

16. Today, technological developments make it possible to design a global interactive communication system that facilitates rapid and well-informed decision-making and provides adequate feedback. This should make it possible to reduce considerably the number of missions - particularly from Headquarters - while relying more on local expertise; the experience of national and regional institutions should indeed be better known and more fully taken into account. There is likewise a need to reduce the volume of reports and studies in favour of action in the field and so-called 'upstream' analysis and evaluation activities, which should be characterized by a rigorous and innovative approach. Only in this way will UNESCO succeed in stimulating the awareness, involvement and commitment of everyone at all levels. UNESCO cannot become involved if its Member States do not commit themselves. For instance, it is not enough to recognize that scientific development should be promoted; it is up to each country to take the measures required to translate this commitment into reality.

III. UNESCO'S ACTION

17. UNESCO's action over the period of the next Medium-Term Plan will be partly determined by commitments made at the major intergovernmental conferences it has recently convened or in which it has participated (Jomtien and Rio Conferences, Toronto World Congress for Education and Communication on Environment and Development, Montreal International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, Istanbul International Congress on Population and Development), or at those to be held in 1994-1995 and beyond (United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, Fourth World Conference on Women: 'Action for Equality, Development and Peace', World Summit for Social Development, United Nations Conference on Human Settlements).

18. These commitments should have their place in an overall vision of what the Organization ought to be doing in the years to come. This is the whole purpose of the Medium-Term Plan, whose preparation and content could be based on three requirements: anticipation, adaptation and concentration. The aim of the proposals that follow, which have been drawn up from this standpoint, is to prompt an intellectual debate so that the fourth Medium-Term Plan fully performs its function of giving direction to the programme, i.e. of making it future-oriented. It is not indeed sufficient to manage the present, it is necessary to transform it.

A. Anticipation

19. The Organization's action should be conceived with a view to the medium and long term, since in many of UNESCO's areas of concern the immediate future is already implicit in present realities (growth of human populations, school failure, environmental degradation, intolerance and prejudice, etc.). Our aim should be to foresee in order to forestall, to seek ways of enabling us to keep pace with or, alternatively, to modify the probable course of events.

20. For example, should we not be encouraging the deformalization of education and envisaging on a grand scale, new forms of knowledge transfer and exchange so that education becomes a lifelong activity for all? All over the world, learning needs and requirements are expanding at such pace that education systems, even in the richest countries, cannot cope. And yet all societies possess reserves of skills and know-how that remain largely untapped, while the range of educational products and services grows ever wider, notably as a result of the possibilities opened up by communication technologies. Should we not therefore encourage alternative learning methods and facilitate the recognition of skills acquired outside institutional systems? Should we not review the whole educational process from the standpoint of learning and the learner, rather than that of teaching and the teacher? Should we not promote a radically different conception of the university as regards both its function and the way it functions, making it a place permanently accessible to all and