



Coordination Meeting of the Secretaries General of the Member States' National Commissions for Education, Science and Culture

Final Report

**ISESCO Headquarters, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco,
15-16 Shawwal 1438 A.H / 10-11 July 2017**

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The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) held the Coordination Meeting of the Secretaries General of the Member States' National Commissions for Education, Science and Culture, on 15-16 Shawal 1438 A.H., corresponding to 10-11 July 2017, at its headquarters in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in cooperation with the the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), upon a recommendation by the 3rd Forum of the International Organizations (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 4 December 2016). Took part in the meeting the respective representatives of the Member States' National Commissions, ALECSO, UNESCO and ABEGS (cf. Attachment)

Opening session:

The opening session was held under the chairmanship of H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, ISESCO Director General, with the attendance of H.E. Dr Ali bin Abdul Khaliq Al-Karni, ABEGS Director General; Mrs Nadia El Hnot, Director of the Moroccan Academy for Diplomatic Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, as representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Chairman of the Moroccan National Commission for Education, Science and Culture; Dr Abdelfattah Lahjomri, Director of the Arabization Coordination Bureau in Rabat, as representative of ALECSO; and Dr Salah Khaled, Director of UNESCO Office in Rabat, as representative of UNESCO Director General, H.E. Mrs Irina Bokova, as well as a host of personalities from the realms of thought, culture and the media.

The opening session started with a recitation of verses from the Holy Quran. Then, H.E. Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, ISESCO Director General, gave an address wherein he welcomed the representatives of the Member States and the organizations taking part in the Meeting, reiterating his condolences on the death of the late Dr Abdulah Hamad Muhareb, the ex-Director General of ALECSO, and praying to Almighty Allah to have him in His mercy.

In his address, Dr Altwaijri underscored the importance, during this meeting, of developing a joint reference concept paper, which combines the Member States' views regarding UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021, in line with their

priorities and needs, and coordinating views in this connection on the occasion of the 39th General Conference of UNESCO. He also re-evoked the need to promote Arab-Muslim-European dialogue as part of educational, scientific and cultural cooperation between the respective countries of the Islamic world and the European Union, while stepping up the efforts of the Member States of ISESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS through active involvement in UNESCO's efforts and effective participation in its General Conference. At the close of his address, the Director General of ISESCO expressed his wishes for success to the Meeting.

Then the floor was given to ABEGS Director General, H.E. Dr Ali bin Abdul Khaliq Al-Karni, who welcomed the participants, thanked the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting the Meeting, underlining the importance of coordinating the stances of the National Commissions and the international organizations taking part in the Meeting, especially in the context of the challenges facing the Member States in the areas of education, science and culture, which requires a common approach to the key issues tackled in UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021; and expressing his hope that the meeting would deliver concrete outcomes.

Then Mrs. Nadia El Hnot, Director of the Moroccan Academy for Diplomatic Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, who represented the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Chairman of the Moroccan National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, delivered an address wherein she thanked the Director General of ISESCO, Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, for convening this meeting and for his efforts geared to the development of the educational system in the Islamic world countries. Mrs El Hnot reaffirmed the keen interest the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco takes in supporting the efforts being made by ISESCO, the National Commissions and the organizations participating in the meeting towards fulfilling their respective missions and developing joint practical steps regarding the issues of common interest in a way that is commensurate with their plans and priorities under UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021 and as part of the Arab-Muslim-European Dialogue. She also reiterated the Moroccan Government's determination to support joint Arab-Islamic action under the guidance of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

Afterwards, ALECSO's representative Dr Abdelfattah Lahjomri, Director of the Arabization Coordination Bureau in Rabat, delivered an address in which he thanked ISESCO for hosting the meeting, and stressed the importance of promoting joint Arab-Islamic action by boosting the performance of the National Commissions and partnership with international organizations. He also called for closing ranks to meet the challenges faced by Member States, and strengthening cooperation and

partnership with the international organizations to develop a unified vision of joint projects. He concluded his address by expressing gratitude to the National Commissions for having attended and participated in the meeting.

Thereafter, UNESCO's representative Dr Salah Khaled, Director of UNESCO Office in Rabat, took the floor to commend the efforts put by ISESCO in the organization of the meeting, which, he said, provides a platform for sharing expertise and knowledge and developing a joint vision regarding UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021 and to Arab-Muslim-European Dialogue. He underscored the role of the Secretaries General of the National Commissions in ensuring the necessary conditions of cooperation with international organizations and enhancing their role in the fields of education, culture and science, in such a way as to achieve the goals pertaining to sustainable development goals, avoid redundancy and duplication of effort, and eventually meet the aspirations of Member States. In his conclusion, he expressed his wishes for a successful outcome of the meeting.

At the end of the opening session, the participants posed for a souvenir photo. Then a procedural session was held during which the Drafting Committee and the meeting's Rapporteur were elected.

The Meeting's working sessions:

The Meeting was broken down into three working sessions aimed at coordinating the positions of the National Commissions on three main topics:

1. UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021,
2. Developing joint mechanisms and projects by the Arab and European National Commissions to promote dialogue with the Other and address the phenomena of zealotry and extremism, especially among young people,
3. Promoting cooperation and coordination between international and regional organizations and the National Commissions, and developing mechanisms to benefit from their projects and programmes.

I. Discussion of UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021

After listening to the presentations made by the representatives of the three organizations and the contributions and discussions of the Secretaries of the National Commissions, the participants commended the early timing of the Coordination Meeting as it would allow room for the Member States to coordinate their positions ahead of the General Conference of UNESCO, and stressed the need to stake more on this approach in the future sessions of the Conference in order to

give substance to and coordinate the positions and roles of the National Commissions. The participants also endorsed the prospective vision of the three organizations regarding the priority issues included in UNESCO's Draft Programme for 2018-2021, underscoring the necessity to prepare a joint reference concept paper – which identifies such issues deemed of priority to the Member States in the fields of education, science, culture and communication, and suggests the necessary practical steps in this connection, in such a way as to avoid duplication of efforts and rationalize expenditures, while taking due account of the specificities of the Islamic world, the national interests of the Member States and the Islamic values and principles – based on the following broad lines:

1. Childhood, youth, women and communities:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Paying more attention to the education of children, early childhood and pre-school education.
- Paying attention to literacy programmes and supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) dedicated to ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning.
- Paying attention to non-formal education as part of the reform of the education system.
- Developing technical and vocational education to boost youth employability and to build more equitable and more cohesive societies.
- Facilitating transition to the knowledge societies through developed and more effective science education.
- Giving due attention to the issue of funding education and education in crisis situations.

2. Peace, communication and fighting extremism:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Enhancing youth's educational roles to foster coexistence and address contemporary international issues.
- Promoting access to information and the right to responsible expression.
- Developing the professional and legal treatment of mutual stereotypes of the Other in the media.
- Strengthening programmes on dialogue among cultures and civilizations through focus on media education to protect the rising generations from extremist ideologies.

- Strengthening partnerships between ISESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS and civil society organizations to conduct field programmes and activities aimed at publicizing and promoting Islam's tolerant values and coexistence.
- Devoting more attention to the protection of youth from falling prey to extremism and violence, through access to cyberspace; and working out innovative tools and methods tuned to the social changes concerning the young generation.
- Encouraging the organization of workshops for the staff and officials of the religious institutions in order to rationalize religious discourse in line with the Islamic values, which favor middle stance and moderation and reject violence and extremism.

3. Development, technology and innovation:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Making use of open source data in promoting development in favor of persons with special needs.
- Strengthening the national innovation systems by optimizing the use of biotechnology and nanotechnology and promoting youth and women entrepreneurship in these areas.
- Planning activities, policies and strategies for the development of science, technology and innovation.
- Upgrading national laws and legislation related to new technologies and access to knowledge.
- Promoting a rational and sustainable management of natural resources and encouraging renewable energies to ensure easy transition to the green economy, in line with UNESCO's Draft Programme.
- Empowering women in science and strengthening their capacities in Member States.
- Expanding the scope of partnership with UNESCO's specialized institutes, benefiting from their expertise and promoting networking between them and scientists of the Member States.
- Establishing a periodic platform for consultation between the National Commissions to ensure experience and knowledge sharing and coordination with regard to development, technology, innovation and issues of common interest.

4. Cultural diversity and heritage:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Preserving cultural heritage, cultural diversity and coexistence values through the promotion of mechanisms of cultural exchange, cultural mediation and respect for cultural pluralism.
- Launching joint initiatives to promote dialogue among civilizations and cultures through education, culture and science.
- Coordinating positions on the protection of heritage in the Member States and retrieval of the stolen components of such heritage.
- Supporting cultural and traditional industries, protecting cultural property and developing eco-cultural tourism.
- Capitalizing on the outcomes and outputs of UNESCO's interim assessment of its International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2023) to harmonize its relevant programmes and plans.
- Mobilizing financial allocations from the regular budgets of the organizations concerned with dialogue as well as from extra-budgetary resources to provide more financial means for the implementation of the relevant projects and programmes.
- Focusing more on dialogue-promoting programmes targeting children and young people and exchanging experiences in dialogue.

5. Issues of displacement, migration and social integration:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Uniting positions on the issues of refugee, displaced and migrant children in conflict zones and in armed conflicts.
- Supporting the countries hosting refugees and displaced persons to enable them to provide education to children who are victims of wars and armed conflict, and engaging actively in the treatment of migration and displacement issues and their socioeconomic implications.
- Developing educational programmes using modern technology and open software for the benefit of the children of the displaced, refugees and people with special needs.
- Boosting coordination between the countries hosting refugees and displaced persons, the competent international organizations and the relevant civil society bodies to launch socioeconomic development initiatives and promote access to the labor market for the benefit of refugees and displaced persons, especially women and youth.

- Strengthening cooperation and coordination between migration-source countries and the host countries in a bid to find concrete, innovative and appropriate solutions to the phenomenon of migration and displacement.

6. Educational and cultural institutions in Palestine:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Strengthening and coordinating the positions of Member States on the draft decisions and resolutions of UNESCO's Executive Board and General Conference and the World Heritage Committee on the protection of cultural heritage and educational institutions in Palestine.
- Building capacities for the Palestinian human resources in the management, documentation and protection of tangible and intangible heritage.
- Providing more support to educational and cultural institutions, especially in Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
- Boosting the work of the Islamic World Heritage Committee and ISESCO Experts Committee entrusted with reporting on the Israeli violations and on the excavations in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and safeguarding cultural heritage in Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
- Underlining ALECSO Executive Council's decision on the convening of an international conference on Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and calling for cooperation between ALECSO, ISESCO and the relevant Palestinian, Arab and international institutions in holding it.

7. Integrated sustainable development in Africa:

Emphasis was laid on the following points:

- Expanding the base of development-oriented partnerships in Africa by identifying new channels of cooperation that bring together the public sector, the private sector and civil society organizations to conduct ambitious projects and initiatives aimed at achieving sustainable development goals in Africa.
- Encouraging capitalization on the African Members States' immense capabilities and traditional knowledge and developing them in line with the requirements of development.
- Supporting the launching of more income-generating initiatives, programmes and activities in agriculture, handicrafts and micro-enterprises for women and youth in Africa, especially in rural and remote areas.

II. Developing joint mechanisms and projects by the Arab and European National Commissions to promote dialogue with the Other and address the phenomena of zealotry and extremism, especially among young people

Having listened to the presentations made by the representatives of the three organizations and the contributions of the Secretaries of the National Commissions, the participants made the following recommendations:

- Strengthening Arab-Muslim-European dialogue in such a way as to promote the true image of Islam in the West and redress stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.
- Calling for the convening of a meeting to assess the achievements of the Euro-Arab Dialogue Working Group and to develop a new reference framework of action that defines action priorities and mechanisms and the parties concerned with implementation as part of a partnership between dialogue-fostering organizations, the different civil society institutions and all stakeholders involved in dialogue issues (schools and clubs affiliated with UNESCO, ISESCO and ALECSO).
- Calling for cooperation between the three organization to organize an Arab-Muslim-European conference for the promotion of Euro-Arab dialogue, and welcoming the offer of the Lebanese National Commission to host the said conference.
- Organizing Arab-Muslim-European youth camps and forums dedicated to the promotion of the universally shared values.
- Organizing artistic workshops bringing together European youth and their counterparts in the Arab Islamic world, in order to foster the values of coexistence.

III. Promoting cooperation and coordination between international and regional organizations and National Commissions, and developing mechanisms to benefit from their projects and programmes

Having listened to the presentations made by the representatives of the three organizations and the contributions of the Secretaries of the National Commissions, the participants made the following recommendations:

- Reviewing the draft resolutions to be submitted to the various commissions at UNESCO General Conference, in order to examine them and take a unified position thereon ahead of the said Conference.

- Reaffirming the periodic nature of the meetings of the National Commissions, along with the crucial need for prior coordination with them concerning the issues to be discussed.
- Enhancing and boosting cooperation between the Arab and Islamic National Commissions in the areas of education, science, culture and communication, especially in terms of capacity building.
- Calling on the three organizations (ISESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS) to exert more efforts to secure funding resources from outside their budgets and to adopt a new and more appropriate approach to the realities and needs of Member States in crisis and difficult situations.
- Highlighting the efforts and achievements of the Member States in the international reports on education, science and culture.
- Reconsidering the missions and roles of the three organizations so as for them to move beyond the confines of mere provision of guidance and expertise into effective engagement in the implementation of integrated structural development projects for the benefit of their Member States, and making efforts, to this end, towards boosting cooperation and integration among them and with Arab and Islamic funding institutions operating within the framework of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
- Enhancing the mechanisms of cooperation between the National Commissions by activating the roles of the affiliated schools and clubs of UNESCO, ISESCO and ALECSO, and benefiting from their successful experiences in the realms of education, science, culture and communication.
- Involving the National Commissions in the specialized ministerial conferences organized by the three organizations as well as in the meetings of their executive councils/boards and general conferences to enable them to effectively follow up the implementation of their decisions and resolutions.