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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**Medium-Term Strategy
(2002-2007)
for the Arab States**

Contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalization
through education, the sciences, culture and communication

Document prepared as a follow-up to the Regional Consultation organized by the Director-General of National Commissions for UNESCO in the Arab States Region (Rabat, Morocco, 6-8 June 2002)

Paris, 16 September 2002

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007) for the countries of the Arab region constitutes an essential programmatic pillar of the new decentralization policy being implemented by UNESCO. It fits fully into the framework of the Organization's overall strategic objectives adopted by Member States in the Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 (31 C/4), whose purpose is to contribute to peace and human development in an era of globalization through education, the sciences, culture and communication.¹

In line with the overall priorities set by the Organization, this Strategy corresponds to four objectives:

- adapting UNESCO's global strategies to local features, conditions and initiatives;
- serving as a joint action framework for drawing up biennial work plans by the cluster offices, regional bureaux and national offices;
- supporting and strengthening the new decentralization policy, whose purpose is to bring Member States closer into line with UNESCO action;
- providing an information and cooperation resource for all Member States and for its partners – agencies of the United Nations system, multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, IGOs, NGOs and other civil society partners – (in particular as a contribution to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals).

To this end, the present document identifies a deliberately limited number of action priorities at regional level corresponding to the region's specific needs within UNESCO's fields of competence: education, science, culture, information and communication.

I. THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Arab region comprises 21 States, all members of the Organization, as well as territories operating under the Palestinian Authority, which enjoys observer status with UNESCO. The region's total population is in the vicinity of 300 million, half of whom are aged under 18, a fact that represents both a vast potential and a huge challenge for the region.

Historically and culturally, the countries of the Arab region have many features in common, in particular from the linguistic and religious standpoints. However, despite these shared features, which represent so many potential sources of cooperation, the Arab region is in many respects a highly composite one, embracing as it does some of the world's richest States as well as a number of its poorest countries. In terms both of population and of surface area, it numbers some of the largest and also some of the smallest countries. The region is also characterized by major political and social disparities, some States enjoying relative stability and prosperity, while others face immense political and social challenges, notably in matters of sexual equality, education, adult literacy and the exercise of human rights. The diversity of the Arab States is reflected in the UNDP

¹ NB: This strategy is the outcome of a process of consultation organized by the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, with all the National Commissions of the region, in cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat both at Headquarters and in the field. In line with the Organization's overall strategy (31 C/4), the regional strategy is designed as an adjustable document, which can be revised in the light of new challenges or new trends at regional or subregional level, but also in the light of the results achieved.

human development index, the level of which varies from country to country, ranging from relatively high to distinctly low.

Moreover, the countries of the region, which are spread over an extremely extensive geographical area, display differences in their history and their evolution. In particular, it should be stressed that countries and territories such as Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Palestinian Territories are very strongly affected by the political context, and that their future is largely determined by past and current conflicts and by the outcome of the peace negotiations in the region as a whole. Even more than in the other Arab States, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding have a key role to play in this area.

Finally, the impact of the multifarious processes of globalization and of transition to knowledge-based economies operating throughout the world, allied to the persistent threats to peace and human security, poverty and high population growth rates and the inadequate level of human capacities and technical skills in several Member States of the region, are all factors that represent entirely new challenges and put a number of these countries at a distinct disadvantage, with the result that they are liable to find themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide, and to fall into the poverty trap. Such a situation calls for, indeed requires, vigorous, innovative measures in the fields of education, culture, science, communication and information.

UNESCO recognizes that these multiple, interlinked challenges call on it to strengthen and develop its cooperation with regional and subregional governmental organizations, in particular ALECSO, ISESCO and OIC, with regional and subregional funding agencies and organizations, and with the whole United Nations system and those of its agencies working in the region. Moreover, UNESCO will encourage the development of interregional partnerships, which will reflect the growing interdependence of the various regions of the world in an era of globalization and which constitute a fruitful source of dialogue and exchange.

II. FUNCTIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

UNESCO's five major functions are those of a laboratory of ideas, a standard-setter, a clearing house, a capacity-builder in Member States, and a catalyst for international cooperation (see box below). *These functions will underpin the entire range of UNESCO action in the Arab region.*

UNESCO's functions

Throughout its activities and projects, UNESCO will perform and assume a range of functions corresponding to its role as the international lead agency for education, the sciences, culture and communication:

a laboratory of ideas: UNESCO will play a key role in anticipating and defining, in the light of the ethical principles that it champions, the most important emerging problems in its spheres of competence, and in identifying appropriate strategies and policies to deal with them;

a standard-setter: UNESCO will serve as a central forum for articulating the ethical, normative and intellectual issues of our time, fostering multidisciplinary exchange and mutual understanding, working – where possible and desirable – towards universal agreements on these issues, benchmarking targets and mobilizing international opinion;

a clearing house: UNESCO has a role in gathering, transferring, disseminating and sharing available information, knowledge and best practices in its fields of competence, identifying innovative solutions and testing them through pilot projects;

a capacity-builder in Member States: UNESCO will organize international cooperation for servicing its stakeholders, especially its Member States, in building human and institutional capacities in all its fields of competence;

a catalyst for international cooperation: UNESCO as a technical multidisciplinary agency will assume a catalytic role for development cooperation in its fields of competence. To that end it will seek to ensure that the objectives, principles and priorities it promotes are followed suit by other multi- and bilateral programmes and that projects are implemented, in particular at regional and national levels, through innovation, effective interventions and wise practices.

For the purposes of discharging the above-mentioned functions, and in accordance with the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 adopted by the General Conference, UNESCO action in the Arab region will be guided by the following principles:

- *concentration:* A number of strategic objectives are defined for each of the Organization's four fields of competence, and a key priority is established in each of these fields for each biennium, together with a limited number of subsidiary priorities;
- *decentralization:* UNESCO's strategy, programming and actions are geared to the new network of the Organization's partners in the region, namely, the regional bureaux, the cluster offices and the national offices, thereby enabling close preliminary consultations to be held with all the partners concerned, as well as adjustments to programmes and activities in line with the true needs of Member States and direct beneficiaries;
- *flexibility:* UNESCO will maintain sufficient flexibility to be able to cope with the new issues and challenges and to adapt to local features and conditions;
- *excellence:* UNESCO will endeavour to promote in Member States a culture of knowledge-based decision-making. Local human resources and external skills will be mobilized in order to supply Member States with high-quality services harnessing the best available knowledge and experience in all the Organization's fields of competence;
- *convergence:* Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches will be strengthened, particular stress being placed on the contribution of the new information and communication technologies to the development of education, science, culture and the construction of a knowledge society;
- *partnerships:* Partnerships, alliances and other linkages and mechanisms will be strengthened, in particular with the other agencies of the United Nations system working at regional and national levels, both upstream for example in the context of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and downstream, through the implementation of joint activities and projects. Partnerships with regional intergovernmental organizations, development banks and bilateral donors, as well as with regional and national NGOs and with the private sector, will be pursued and developed, as will activities conducted with the National Commissions, which are an integral part of UNESCO. Actions will be carried out with the assistance of parliamentarians and UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations, and various forms of cooperation will be explored.

In order to be able to respond to the multifarious needs and challenges of the Arab region's Member States, UNESCO has adopted a new action strategy geared to the following main thrusts:

1. *redployment of human resources*: The introduction of the concept of "cluster offices" enables the Organization to develop closer ties with Member States, for the purpose of enhancing the usefulness of its activities for Member States and its ability to meet their needs;
2. *marshalling of resources*: Responding to the needs and challenges that currently face and will continue to face the Arab region in UNESCO's various fields of competence would require a cornucopian volume of human and financial resources, well beyond the Organization's capacity. Given the financial constraints, wide recourse will be had to extrabudgetary funding for many of the activities to be conducted in the various fields; to that end, UNESCO will in particular undertake to negotiate and implement agreements that involve a range of different donors, agencies and types of funding;
3. *strengthening UNESCO's outreach capacity*: In an increasingly competitive environment, in which intellectual cooperation is geared to results, UNESCO is duty-bound to strengthen its image in the region by providing evidence of its ability to supply high-quality services in all its fields of competence. A communication plan should be drawn up for each of the regional bureaux, cluster offices and national offices, in order to strengthen its visibility and outreach. In this regard, the creation and continuous updating of new websites, linked to the Organization's other websites and those of other partners, will provide an extremely useful tool.

III. REGIONAL SECTORAL STRATEGIES

A. EDUCATION

The first priority of UNESCO's strategy in the Arab region for 2002-2007 will be to promote the attainment of the six goals of the Framework for Action adopted by the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000; see box below) and to play to the full its role as promoter and coordinator of partners in the Education for All (EFA) initiative. UNESCO will continue in the Arab region to implement its three strategic objectives in the field of education:

- strategic objective 1: Promoting education as a fundamental right in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- strategic objective 2: Improving the quality of education through the diversification of contents and methods and the promotion of universally shared values;
- strategic objective 3: promoting experimentation, innovation and the diffusion and sharing of information and best practices as well as policy dialogue in education.

Education for all: the six Dakar goals

(adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000;
source: Dakar Framework for Action, para. 7)

"We hereby collectively commit ourselves to the attainment of the following goals:

1. expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

2. ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;
4. achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
5. eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
6. improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills".

The Organization's efforts at the regional level will be based, *inter alia*, on the Framework of Action adopted by the Arab Regional Conference on Education for All (Cairo, Egypt, 24-27 January 2000),² the declaration and plan of action adopted by the Regional Conference of Arab States on Higher Education (Beirut, 1998) and the priorities identified at various regional meetings on teaching and technical and vocational training.

Education for All in the Arab States:

Seven objectives for 2000-2010 (Cairo, 2000)³

- (1) expanded and improved early childhood care and development;
- (2) extending basic education and its provision to achieve high quality education leading to excellence for all children, with special emphasis on those with special needs;
- (3) extending opportunities for basic education and training programmes to acquire life and vocational skills for all youth and adults;
- (4) universalizing literacy among adolescents, and decreasing illiteracy rates among adults;
- (5) ensuring mastery of basic learning skills and excellence for all through the empowerment of all learners to attain outstanding achievement levels that make full use of their potential, starting with the mastery of basic skills, vocational and life skills, and attaining excellence in creativity and inventiveness;
- (6) full equality and effective participation in basic education for girls and women, and the elimination of gender biases and disparities in all schools and education systems;
- (7) Improving educational governance and management.

² Education for All in the Arab States: Renewing the Commitment - The Arab Framework for Action to Ensure Basic Learning Needs in the Arab States in the Years 2000-2010, adopted by the Arab Regional Conference on Education for All (Cairo, Egypt, 24-27 January 2000). Cf. UNESCO, The Dakar Framework for Action, UNESCO 2000, pp. 43-55.

³ For the complete text, see "Education for All in the Arab States", op. cit., "Seven objectives", p. 51.

Strategic objective 1: Promoting education as a fundamental right in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Dakar Forum and the Cairo Conference both regarded the **promotion of good quality basic education for all** as a major development objective not only because of its intrinsic value as a human right but also owing to its capacity to contribute to the attainment of other international development objectives in fields including health, poverty alleviation, social development, environment and sustainable development. Efforts to guarantee exercise of the right to education will form an essential part of this strategic objective.

Strategic objective 1 is of particular importance for States in the Arab region, where conditions are unequal and vary from one country to the next. The overall increase in primary school enrolment at the regional level over the past ten years is unevenly distributed at the national level. In general women and girls have not benefited enough from the resources allocated (the literacy parity index is 0.69%); for example, primary school enrolment for girls remains inferior to that for boys. In addition, there is still a substantial discrepancy between rural and urban areas. Early childhood education, a determining factor with regard to enrolment in primary school, is very much overlooked. Reducing illiteracy (38% of persons aged 15 and above, with big variations from one country to another) is a major priority for the region.

Expected outcomes:

- Greater access to early childhood care and education, and improvement of their quality.
- Effective participation of girls and women, in conditions of full equality, in basic education services and elimination of gender disparities in all schools and education systems; in this framework, elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.
- Generalization of literacy among adolescents, and curbing of adult illiteracy, particularly in rural and landlocked regions, with a view to achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, and combating functional illiteracy.
- Reinforcement of formal education by means of integrative and innovative approaches and through diversification of non-formal channels of education designed to reach excluded and marginalized groups, including individuals with special educational needs.
- Lower school dropout rate.
- Greater access to basic education and training programmes to enable all young people and all adults to acquire life and occupational skills.

During the period 2002-2007 UNESCO will pursue its EFA efforts in the Arab region, notably by acting as EFA coordinator and by helping to promote EFA actions and mechanisms at the regional, subregional and national levels. Regionally, these partnerships will be operating under the umbrella of the Regional Mechanism for Education for All in the Arab Region (ARABEFA), a high-level committee responsible for planning and supporting the follow-up to Dakar. At the national level a support team composed of representatives of the United Nations and other donors has been established to assist in framing and implementing national EFA action plans. UNESCO will help build national government capacities for collecting, managing, analysing and circulating information and data relating to education. Indicators in areas of access, quality, relevance and effectiveness at the national and regional levels will be identified, developed and tested.

Expected outcomes:

- Elaboration of detailed national EFA plans in all the Member States of the Arab region within a well-integrated and viable sectoral framework which is clearly linked to poverty eradication and development strategies, and launching of the process for implementation of the six goals set at the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000).
- Establishment of partnerships in support of activities and reforms relating to EFA with all stakeholders, namely, in addition to the Member States, United Nations system agencies, in particular the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank, Arab regional and subregional organizations, in particular the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), bilateral donors and international and local NGOs.
- Building of national capacities for the collection and treatment of vital educational data.

Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality of education through the diversification of contents and methods and the promotion of universally shared values

Studies undertaken in preparation for the Cairo Conference and the Dakar Summit (2000) revealed that quality education is still restricted in the Arab region to a privileged minority. Competencies acquired by pupils in primary education (4th grade) are far below the level proposed at Jomtien in 1990: only 12% of them manage to attain that level in Arabic, 10% in mathematics and 25% in life skills. Despite substantial improvements (decline in repetition rates, increase in the number of pupils staying in school through fifth grade, better results for girls than for boys), efficiency remains inadequate: persistence of dropout and grade repetition (which increase the higher one goes up the educational ladder), and the long time taken to complete primary education.

To help attain EFA objectives in the region, resolute action by UNESCO will be needed in several areas:

- Teacher training. The pupil/teacher ratio is generally low throughout the region (11 to 25 in 14 States, 26 to 30 in three States and 31 or more in two States). The realization of EFA objectives calls for priority attention to teacher training, professionalization of teaching, improvement of the status of teachers, in particular their working conditions and social standing, in order to attract young and qualified staff;
- Improvement of educational content, with the inclusion in particular of education for citizenship, for tolerance and for living together; environmental education and education for sustainable development; teaching of the ethics of science and technology; school health programmes. As part of this process, UNESCO will pursue its efforts to revise textbooks throughout the region, in conjunction with a worldwide effort in that respect.

Expected outcomes:

- Support for the training of qualified teachers in pursuit of the Dakar goals.

- Reinforcement of education for citizenship, tolerance and living together, including through the revision of educational material.
- Reinforcement of environmental education and education for sustainable development.
- Reinforcement of science teaching at all educational levels, including teaching of the ethics of science.
- Acquisition at all levels of skills helping to improve the everyday lives of the most disadvantaged population groups.
- Evaluation of needs in the area of school health and preventive education concerning HIV/AIDS and the formulation of an appropriate action plan (capacity-building, production of teaching material, etc.).

Strategic objective 3: Promoting experimentation, innovation and the diffusion and sharing of information and best practices as well as policy dialogue in education

UNESCO's efforts in the Arab region will be aimed at the reinforcement and renovation of education systems, with due regard for specific national needs, at the primary, secondary and higher education levels. UNESCO will encourage the harmonization of educational approaches and cycles throughout the region.

It has emerged from numerous studies and work done by various bodies that **improvement in the quality and the relevance of technical, vocational and higher education** is vital to progress in Arab societies and to their sustainable development. UNESCO's efforts will therefore be aimed at the promotion in the region of technical and vocational education and the acquisition of skills to help improve the quality of life, in particular for the most disadvantaged population groups. Particular attention will accordingly go to:

- (a) diversification of educational curriculum and programmes and participation of teachers and of business and industry in the elaboration and implementation of these programmes in order to meet the needs of the workplace more effectively; and
- (b) improvement of opportunities for the various categories of potential beneficiaries by making a particular effort to provide women and girls with greater access to education and vocational and technical training and to extend the sharing of information on innovative approaches.

Expected outcomes:

- Overall development of technical and vocational education.
- Preparation of diversified curricula and study programmes in the field of technical and vocational education, in cooperation with ministries of education and other competent partners.
- Improved access for women and girls to technical and vocational training through medium-term pilot projects in selected countries.

With regard to **higher education**, the priority aim will be to:

- (a) diversify schools and educational programmes and procedures in order to improve access and meet development needs more effectively;
- (b) devise and use quality assurance mechanisms;
- (c) increase the contribution of secondary and higher education to local development;
- (d) improve, reinforce and diversify scientific and technical education (formal and non-formal) at all levels, with particular attention to the specificity of the context, and with a view to preparing students to meet the challenges of modernity; and
- (e) increase regional and international cooperation (including the question of the equivalence of degrees).

Expected outcomes:

- Improved access to higher education through diversified structures, methods and content.
- Elaboration of mechanisms of quality assurance, certification and recognition of higher education degrees, in cooperation with the competent national authorities.
- UNESCO will encourage the use of **information and communication technologies (ICTs)** for educational purposes in the Arab States. The use of ICTs will be encouraged, firstly, for the development of access to education and improvement of its quality, with regard to both formal and informal education, and for teacher training and, secondly, for the improvement of education systems and for use in decision-making at all levels and with regard to all aspects of education, in particular by building databases of knowledge and reliable factual data.

Expected outcomes:

- Introduction of a greater variety of teaching methods for formal and non-formal education.
- Promotion of innovation and renovation with regard to educational content and methods.
- Promotion of the dissemination and sharing of information and best practices, and improvement of the dialogue on principles of action in the field of education.
- Introduction of systems and tools to assist decision-making in education, in particular through the establishment and application of detailed information systems on higher education establishments, curricula, staff and students.

Arab-Europe Dialogue: interregional cooperation between National Commissions for UNESCO of the Arab States and the Europe regions

The ultimate aim of this dialogue is to mobilize civil society and all social actors in support of UNESCO's objectives in education, science, culture and communication through interregional cooperation among National Commissions of the Arab States and the Europe region.

The Arab-Europe Dialogue will particularly focus on the following strategic objectives (and relevant strategic sub-objectives):²

- promoting education as a fundamental right
- improving the quality of education
- promoting experimentation, innovation and the diffusion and sharing of information
- safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilizations
- enhancing learning opportunities through access to diversified contents and delivery systems.

Initial areas of interest include the promotion of cultural diversity, and teacher training, with special emphasis on the UNESCO Associated Schools Network as a useful modality for project action.

The project will include the following elements:

- (i) **inter-agency cooperation** with regional intergovernmental organizations active in this field, such as ALECSO, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Council of Europe, the European Union and OSCE;
- (ii) **mobilization of civil society** through National Commissions and International or regional NGOs;
- (iii) **implementation mechanism** for priority projects, including the establishment of in-house as well as inter-agency coordination and provision of matching funds.

Expected outcomes:

- Wide dissemination of the Delors Report and of the results of the 46th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) within ministries of education, teacher-training institutions and curriculum development centres, and organization of exchanges between practitioners and policy-makers; networking of teacher-training institutions of both regions.
- Support to Member States and their National Commissions for youth exchange, especially through twinning arrangements between ASP Network schools in both regions.
- Comparative analysis of curricula and school textbooks in several countries of both regions and publication of a special issue of the Journal *Prospects* on the Euro-Arab dialogue.
- Preparation of a revised version of the Practical Guide for human rights education and education for tolerance and dialogue among cultures and civilizations, complemented

² The following correspond to strategic objectives 1, 2, 3, 8, and to strategic objective 2 under the cross-cutting theme “The contribution of information and communication technologies to the development of education, science and culture and the construction of a knowledge society” (UNESCO, Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007, document 31 C/4 Approved).

by a selection of best practices for “Learning to Live Together” and “Education for Citizenship” in cooperation with the Council of Europe and ALECSO.

- Establishment, in support of the Plan Arabia, of a network of higher education institutions specializing in teaching and research on the cultural diversity of the Arab world (including outside the Arab States and Europe regions).
- Encouraging inter-university cooperation between the two regions, notably through joint research projects and participation in the UNESCO Chairs network in all major programmes.
- Support to cultural festivals, exhibitions and cultural information seminars that develop and foster Arab-Europe Dialogue.
- Demonstration of the impact of ICT-based alternative delivery systems through pilot projects such as multilingual UNESCO Education Servers for Human Rights and Democracy (based on the evaluation of the existing server in the Europe region – Sarajevo).
- Collection of best practices for the dissemination of knowledge on the other region in the media through workshops organized in collaboration with journalists and their professional associations, contest and encouraging cooperation and exchange between the media of the two regions.

The Arab-Europe Dialogue project was elaborated at the initiative of the German and of the Tunisian National Commissions for UNESCO and developed through an extensive process of consultations involving National Commissions of the Arab States and of the European Regions, the Arab League, the Council of Europe, ALECSO and other interested IGOs.

B. SCIENCES

The specific nature of UNESCO’s programmes in the natural sciences, and in the human and social sciences, accounts for their separate presentation. UNESCO will nevertheless seek to ensure close interaction between the activities it undertakes in both fields. Indeed, strong emphasis was laid on such interaction during the World Conference on Science (Budapest, 1999) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). UNESCO’s action will therefore be geared to a better understanding of the complex interrelationships between natural and social phenomena, thus participating in the formulation of human and sustainable development policies. The conclusions of both major meetings will direct and inspire UNESCO programmes in the Arab States, in accordance with the Organization’s will to ensure that science responds better to society’s needs and aspirations.

In view of their growing complexity, globalization problems in the Arab world are becoming increasingly difficult to understand and address. Over the past decade, the States of the region have experienced significant social, economic and political advances marked, in particular, by the emergence of a significant, dynamic and diversified civil society. In a rapidly changing world, UNESCO will have to promote reflection on the ethical principles and standards underpinning such change and will strengthen its role as an intellectual forum for ethical reflection, a laboratory of ideas and a meeting point for research and action in social and human sciences in the Arab region, so as to foster reflection on the following subjects:

- contributing to a better understanding of the causes and roots of conflicts, promoting the resolution of conflicts and contributing to post-conflict reconstruction;
- strengthening the culture of democracy and governance; and
- equipping societies to cope better with emerging challenges, to benefit from new opportunities, to reinforce their economic and human potential and to ensure their effective participation in the globalization process, while giving further thought to the role of governments, the private sector and civil society.

The overriding priority in social and human sciences for the Arab region will be to prepare key partners for the radical **social transformation** under way and for its interaction with globalization processes, with a view to implementing the goals set at the Copenhagen Conference on Social Development. Particular emphasis will thus be laid on capacity-building in social and human sciences in the region, networking existing research institutes, and disseminating and pooling information on major problems and difficulties via the use of new communication technologies.

Consequently, UNESCO's action for science in the countries of the Arab region will be guided by the Organization's three global strategic objectives:

- Strategic objective 4: Promoting principles and ethical norms to guide scientific and technological development and social transformation;
- Strategic objective 5: Improving human security by better management of the environment and social change;
- Strategic objective 6: Enhancing scientific, technical and human capacities to participate in the emerging knowledge societies.

Strategic objective 4: Promoting principles and ethical norms to guide scientific and technological development and social transformation

In the Arab region, UNESCO will support action to define new ethical norms to guide scientific endeavours and social and political developments. In order to achieve this strategic objective, UNESCO will work towards the following sub-objectives:

Sub-objective 4.1: Promoting the ethics of science and technology

UNESCO will encourage Member States in the region to look closely at the ethical dimensions of science and technology and their applications (particularly, but not exclusively, with regard to bioethics) in order to evaluate their impact on the region's societies. In particular, an effort will be made to raise the awareness of public institutions, civil society, the media and the public at large of major ethical implications and challenges. National mechanisms to monitor questions of ethics will be encouraged and supported. UNESCO will encourage the formulation of ethical recommendations on the basis of an analysis of good practice and will provide assistance for reflecting such recommendations in policy-making.

Expected outcome:

- Strengthening of the national and regional debate about ethics in the field of science and technology and support for national policy-making in the matter.

Sub-objective 4.2: Promoting a concept of development based on human rights

UNESCO will encourage the formulation of development approaches hinging on human rights and the integration of such approaches in planning and governance, in cooperation with the entire United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This will be aimed, in particular, at the elimination of all forms of discrimination with regard to fundamental rights, the participation of all social groups, particularly women and the most vulnerable, and the strengthening of relations between the State and civil society (NGOs, voluntary organizations, etc.).

Expected outcomes:

- Promotion of research, information and training in human rights – with special reference to social, economic and cultural rights and development approaches based on human rights – in particular through the establishment or strengthening of networks and the elaboration of a UNESCO human rights strategy.
- Promotion of the intellectual debate about human rights and the link between culture and democracy.

Strategic objective 5: Improving human security by better management of the environment and social change

Peace and human security are priorities for the region, which for many decades now has been seriously affected by conflict. In the field of the natural sciences, UNESCO will place **water and ecosystems** at the forefront of its activities in the Arab region during 2002-2007. Special attention will be given to the maximum reduction of the risks which threaten vulnerable water resource systems and the full consideration of social difficulties and interactions and of cultural diversity, the aim being to adopt appropriate approaches to the integrated management of water resources, a key aspect of sustainability and human security.

In the field of the human and social sciences, UNESCO will encourage fuller reflection on the causes and origins of conflicts. It will also encourage, in particular through networks to exchange experience and study, a better understanding of the social problems facing the region at all levels, in particular crime and social violence. The development of interdisciplinary studies and the formulation of innovative approaches will be encouraged so as to improve the quality of life and deal with the complex social problems and challenges which are often exacerbated by violence, such as HIV/AIDS, gender disparity and rapid changes in the urban and rural environments.

Sub-objective 5.1: Sustainable management of water resources and ecosystems, especially in arid and semi-arid zones

Main thrusts:

- Promoting research – establishing national and institutional capacities for that purpose – on environmentally friendly principles and plans for water resource and ecosystem management, especially in arid and semi-arid zones. UNESCO will provide support for the establishment of a centre for water management in arid zones.
- Supporting activities relating to hydrology and the management of water resources in arid and semi-arid zones during the sixth phase of IHP, particularly in relation to wadi

hydrology, the protection of groundwater, water resources management and capacity-building.

- Study of the phenomena of desertification and land rehabilitation.
- Protecting the environment against pollution and waste (groundwater reserves, marine resources, deforestation, natural gas, etc.).
- Giving strategic advice to Arab States on the creation of new biosphere reserves and the improvement of existing ones.
- Providing ArabMAB, the biosphere reserves network and the ecotechnic chairs network with the means to undertake strategic action serving to advance the ecosystem approach and increase the use of modern information and communication technologies for the dissemination of information and the management of natural resources.
- Promoting interdisciplinary projects and activities for joint implementation by UNESCO's five intergovernmental and international scientific programmes (MAB, IHP, IGCP, IOC and MOST), with a view to furthering the cooperation process within and between sectors.

Expected outcomes:

- Creation of an expanded knowledge base and more rational scientific methods for the sustainable management of water resources and related ecosystems.
- Increased water security by devising consensual methods and appropriate procedures concerning water resources and the sharing thereof.
- Enhanced methods, tools and indicators for assessing the present and future situation as regards the status, development and management of water resources in the Arab region, and also the phenomena of desertification and land rehabilitation.
- Improved methods and instruments for increased protection of natural resources (groundwater reserves, marine resources, vegetation cover) against pollution and waste.
- Improved principles for managing existing biosphere reserves and the establishment of an Arab strategy for identifying new biosphere reserves;
- Reinforced means of action for the ArabMAB network and the ecotechnic chairs network.

Sub-objective 5.2: Mobilizing international cooperation with a view to the effective application of geoscientific knowledge in the service of sustainable development

Main thrusts:

- To study the earth's crust and monitor, describe and understand the phenomena at work through the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP) and to apply this knowledge to the efficient management of mineral resources, energy, groundwater and the environment.

- To develop the use of modern technologies such as remote sensing and geo-information systems to improve the assessment and the management of water resources.
- To increase scientific knowledge of natural hazards, in particular earthquakes, and harness this knowledge to the strengthening of disaster reduction mechanisms.
- To promote the establishment of networks, cooperation and scientific exchange programmes.

Expected outcomes:

- Increased understanding, through IGCP's multidisciplinary projects, of the geological, geochemical, mineralogical and the geophysical parameters essential for the gathering of basic data on the environment and the understanding of the relevant geological phenomena.
- Establishment of plans and scenarios with a view to disaster reduction in seismic regions and a more decisive involvement by governments in disaster prevention.
- Improved access to the global stock of knowledge on the earth sciences compiled through regional cooperation.

Sub-objective 5.3: Developing a multidimensional, interdisciplinary and integrated approach to the evaluation of coastal area management

Main thrust:

- To help small developing island States and other archipelagos in drawing up their own action programmes in respect of human security and sustainable development by establishing an intersectoral framework of action, especially centred on natural disaster preparedness, forestalling the growing scarcity of freshwater, protecting coastal ecosystems against pollution and overfishing, and tourism management.

Expected outcomes:

- Increased capacities as a result of sustainable development strategies, public awareness campaigns and transfers of clean technology.
- Activities making use of ICTs, laying special emphasis on the strengthening of intersectoral and interdisciplinary action.

In the Arab region, it is necessary to develop interdisciplinary and innovative approaches in order to address the impact on society of complex problems such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender disparities and changing urban environments. UNESCO will therefore concern itself particularly with the various repercussions of globalization and social transformations on local communities and the quality of life.

Sub-objective 5.4: Social transformations and development

In the Arab region, attention will be focused on the governance of cities and on social and environmental problems in urban areas. In this respect, priority will be given to an urban development that meets the basic needs of the populations, in particular children, young people and

women, having regard to specific economic and socio-cultural constraints. UNESCO will promote, *inter alia*, research and reflection on the following themes:

- the new social geographies, making for a better understanding of the new social stratifications;
- the impact of population growth and population movements, emigration and immigration;
- the evolution of basic social structures (family, relatives, group affinities, and so forth) and male and female identity;
- changes in culture and practices among young people;
- the gulfs between rich and poor, including in the access to knowledge and to information and communication technologies;
- the challenges posed to national and local cultures, with particular reference to the cultural impact of globalization.

Expected outcome:

- Better understanding by governments, civil society and the private sector of social and human challenges, particularly those related to the globalization process.

Strategic objective 6: Reinforcing scientific, technical and human capacities for participation in the new knowledge societies

Sub-objective 6.1: Reinforcing human and institutional capacities in the sciences

Main thrusts:

- Strengthening human and institutional capacities in the various scientific disciplines so as to reduce the disparities between Arab States in respect of scientific capacities.
- Improving teaching of the basic and engineering sciences as well as technology education through the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), with special emphasis on upgrading programmes and developing integrated teaching materials that are non-sexist and adapted to the socio-cultural environment.
- Promoting training in science communication techniques and the exchange of best practices in the popularization of science.
- Encouraging capacity-building and training in biology and biotechnology research.
- Mobilization and support for the increased use of new and renewable energies, particularly solar energy, in the framework of the World Solar Programme.
- Promotion of effective cooperation and interaction between the relevant international and regional institutions and specialized scientific bodies within the UNITWIN Programme /UNESCO Chairs networks; and promotion of training in informatics for all through the application of internationally approved norms and educational programmes.

Expected outcomes:

- Increased use of ICTs in the theoretical and practical teaching of science and technology at all levels.
- Enhanced scientific content of science and technology courses, increased on-the-job training and exchanges of teaching materials, skills and best practices.
- Improved access by women and girls to science and technology teaching and greater participation by scientists, particularly women scientists, in collaborative research and training in the life sciences.
- Greater emphasis on the popularization of science and its applications.
- Increased use and promotion of new and renewable energies, particularly solar energy.
- Strengthening of capabilities and basic knowledge in the informatics field.
- Continuation and extension of the SESAME (International Centre for Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East) programme.

Sub-objective 6.2: Adapting science policy to societal needs

Main thrusts:

- Formulating guidelines for policy-making, promotion of best practices, and the conduct and dissemination of comparative studies on science and technology policy issues.
- Promoting reforms of systems of scientific and technological innovation and stimulating innovation by strengthening partnerships between universities and the industrial sector and effectively exploiting their scientific and technological potential.
- Devising scientific and technological indicators on the basis of reliable data, broken down by gender and disadvantaged groups, on science education and R&D systems and activities.
- Supporting the Arab Regional Training Network for Science and Technology Management (STEMARN) and strengthening its links with comparable regional science and technology networks.
- Creating education and training programmes together with programmes to raise awareness of the new challenges posed by scientific and technological progress in order that they can be better understood.

Expected outcomes:

- Improved methods, guidelines and approaches on which to base policy analysis and the framing of policies, budgets and national legislative texts in the field of science and technology.
- The devising of new scientific and technological indicators capable of making a valid contribution to the framing of policies.

- The formulation of guidelines for revitalizing national systems of innovation, and the promotion of innovation on the basis of improved cooperation between universities and the industrial sector.
- The strengthening of endogenous research and operational capacities for the establishment and management of national science and technology systems.
- The strengthening of information and communication in the field of science and technology.

Sub-objective 6.3: Social science research and knowledge sharing

UNESCO will make a priority, in the Arab region, of strengthening the knowledge base, the professional infrastructure and the exchange of information in the social and human sciences for the benefit of decision-makers. To implement certain projects, partnerships and networking will be encouraged in the fields of training, research and capacity-building, in particular through the network of UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs in Social Sciences for young people and adults, in cooperation with the authorities, community members, etc.

Expected outcome:

- Improved interactions, exchanges and networking among specialists in the social and human sciences, and between those specialists and decision-makers at government level, within civil society or in the private sector.

Regional flagship projects

Regenerating degraded water and reconstituting ecosystems and their biodiversity in arid and semi-arid zones.

The Arab region must tackle freshwater problems without delay and carry out work to safeguard ecosystems facing a serious threat. Since much of the Arab region is located in arid zones, factors such as desertification, the silting up of water courses by sand from dunes, the spread of the urban infrastructure and the development of agriculture may aggravate the situation. The aim of the flagship project will be, in coordination with UNESCO's five intergovernmental and international science programmes (MAB, IHP, IGCP, IOC and MOST), to frame strategies mainly targeted on arid and semi-arid regions for the integrated management of water, soil and biodiversity, from the standpoint of ecological, social and economic sustainability.

Technology-Assisted and Mediated Education Framework for the Twenty-First Century (TEAM Framework)

This project was set up in response to the recommendations issued at the World Conferences on Higher Education (Paris, 1998) and Science (Budapest, 1999) and is aimed at devising an overall framework applicable to science and technology education making use of ICTs in the Arab States. The Framework comprises the four complementary modules set out below, which concern primary, secondary and university education: (i) framing the strategic studies, guiding principles and general indicators of performance assessment needed for integrating the ICTs into teaching and learning; (ii) strengthening national capacities in terms of network infrastructure and access to information and educational resources; (iii) strengthening material means and enhancing human-resource capacities; and (iv) promoting and supporting new learning models making use of the new ICTs

(open, distance and electronic learning and access to high-quality education materials in the global public domain).

C. CULTURE

Cultures must be recognized as comprising the heritage of values, knowledge and skills upon which identities are based, and as embodying the creative visions and energies that empower people to enrich and renew those identities through interaction with other cultures, with a view to consolidating both peace and human development. The World Commission on Culture and Development, in its report *Our Creative Diversity*, and the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm, 1998) stressed that cultures in all their diversity must play an essential role as agents of global development and coexistence.

In consonance with its mission, UNESCO will focus over the next six years on three closely interrelated strategic objectives elaborated below:

- Strategic objective 7: Promoting the drafting and implementation of standard-setting instruments in the cultural field;
- Strategic objective 8: Safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilizations;
- Strategic objective 9: Enhancing the linkages between culture and development, through capacity-building and sharing of knowledge.

In the field of culture, community of language provides a basis of understanding and dialogue for the countries of the Arab region. Nevertheless, languages such as Berber and Kurdish, and certain regional and/or national variants of classical Arabic, with their specific traits and traditional forms of expression, illustrate cultural diversity within both the region and countries themselves and need to be preserved in a spirit of dialogue. Arab States also share characteristics that may vary from one region to another, such as the urban structure of the “medina”, different forms of traditional music and dance, scientific and literary traditions, etc. In terms of the cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, these characteristics are extremely rich and often go back several thousands of years. They are closely linked to the Mediterranean world all along the northern and eastern coasts, with Africa to the south and Asia to the east. The Arab region sits at a crossroads, sharing and receiving experiences and knowledge while exerting an influence on other regions of the world.

The impact of globalization, in particular through the media, is more visible in some countries (particularly in urban areas) than in others, where traditions remain strong, usually owing to religious principles and firmly-anchored ways of life. In the light of the uniformization noted elsewhere there is, nonetheless, a need to preserve and enhance cultural diversity and identities. There is also an urgent need throughout the region to strengthen and sharpen awareness of the importance and value of the intangible heritage. UNESCO will continue to oversee the conservation of the tangible heritage and the strengthening of capacities in this specific area, which remains at the forefront of the concerns and demands of the Member States in the region.

Strategic objective 7: Promoting the drafting and implementation of standard-setting instruments in the cultural field

It is not commonly the case in the Arab region that legislation and regulations in the cultural field are correctly applied. Legislation exists, of course, and a number of international instruments,

in particular UNESCO conventions, have been ratified by Arab States. However, even if some legislation goes back to colonial times, much of it is so recent that it is rarely understood and applied other than in specialized circles and by the authorities directly concerned. Awareness of the objectives and practical utility of these regulations needs to be enhanced and promoted throughout the region, to make people understand that the aim is to protect the national heritage and national identities from the threat of disappearance or standardization.

The 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was ratified by 17 Arab States, which encompass 52 sites, including one mixed cultural/natural site, one cultural landscape and only three natural sites. This reflects the absence of activism in most Arab States on environmental issues, which must however be taken into account. Special attention should be paid to strengthening national capacities in the area of the conservation, restoration and presentation of sites, in particular for the purposes of healthy management and the development of tourism.

In a region such as the Middle East, where the cultural heritage – both physical and intangible – has been greatly damaged by numerous conflicts, it is even more important to strengthen the 1954 Hague Convention. The entry into force of the Second Protocol and the setting-up of the Intergovernmental Committee provided for by this text should help ensure that the provisions of the Conventions are respected to a greater extent by the 14 States Parties in the region.

The pillaging of archaeological sites and illegal trade in moveable cultural property represent a major threat for the countries in the region, despite their extraordinarily rich heritage. Only thirteen countries have ratified the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; no country has signed the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention, and implementation of legislation at national level is not always satisfactory. It is planned to step up UNESCO's assistance, in the legal sphere and in the realm of practical training, in order to combat pillage and illegal trade; this assistance will be directed both to the relevant authorities and to the communities directly involved or concerned.

Efforts will also be made to promote the ratification of existing and new instruments, such as the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. The Mediterranean is probably one of the world's largest underwater museums, having been for centuries a major centre of navigation and trade.

On the basis of the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, and in order to develop a new standard-setting instrument, UNESCO has undertaken to promote awareness of and respect for the intangible heritage in the Arab States. Although many traditions are still living, globalization – and the economic environment – threaten to weaken them or cause them to disappear. Through the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity and on the basis of the guidelines for the Establishment of a Living Human Treasures System we will make every effort to maintain and revitalize all possible aspects of the intangible heritage.

At the same time, greater support should be given to creativity in the Arab Region, by way of the Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist. Respect for artists should be fostered, and more possibilities opened up to artists by raising awareness and encouraging institutional recognition. In order to step up work in the area of copyright and neighbouring rights, the *Copyright Bulletin* will be translated into Arabic and widely disseminated.

Expected outcomes:

- Increase in the number of States Parties to each convention.
- Effective implementation in the region of standard-setting instruments in the cultural field, particularly the Hague Convention and its Second Protocol, training of staff specialized in the area of the restitution of cultural property and illegal trade.
- Improved implementation of existing legislation and regulations.
- Increase in the number of natural world heritage sites and support for the strengthening of national capacities regarding the preparation of files for the inscription of sites on the World Heritage List.
- Active participation in programmes for safeguarding the intangible heritage, by means of publications and exhibitions.
- Greater recognition of contemporary artists and their role in an ever-changing society.
- Widespread observance of international standards concerning intellectual property.

Strategic objective 8: Safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging pluralism and dialogue among cultures and civilizations

With respect to this strategic objective, UNESCO will pursue three main sub-objectives:

- Safeguarding cultural diversity;
- Dialogue among cultures and civilizations;
- Respect for pluralism.

In the Arab region, UNESCO will spare no effort to promote an integrated approach to culture and human development through the framing of sound national cultural policies, and to show the beneficial role that cultural diversity can play in the emergence of a pluralistic society. Its action in this field will draw on the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the General Conference at its 31st session. These efforts will be coupled with initiatives in support of human rights and democracy throughout the region.

With respect to the protection and safeguarding of the cultural heritage, priority now tends to be given to the intangible heritage rather than to monuments, to archaeological sites and to moveable and immovable cultural property. This does not mean that the importance and value of the tangible heritage is in any way diminished. Nor does it challenge the need to protect it, as illustrated by the World Heritage Convention. Emphasis will be placed on national capacity-building for the protection and preservation of the past and on enhancing existing interlinkages between tangible remains, history and identity, oral traditions and everyday life.

The oral traditions, the values, the knowledge and all of the accumulated memories that have forged both the unity and the diversity of the Arab world must be preserved and revitalized, not just through standard-setting work but also through community-wide participation and understanding. Special attention must go to ensuring the transmission to the young, in the interests of the heritage itself and as a means of strengthening cultural identities.

The Arab States, like other developing countries around the world, must integrate culture – and the cultural heritage in particular – into their development strategies, while taking into account the socio-economic role of cultural activities. Priority needs to be given both to capacity-building in the field of heritage conservation and to the devolution of powers to local communities in order to protect their cultural environment and to contribute to poverty reduction in disadvantaged areas.

With respect to the safeguarding and revitalization of the intangible heritage, the new technologies could contribute to the recording, storage and dissemination of the various forms of that heritage for the benefit of people in the Arab and other regions, which would make for greater dialogue among civilizations and enhancement of exchanges.

Dialogue among cultures and civilizations – enhanced by activities in connection with the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations (2001) – and the proclamation by the General Assembly of the United Nations of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, have laid the foundations for a better understanding of the dynamic impact and cross-fertilization of civilizations and cultures that has occurred throughout history to the present day. Arab civilization has been one of the greatest and most enduring melting pots for religious, intellectual, scientific and technical convergence, influence and confluence. In view of the current international political context, it is more crucial than ever to promote dialogue and tolerance through better knowledge and greater understanding. UNESCO will spare no effort in all of its fields of competence – especially through formal and non-formal education – to further such dialogue among countries in the region and around the world.

Expected outcomes:

- Sustained regional debate on the key messages contained in the *Our Creative Diversity* report and the follow-up to the Stockholm Conference on Cultural Policies for Development.
- Assistance to communities in maintaining their identities and safeguarding their intangible heritage.
- National capacity-building for the safeguarding, preservation, presentation and revitalization – at the legal and technical levels – of the national cultural heritage.
- Greater political will behind cultural diversity.
- Framing of national cultural policies.
- Intercultural dialogue and cultural exchanges enhanced in close cooperation with such international and regional organizations as ALECSO, ISESCO and OIC.
- Greater interregional dialogue, particularly with the Europe region and the Africa region.

Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity (see 31 C/4, p. 42)

This Global Alliance will be developed in the Arab States during the 2002-2003 biennium through a variety of activities coordinated by the *Tissages et métissages: la mode pour le développement* project, which has already been successfully applied in other regions. The aim is to foster an exchange of knowledge and better understanding throughout the Arab region and with

other cultures and civilizations (African, Asian and Latin American), encouraging networking among fashion designers, weavers and microfinance organizations.

Strategic objective 9: Enhancing the linkages between culture and development through capacity-building and sharing of knowledge

UNESCO will continue to advocate the integration of culture into national and regional strategies.

In the field of tangible and intangible heritage, UNESCO will strive to raise public awareness at every level of society – and in every field – by presenting the potential socio-economic benefits of the cultural heritage and creativity. To prevent any misunderstanding as to the economic impact of cultural goods (monuments, artefacts, craftwork, etc.), efforts will be made to encourage cultural tourism with a view to improving endogenous capacities and cultivating community participation.

In the field of world heritage conservation, UNESCO's main focus will be on national capacity-building through training and the participation of local communities in awareness-raising activities and participatory projects. This mobilization effort will embrace issues such as the natural heritage, cultural landscapes and urban renewal.

Development, through the appropriate management and marketing of crafts, will contribute to poverty reduction in remote areas and among disadvantaged population groups, especially women and youth. It will be a logical part of interdisciplinary efforts to improve minority group participation in connection with the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004).

Expected outcomes:

- Participation of Arab States in the creation of an Internet-based observatory on “culture and sustainable development”.
- Promotion of innovative cultural approaches and initiatives built on best practices.
- Enhanced cooperation between the various sectors of society and public and private partners.
- Development of sustainable craft industries contributing to youth and women's empowerment and to poverty reduction in disadvantaged areas.

D. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

UNESCO's communication and information strategy aims to contribute to education, peace and human development by providing access for all to knowledge through the use of traditional communication and information techniques and new technologies in these fields. While the problem of the digital divide is keenly felt in some Arab States, others, technologically less advanced, are among those with the fewest Internet users in the world. With an Internet market penetration of 2%, the Arab States region accounts for less than half of the world average of 5.2%. However, the number of users is rising sharply; it has even doubled during the last few years. By the end of 2000, the Arab Internet market was estimated at more than two million users.

- Strategic objective 10. Promoting the free flow of ideas and universal access to information.

- Strategic objective 11. Promoting the expression of pluralism and cultural diversity in the media and world information networks.
- Strategic objective 12. Access for all to information and communication technologies, especially in the public domain.

Strategic objective 10: Promoting the free flow of ideas and universal access to information and Strategic objective 12: Access for all to information and communication technologies, especially in the public domain

Efforts will continue to aim to encourage **press freedom and media pluralism** through the formulation of legislative frameworks designed to foster the development of an independent press. In particular, advisory services will be provided for the drafting of legal provisions that ensure free access to radio frequencies, thus encouraging private electronic media to play a greater role on the media scene. Assistance will also be provided for the development of editorially independent public-service broadcasting. Capitalizing on the impetus given by the Sana'a Declaration on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Arab Media (1996), sustained efforts will be made to encourage the granting of broadcasting licences to small-scale electronic media, especially rural radio stations, multimedia community centres and telecentres, more specifically so as to enable local communities, women and young people to make their voices heard.

Training will focus on providing various specialization opportunities to media professionals through journalism and communication training institutions, existing training centres and on-the-job opportunities in newspapers and radio and television stations. Priority attention will need to be given to: sensitizing young people to the concept of a free press and the role of the media through pilot media education projects in secondary schools; and to contributing towards the enhancement of the skills of women media professionals through targeted training, the encouragement of NGOs of women working in the media and the establishment of networks.

UNESCO will aim to reduce the digital divide affecting the region's Member States, through greater access for all (especially young people, who make up a very high proportion of the population) to a knowledge society. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening the capacities of Member States for the networking of educational, scientific and cultural institutions. Technological support for the development of distance education delivery systems and the improvement of training for university and secondary-school teachers in the use of communication and information technologies will be given high priority. Action will be focused on enhancing the capacities of educational institutions both for the establishment of local area networks and for promoting access to the Internet. In this regard, particular attention will be paid to human resources development with a view to introducing ICT skills to enhance teaching capabilities. The effective utilization of portals in education, the creation and dissemination of quality educational, scientific and cultural content and appropriate applications will also be of great importance. The necessary support to develop school and public libraries will be provided, particularly in the form of practical guidelines and methodologies and under the Memory of the World programme, which aims to preserve and make known the rare and endangered items of the documentary heritage of universal value. Efforts will focus on the preservation and digitization of manuscripts dealing with science and mathematics.

UNESCO's role in the exchange of information and knowledge, in human resources development in its Member States, and as a catalyst of international cooperation will be enhanced. To that end, the Organization will strengthen its **alliances and partnerships** with donor organizations, primarily in the Gulf region, with the agencies of the United Nations system under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessments (CCA), ALECSO, ISESCO and AGFUND, as well as with the private sector and civil

society. Extrabudgetary resources will need to be secured as a complement to the funding available under UNESCO's Participation Programme, in particular to establish infrastructures and to reduce the digital divide at the national and regional levels in schools and higher education institutions. Efforts will also be made to involve the National Commissions in these activities. Regional networks will be set up for various target groups in the fields of science, education, libraries and archives, and culture.

Expected outcomes:

- Institutional capacity-building to produce, disseminate and share information and knowledge through the networking of educational, scientific and cultural institutions.
- Strengthening of educational institutions and human resource capacities through greater use of delivery systems for distance education and distance learning at the secondary and higher levels.
- Improvement of learning opportunities through effective use of ICTs.
- Strengthening of free and pluralist media in all countries of the region through the adoption of appropriate legislative frameworks, training and the provision of equipment.
- Development of training in information and communication technologies at all levels.
- Strengthening of women's role in the media through training and awareness-raising.
- Strengthening of reflection on the ethical aspects of information and communication.

Strategic objective 11: Promoting the expression of pluralism and cultural diversity in the media and world information networks

The impact of globalization on the region has been felt very keenly following recent international events; hence the need to make use of all communication media in order to **encourage dialogue among cultures and civilizations**. To this end, under the second main line of action, efforts will focus on sensitizing media professionals in view of the important role that they play in conflict prevention and resolution and in the consolidation of peace, with priority being given to women and youth. Cyberspace is also a particularly promising field for the development of a wide range of cultural exchanges, and UNESCO's strategy in the region will encourage the promotion of dialogue through the establishment of networks for disseminating educational, scientific and cultural content.

Expected outcomes:

- Promotion of cultural diversity and dialogue through the production, dissemination and exchange of educational and cultural content.
- Promotion of linguistic pluralism in cyberspace and the media.