

The fast-paced changes unfolding on the Arab, Islamic and international scenes and their direct and indirect repercussions on the fields of action of organizations operating in the educational, scientific, cultural and communication areas, such as ISESCO, dictate a new visualization of this Organization's action plan for the next three years (2016-2018), both in form and content. This new vision will ensure the interaction of this action plan and its activities with all these variables and its response, in a more precise and effective way, to the pressing needs of Member States.

The insightful and proactive dimension of the guidelines and contents of ISESCO's Medium-Term 2010-2018 Action Plan (of which the coming 2016-2018 action plan represents the third and last link) has helped read the implications of all those developments, thus confirming the plan's importance as a focal point of reference that defines ISESCO's action in the coming years alongside the Organization's other more constant references. These include ISESCO's objectives as laid out in its Charter, its sector-focused strategies, the decisions of its supreme constitutional bodies, its specialized ministerial conferences, the internal and external evaluation reports on the outcome and field impact of its implemented activities, programmes and projects.

The outcome of our analysis of the current regional and international scene, and our projections of how the situation will evolve in the coming few years, have led us at the General Directorate of ISESCO to adopt a new approach to the Organization's Action Plan for 2016-2018 of which we have already presented the broad lines at the 35th session of our Executive Council. Back then, we identified within the framework of this draft action plan, three strategic objectives for ISESCO's action in the coming three-year period. The first one will be “**mobilizing the youth for joint Islamic action and sustainable development**”. The second strategic objective will focus on “**promoting quality, governance and equality of opportunity in Member States' education, science, culture and communication policies**”. As for the third strategic objective, emphasis will be placed on “**the promotion of human rights culture and respect for otherness towards social peace and coexistence**”. These objectives overlap and seek to sustain Member States' efforts in addressing various challenges and achieving development.

To achieve these strategic objectives over the coming three years, we have **chosen a limited number of priorities**. This should enable us to totally focus our efforts on coping with the rapidly unfolding changes and addressing the educational, scientific, cultural and communication challenges inherent to these changes, and to achieve the desired

results on the ground as opposed to scattering efforts on multiple fronts, a situation that often leads to modest results and a poor effect. For the very same reason, we engaged a number of structural changes to further consolidate this drive. These changes included:

- A. Creation of a new directorate, the Directorate of Social and Human Sciences**, which will address social and human issues and analyze their increasingly pivotal role in the emergence of new practices and patterns at the intellectual, social and economic levels. The new directorate will make it possible to bring together, under the same umbrella, all activities and programmes of relevance to these aspects and which were previously divided over other directorates.
- B. Creation of an Information and Communication Center** that operates independently from the Directorate of Culture. The purpose of this addition is to create an appropriate institutional framework to address issues of import and coach specialized human resources in line with a broader vision that is conducive to the fulfillment of ISESCO's strategic goals of expanding its intellectual and informational radiance within and outside the Islamic world and supporting access to information and the right to responsible expression in information and communication.
- C. Creation of a Translation Center** to keep pace with the growing volume of the Organization's translation activities.
- D. Introduction of the term 'Technology' in the appellation of the 'Directorate of Science'** which thus becomes the 'Directorate of Science and Technology', in a more accurate reflection of its scope of activities.
- E. Integration of all activities dedicated to Al Quds Al Sharif within the purview of the Directorate of Culture** in consolidation of the mission of the Islamic World Heritage Committee which falls under this Directorate, the protection of the Arab and Islamic heritage in Al Quds Al Sharif featuring at the forefront of these preoccupations.

Ultimately, these changes culminated in a decision to implement broad and cross-cutting activities but in limited numbers to achieve the desired effects on the ground. These projects have clearly set out objectives and specific outcomes and beneficiaries, and the designated partners involved in their implementation. **They primarily focus on fields of intervention that can fulfill these objectives and bring about the expected outcomes.** Likewise, their activities and programmes are complementary in their nature and objectives, gradually staggered over the Plan's three years and complete with measures and evaluation criteria.

For the **Education Directorate**, and given the commitment of the international community, including the Islamic world, to **fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals related to education and literacy for the post-2015 period**, action will be focused on two sector-specific priorities: **"Renewal of Member States' Educational Policies towards a Transition from Teaching to Learning"** and **"Enhancing the Role of Education in Development and Coexistence"**. This will translate into six projects, namely:

- Project on the developmental approach to literacy and non-formal education programmes.
- Project on the development of technical and vocational education to strengthen youth employment opportunities.
- Project on pre-school education development.
- Project on developing original education and promoting the Arabic language position in the Islamic environment.
- Project on information and communication technology at the service of education.
- Project on promoting joint education action to develop educational systems in the Member States.

For the **Directorate of Science and Technology**, and since its structure covers the sectors of humanities and social sciences, two **sector-specific priorities** were identified: **“Gearing Science and Technology Output to achieve Socio-economic Gains”** and **“Science-based Effort to Conserve Biodiversity and Natural Resources”**. Five projects will be implemented under these priorities:

- Project on sustainable scientific development eco-system.
- Project on technological innovations for sustainable socio-economic development.
- Project on modernization of science education to address future needs.
- Project on sustainable natural resource management.
- Project on promoting environmental governance.

ISESCO Center for Promotion of Scientific Research (ICPSR) was brought to bear, through its programmes, in achieving the first strategic objective outlined for the action plan: namely, mobilizing the youth for joint Islamic action and sustainable development. To this end, focus will be placed on two projects:

- Project on supporting STI research strategies.
- Project on promoting knowledge transfer-based research and development for greater youth employability.

At the **Directorate of Culture**, two sector-specific priorities were identified, namely: **“Promotion of cultural diversity, reinforcement of cultural rights and intercultural dialogue, and preservation of heritage within the cultural policies of Member States”** and **“Strengthening cultural roles of the civil society’s different social classes towards the achievement of sustainable development in the Islamic world”**. Three projects will be implemented under these priorities:

- Project on protection of civilizational heritage, cultural plurality and coexistence within and the mechanisms of cultural exchange and cultural mediation.
- Project on supporting specialized institutions in Al Quds Al Sharif.
- Project on transcribing the languages of Muslim peoples in the Quranic Script (QS).

For the **Directorate of Social and Human Sciences**, two priorities were identified: **activating the role of social and human sciences in entrenching social peace and cohesion**, and **harnessing the results of social and human studies in the service of society's prosperity**. Three projects will provide a channel to achieve this:

- Project on strengthening youth educational roles in fostering coexistence and addressing contemporary international issues.
- Project on social transformations toward building cohesive and prosperous societies.
- Project on addressing issues of youth, childhood and women in the Islamic world

In terms of **giving body to the partnership and cooperation with Arab, Islamic and international organizations, civil society institutions and national commissions** during the next three years, **it was decided that this endeavor, undertaken as part of the prerogatives of the Directorate of External Relations and Cooperation, would espouse a perspective that strengthens the important and positive achievements of the cooperation policy adopted by the General Directorate under the Organization's successive action plans and where the outputs of cooperation and its executive mechanisms translate into integrated programmes and projects that address fundamental issues and propose radical and effective solutions**, within set timeframes, in coordination with the beneficiaries and executive and cooperating parties, and based on quality criteria and assessment indicators that properly assess the impact on the ground of these programmes and projects. In this regard, two projects will be implemented:

- Project on consolidating cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies.
- Project on consolidating cooperation with civil society institutions and promoting humanitarian work.

As for developing the action of the **Center for Planning, Information, Documentation and Publishing (CPIDP)**, two priorities will be tackled namely, improving methods of strategic planning, follow-up and evaluation of ISESCO's activities through continuous training; and working towards integration into the knowledge society and addressing ICT challenges. These priorities will be carried out through three projects:

- Project on boosting the capacities of the human resources working in the fields of planning, follow-up and evaluation, and providing data and statistics in the Organization's fields of action.
- Project on promoting the use of information and communication technologies to develop the action of ISESCO and the competent parties in Member States.
- Project on strengthening the capacities of ISESCO's human resources and provide electronic and computer equipment used in printing, documentation, publishing, and distribution.

With regard to the **Center of Information and Communication**, newly created within the framework of the present Plan, the following three priorities were set: **enhancing the Organization's intellectual radiance and publicizing its activities**, **consolidating the right of access to information**, and finally the **professional and legal handling of stereotypes about Islam and Muslims in the Media**. These priorities will be concretized through the following three projects:

- Project on harnessing information technologies and public relations to further enhance the international radiance of ISESCO.
- Project on access to information and the right to responsible expression in the media and communication sectors.
- Project on the professional and legal handling of stereotypes about Islam and Muslims in the media.

True to our commitment, we have also **strengthened our planning approach, building it around adopting projects as opposed to scattered small-scale activities**, while being aware of the points of integration and intersection between some of these projects. This will enhance our approach to the activities and programmes scheduled under these projects as inter-sector activities and programmes.

In a bid to enhance ISESCO's permanent duties, in its being a house of expertise, an incubator of thoughts and concepts and an entity for capacity-building and policy guidance in Member States in education, science, culture and communication; and true to our avowed commitment to **increase the number of regional and sub-regional training programmes and meetings of experts, to prepare studies, reports and guidebooks to provide more academic and practical reference documents** and working tools to researchers, experts and trainees and to harness electronic media to this end, the information contained in the indicators measuring the desired outcome of activities over the next three years, shows that **over 230 regional and sub-regional training sessions will be implemented thanks to the technical resources and professional expertise provided by ISESCO's regional centers in training of teachers of Islamic education and Arabic language for foreigners, supervisors and developers of literacy programmes and staff specialized in techniques of media, communication and audiovisual and multimedia production, and education in human rights and the culture of peace and dialogue**. Also planned are **the preparation of 130 research works, studies and reports, guidebooks and teaching aids, the organization of 125 meetings of experts and specialized seminars, and the increasing of the number of activities that boost ISESCO chairs** in existence or the creation of new ones. The same applies to the **already existing or to be created ISESCO prizes that encourage creativity and innovation among the youth** in science and technology, scientific research, entrepreneurship and harnessing arts and literature to serve modern issues and the society. The same measurement indicators reveal an increasing interest in **intensifying actions undertaken in cooperation with civil society organizations and focused on the youth, women and children** with a view to training them to meet the requirements of the labor market, raising them on the respect for the values of citizenship, dialogue and the love of

work and its quality, enabling them to enjoy their cultural, social, economic and political rights, and **addressing gender issues in a context of equality in rights and duties between men and women.**

On the other hand, and as pledged, the **number of conferences, seminars and international and regional forums was reduced to 40** which include the **Islamic ministerial conferences convened by ISESCO in the fields of higher education and research, culture, childhood and the environment**, the annual meetings of the Consultative Council in charge of the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World, the Consultative Council in charge of the Implementation of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in Islamic Countries, the Supreme Consultative Council for Bringing Islamic Madhahib Closer Together, and the Supreme Council of Education and Culture for Muslims outside the Islamic world.

In view of the fact that a number of the National Commissions benefited by the expertise provided by ISESCO to renew their policies related to the Organization's fields of competence, additional emphasis is placed under the new action plan on **strengthening ISESCO's role in providing expertise and technical advice to the authorities in charge of developing national educational, scientific, cultural and communication policies**, in extending the subsidies necessary for the implementation of local activities, especially in terms of training human resources and building professional capacities, and in granting scholarships for scientific research projects. **About 350 activities have been dedicated to covering the needs meeting the set objectives.**

With regard to the **development of monitoring, follow-up and evaluation mechanisms**, we have adopted the same new mechanisms we used under the ending action plan and which proved their efficiency. The objective and outcome-based planning methodology, **the desired results, limited in number, well defined in scope in content and timeframe, as well as in measurability thanks to performance and measurement indicators, will enable us to follow up on the implementation of the new action plan's activities and conduct a more accurate evaluation of their impact.**

With regard to the 2016-2018 budget, the General Directorate forged ahead with the strategic orientation developed over its previous plans and which provides for the **allocation of no less than two-thirds of the entire budget for programmes, while the remaining third goes to cover various administrative expenses.** The Organization made sure to keep abreast of financial developments and to take note of economic factors, whether local ones such as the **annual inflation rate and cost of living increases in the seat country and host countries of ISESCO's regional offices**, or at the international ones, and the **rising costs of general services such as printing and publishing, technical supplies air tickets and accommodation** when calculating the field costs associated with the implementation of programmes and financial management.

Also included in the present action plan are the Organization's new financial estimates of major programmes such as the Islamic ministerial conferences of which the organization was assigned to ISESCO by previous Islamic Summit Conference meetings and the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. Under the current action plan, the **Islamic conference of education ministers will be added** along with **effective participation in the Islamic conference of ministers in charge of youth**, to be held in collaboration with the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation, and with the **Islamic conference of endowments (Awqaf) ministers**.

Added to these major programmes are others that are no less important or strategic for the Organization and for its growing role on the international scene. These include the **alliance of civilizations**, the **fight against extremism**, the **international environmental summits**, and the **Education for All conferences**. The Organization had earmarked part of its estimated funds to these activities under its current action plan.

In light of these data, and compared with the previous action plan, there will be no increase at all in the budget of the new action plan 2016-2018.

Thus, **and out of the new budget which amounts to US\$ 45,210,498, the amount of US\$ 38,867,787, i.e. 86%, has been earmarked for programmes, while only US\$ 6,342,711 allocated to cover operating costs, equipment and administrative staff**. The high percentage allocated to programmes reflects the keenness of the General Directorate to ensure that Member States benefit optimally from the Organization's activities and secure all that is essential for serving the developmental objectives of these countries. It also stems from a strong desire to rationalize expenditure and reduce administrative expenses to the bare minimum.