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Madam/Sir,

The preparation of the fourth Medium-Term Plan, which will bring UNESCO into the twenty-first century, will be one of the Organization's most vital tasks over the next two years. At a time of unprecedented political, economic and social upheaval but also of great opportunities for action to respond to these upheavals, UNESCO must be more receptive than ever to the views of the different countries and specially their intellectual communities in its efforts to analyse emerging trends and their probable evolution. It will then be able to alert opinion and mobilize the international community to tackle these new challenges. Anticipation, adaptation and innovation: these are the principles on which we must base our strategy and that we must constantly bear in mind as we turn our thoughts to the new Plan. For the Organization's effectiveness will depend on its ability to anticipate events and to prepare for rapid changes in the world.

This was the spirit in which I submitted to the General Conference at its twenty-seventh session document 27 C/15 entitled 'Preliminary considerations concerning medium-term planning as from 1996'. During the general policy debate, the Member States were in favour of a six-year plan which would set out the major lines of emphasis for the Organization's mission and its action during the period 1996-2001. The primary purpose of the Plan should be to describe clearly and concisely the general policy to be followed, the priority fields of action and the general outline of the strategies to be implemented, while remaining sufficiently flexible to allow adjustments to be made in order to cope with emergencies and new problems that might arise during the period covered by the Plan. The Member States also wanted to have a more flexible form of consultation than in the past, which would eliminate long and complex questionnaires and more directly involve all our partners, particularly the intellectual community, in the preparation of the programme.

In carrying out this consultation, I intend to make the most of the meetings of the National Commissions for UNESCO scheduled to be held during the current biennium; ten of these meetings will in fact be held at subregional, regional and interregional level between now

(G-NC)