertaken in the biennium immediately following. It has also to express an opinion and give guidance to the Administration with regard to long-term action.

129. As a result of these various factors, the duration of the General Conference session is largely dependent on the length of the Programme Commission's proceedings.

130. The trouble is that almost a quarter of a century after the establishment of the Organization, the organ possessing principal competence to formulate the programme looks as if it were still in the experimental stage of its operations. This is borne out by the fact that, for every session of the General Conference, the Executive Board and Secretariat try out new procedures, none of which have so far proved fully satisfactory. At the last session of the Conference, a draft resolution which was submitted by several Member States when the Programme Commission ended its meetings, and which was intended to lay down certain new principles on this subject, failed to gain approval because opinion among those present was so divided.

131. At the fifteenth session of the Conference four Sub-Commissions of full membership - one for each major sector of the Programme - were established to assist in the work of the Programme Commission.

132. The meetings of the Programme Commission and of the Sub-Commissions took up a total of 28 working days. If one bears in mind that for the sixteenth session of the General Conference the Secretariat has set a

target of 25½ working days, and that in this report it is proposed that the duration of the session should be cut to 24 working days, it will be readily apparent that, unless the work of the Programme Commission is greatly rationalized, these targets cannot possibly be attained.

133. Documentation: It is generally agreed among the Member States and the Secretariat that the changes suggested in the presentation of document C/5 will greatly simplify the work of the Programme Commission.

134. If delegates no longer have to debate a series of draft resolutions or consider work plans in detail, it should be possible to reduce the number of meetings of the Sub-Commissions dealing with document C/5 by at least 25 per cent.

135. System of Sub-Commissions: This has worked satisfactorily. The four main branches of UNESCO activity have to be considered separately and in general are dealt with by specially qualified delegates. On the other hand, attendance at the Sub-Commission meetings, unlike attendance at plenary meetings of the Commission, leaves something to be desired: on many occasions the number of delegates present did not exceed 40 or 50, the required quorum being 64. There seems to be no solution to this problem, however, since many developing States are unable to send bigger delegations.

136. Time-limits on speeches: The practice in the Programme Commission and its Sub-Commissions is that delegates' statements should take no more than 5 to 10 minutes. This practice is generally upheld and should be maintained. It could, however, be the subject of an advance recommendation, to be included in the circular letter referred to in paragraphs 63, 109 and others.

137. It is also desirable to reduce the length of the statements made by representatives of the Secretariat in the Commission and Sub-Commissions. UNESCO is perhaps the organization which has seen the freest growth of the custom whereby Secretariat representatives take an assiduous part in debates; an outside observer may at times even have

the impression that they actually conduct them and this is especially true in the Programme Commission. This is due, partly, to the practice of centring discussions on the draft resolutions, whose superabundance of detail constantly calls for explanations in order to avoid ambiguities in the instructions given to the Director-General. It is also due in part to the complexity of UNESCO's activities, which elicit impracticable proposals from those delegations that do not happen to be thoroughly conversant with the procedural maze required for the passing of a resolution. Essentially, however, it is due to a style of work that is, frankly, not wholly consonant with the sober and uninvolved attitude an Administration should normally maintain. In addition, during the debates, Secretariat representatives should see to it that their suggestions, if any, for improvement in the form - and even, occasionally, in the substance - of delegations' proposals be made outside the meetings or else in the drafting committees.

138. For if we analyse the time taken up by Secretariat representatives at plenary meetings of the Programme Commission, we find that it accounts for 5 out of 50 working hours, i.e. 10 per cent.

139. In the sub-Commissions, in which the competent Directors introduce the material concerning their sectors, the Secretariat representatives took up a total of  $20\frac{1}{2}$  hours, or 8 per cent of the working time. In Sub-Commission I the Director took 10 minutes to introduce his material; in Sub-Commission II, 21 minutes; in Sub-Commission III, 20 minutes; and in Sub-Commission IV, 45 minutes. Should such oral introductions be considered indispensable at all, and since each section of document C/5 is preceded by a general introduction which delegates must be assumed to have read anyway, we believe that 5 minutes should suffice for these introductory statements.

140. The limitation of draft resolutions and work plans which have been suggested would doubtless reduce further the need for lengthy interventions by members of the Secretariat, who would merely be called upon from time to time to give brief explanations.

141. Procedure for discussion: Once document C/5 is put out in the suggested simplified form, there will be no difficulty in continuing in the future the practice applied at the fourteenth session of entrusting a study in depth of the document, section by section, to the Sub-Commissions; this should also expedite the work. The document containing the Organization's programme and budget is the most important of all the documents before the Conference and there is no justification for the piecemeal examination of its contents, as has sometimes been suggested.

142. Once the Programme Commission has completed its work, the report is examined by the plenary General Conference. The procedure followed in approving the document at the fifteenth session was to put it to the Conference resolution by resolution; since there are so many resolutions, this practice is tedious. It would be more workmanlike and more natural to submit the document to, and have it adopted by the Conference sub-chapter by sub-chapter.

143. Organization of the discussion on the past, current and future programmes: Of all the problems posed by the Programme Commission, this seems to be one of the more intractable. Maybe because it has always been difficult in UNESCO to clearly define what programme should be considered "past", "current" and "future", difficulties have often arisen regarding the order in which the various phases of the programme should be taken up.

144. The draft resolution which we mention in paragraph 130, and which failed to be adopted for lack of a consensus, was concerned with this very problem. Thus many questions remain unanswered.

145. Should, for example, the past programme (i.e. what was done during the biennium about to end) be considered? Should the current programme (i.e. what is being done now and will be done during the biennium immediately following the Conference session) be considered at the same time as the future programme (i.e. what will be done during the subsequent four years)? Or should a clear dividing line be drawn in the consideration of the past, current and future programmes?



146. We believe that the best way to test an effective and lasting solution would be to prepare appropriately structured basic documents and arrange for them to be examined in a logical sequence.

147. If our recommendation 10 were adopted, the Programme Commission could examine, during three or four plenary meetings, at the very beginning of its session, the report of the Executive Board (C/9) evaluating past and current activities on the basis of the Director-General's reports. Then the Sub-Commissions would take up document C/5 in its new simplified form, section by section, but only with reference to the programme for the forthcoming biennium. When discussing it, Sub-Commissions would have in mind the Executive Board's opinions (C/6) on the programme and budget proposed by the Director-General.

148. After which the Programme Commission might resume its plenary meetings, firstly to adopt the Sub-Commissions' reports and then to examine the long-term programme on the basis of document C/4, containing general projections for the future, and specifically for the four years following the coming biennium.

149. We think that such a plan of action would ensure that each of the relevant discussions would take place in the forum in which they logically belong: matters requiring general appraisal would be examined in plenary meetings of the Programme Commission at the beginning and end of its work; and matters requiring detailed attention would be examined by the Sub-Commissions during the middle period of the Commission's session.

150. Furthermore, the availability of four basic documents drawn up along more business-like lines would lighten the burden of the delegates, who lack the time to absorb the present superabundance of reading matter: the Executive Board's evaluation of past and current activities (C/9) would help them to gauge the Director-General's reports on the activities of the Organization; the simplified document C/5 would do away with the need for the discussion of draft resolutions; C/6 would help them centre the discussions on those matters that have been highlighted by the Executive Board; lastly, document C/4, which deals with the future,

would make it unnecessary to continue proposing "frameworks" for discussion, for it would lay down the main lines and priorities to be applied to long-term programmes.

151. For its part, the resolution resulting from the debate on the long-term plan, which would also include the main ideas that emerge from the debate on general policy as summed up by the Director-General, would provide him with the basic guidance he needs to draft the next C/5.

152. Time-limits for the submission of amendments to draft resolutions: There is no doubt that were the draft resolutions, numbering nearly 100, to be removed from document C/5, the number of amendments they automatically elicit from Member States will also automatically fall off sharply.

153. We do not think it advisable, therefore, as yet to set strict time-limits for the submission of amendments which have no budgetary implications. To do so would be an undue encroachment on the right of Member States to make changes in the programme and budget. The same applies to proposals on the long-term programme. One of the directions in which the General Conference needs to make progress most is in the formulation of basic guidelines for the future, and in this matter it should not be subjected to rigid rules.

154. We also think that it might be useful to maintain the practice of setting up a resolutions committee of the Programme Commission even if there would be far fewer draft resolutions and amendments to deal with. For those draft resolutions which are to be retained may still require the work of selection which that committee performed so effectively at the fifteenth session of the Conference.

155. Role of the chairmen and secretaries: When speaking of efficiency, the role of the presiding officers can never be underestimated. For it is largely on them that the success of the measures proposed for the rationalization of the General Conference's working methods depends.

156. Generally speaking, the presiding officers elected by the main organs of the Conference possess the necessary qualifications to exercise

efficiently the responsibilities conferred on them. In its turn, the Secretariat assigns to these main organs highly experienced officials, whose assistance to the chairmen is invaluable.

157. Unfortunately, the situation is not the same in the Sub Commissions and working groups; there, not only are the chairmen selected according to less exacting criteria (which is perhaps natural and inevitable), but the assistants provided by the Secretariat are recruited from staff who have no special training or experience in this respect and sometimes can provide but little effective help.

158. Evaluation of the work and functioning of the Programme Commission and its Sub-Commissions: On completing its work, the Programme Commission spent four meetings evaluating its own activities. The conclusions from this discussion, in which the Secretariat again took a major part, were set out in document 15 C/88. If this evaluation is to be made a regular practice, as it may well have to be so long as the Programme Commission continues to present problems, we wonder whether the forum chosen for such an exercise is the proper one.

159. As a representative cogently pointed out during the discussion, "a real evaluation of the work of the Programme Commission and Sub-Commissions would have to wait until sufficient time had passed in order to permit an objective view". Self-examination performed out of perspective is apt to be too subjective and too sensitive to yield a fruitful evaluation. Such an evaluation should more appropriately be carried out in the Special Committee of the Board, some time after the end of the session.

160. Moreover, in view of the heavy workload of the Commission, every effort should be made to avoid burdening it with any matter which does not fall specifically within its terms of reference.

(c) The Administrative Commission

161. This Commission performs important and delicate functions relating to parts III to VI of the draft programme and budget: i.e. those parts that deal with strictly administrative and budgetary problems.

162. So far as its mode of operation is concerned, it presents no major problems; the presentation of the working documentation, consisting essentially of document C/5 and the annexes thereto, appears to be adequate and is being systematically adapted to the pattern prescribed by the Committee of Fourteen. It stands to reason, however, that we reserve our opinion with regard to the merits of the cost accounting system; a study of that system as applied to UNESCO and the other organizations in the United Nations family has been made by a member of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/69/2) and recommends some reforms.

163. Perhaps the gravest problem for the Administrative Commission, which met for 12 days (19 meetings) at the fifteenth session of the Conference, was the extremely low daily attendance record, which averaged no more than 35 delegates out of a total of 125.

164. This is a serious problem, since the Commission examines and decides questions of vital importance to the Organization, such as various matters related to the budget, wage policies, the use of the Working Capital Fund, etc.

165. What is the explanation for this meagre attendance? The average strength of delegations to the fifteenth session of the Conference was 5 members. Some developing states, however, sent a smaller number of delegates (8 sent four delegates; 11 three delegates; 6 two delegates; and 5 only one delegate).

166. Since Member states prefer to send specialists in UNESCO's fields of competence, it is natural that such countries should prefer to follow the proceedings of the plenary meetings, most of which are attended by heads of delegations, and of the programme organs.

167. The result is that the majority of those who attend the meetings of the Administrative Commission is composed of delegates from industrialized countries whose interests and views, within an increasingly operational Organization, do not always coincide with those of the developing countries. Anomalous situations then arise, as in the debate on the use of the Working Capital Fund, in which the Commission adopted a compromise

consistent with the recommendations of the Committee of Fourteen and then, when the Commission's report was taken up at a plenary meeting of the Conference, the decision was reversed in a well-attended gathering at which the representatives of the developing countries were in the majority. The Director-General, who played an important role in this debate, pointed out that the decision in the Commission had been adopted by a restricted coterie.

168. The situation could perhaps be improved were the following measures to be adopted:

- (1) Well in advance of the session, the Secretariat should highlight in its circular letter a set of practical recommendations with regard to the composition of delegations. It could be pointed out inter alia that each Member State might endeavour to send a specialist in budgetary and administrative matters to serve on the Administrative Commission, or to second a member of its permanent mission in Paris for that purpose;
- (2) The Administrative Commission should consider dropping some items from its agenda so as to concentrate its attention on those matters which are required to be discussed in detail by the Conference. The items to be dropped would be selected by the Executive Board, which would itself undertake a study in depth of them, after which they would be forwarded to the plenary meeting by the Board with its semi-final recommendations. Such a cut in the Administrative Commission's agenda, and therefore in the number of its meetings, would perhaps make it possible for more delegations to attend the discussions of those items that are retained and for which a larger quorum than is at present the case, is definitely desirable.

169. On the other hand, the report on the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the work of UNESCO might again be dealt with in the Administrative Commission, as it was in the past. We fully understand that this report is closely related to the work of the Programme Commission. But unless we drastically rationalize the

workload of the latter, all efforts to shorten the Conference and to make the Programme Commission's work more effective will remain sterile. We feel, therefore, that the Administrative Commission, which has the same membership as the Programme Commission but which has invariably a much smaller agenda than the latter, should take up this subject which, by the way, only comes before the Conference every six years.

## VI. CONCLUSION

170. In this report, which, we realise, may be judged to have an unconventional degree of frankness, we have endeavoured to assist the Executive Board and the Secretariat of UNESCO in their efforts to improve the methods of work of the General Conference. Our findings lead up to a series of recommendations set forth in the Annex to this document which, if adopted, might offer:

- (a) Economies to Member States sending delegations to the General Conference;
- (b) Savings on the Conference's expenses met by the Organization; and
- (c) Most important of all, some rationalization of methods which might be confidently expected to result in more purposeful and effective deliberations.

171. As we have already pointed out, the problem for UNESCO lies in its diversity; the growth of activities in its four main sectors adds to the difficulty of any attempt to simplify and systematize its methods of work. For this reason we can do no less than pay a sincere tribute to the Director-General and his skilled staff, who have brought intelligence and high responsibility to bear on the task of directing the Administration of the Organization, with the steadfast purpose of making UNESCO responsive to the constantly changing needs of the world of education, science, culture and information.

172. Before we close we should like to express one last opinion. The problem of the excessive workload placed on the General Conference, which we have related directly to the multi-disciplinary nature of UNESCO, has prompted some suggestions in the Executive Board for drastic changes in the scope of Conference sessions. The most pertinent of these suggestions, in our view, is that the General Conference, at each biennial session, should review in depth only two of its main sectors of activity. We believe that the merits of this idea deserve further consideration.

