

As indicated in the preamble to its constitution, the goals of UNESCO were:
to give fresh impetus to education and the spread of science;

to contribute to the conservation, advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
to employ these means to create mutual knowledge and understanding among peoples.

The statistics in the table below and the notes accompanying them illustrate the rate of geographical expansion of UNESCO and the large number of states that have joined it to share its mission of international co-operation based on acceptance of the diversity of political systems, ideologies, cultures, beliefs and so on. These data provide us with reference-points that enable us to go beyond simple chronology and measure how far UNESCO has come in terms of "temporal" distance. This, of course, is an experimental procedure, and a venturesome one at that, which gives rise to the following questions: can the conception of distance in terms of time be approached in the same manner as distance in space? There are technical means of measuring the latter; how should we measure the former?

In order to measure distance in space, a point in the present is taken, and cover-

ing the distance signifies progress towards the future. There is no movement in the reverse direction. However, going with distance in time, the past can be brought into play, as this allows us to go back and look not only at what is happening in the present but at what has happened in the past as well, thereby enabling us to find a deeper meaning.

There is danger in attempting to measure UNESCO's progress in terms of "temporal" distance. UNESCO is too close to us and its activities are too recent to lend themselves to a satisfactory assessment. Nevertheless, there is no reason why we cannot take stock of UNESCO and make an assessment of what it is doing, while keeping in mind the ideals that led to its founding. To do this, we must place the nineteenth session of the General Conference in Nairobi in relation to the preceding ones and briefly examine its characteristics and the results of its endeavours. Finally, we shall look at Kenya's participation in UNESCO during this period.

Why Nairobi?

As early as the spring of 1974, in the light of the facts that Nairobi was the headquarters of the United Nations Secretariat,

Distribution of UNESCO member states by geographical region ⁽¹⁾

Regions	Years	1946	1947	1948	1954	1956
Europe (Gr. I)		13	15	18	20	22
Eastern Europe (Gr. II)					7	9
Latin America (Gr. III)		7	12	14	18	20
Asia (Gr. IV)		3	3	5	17	17
Africa (Gr. V) ⁽²⁾		4	4	5	8	12
Total		27	34	42	70	80

(1) This table was prepared using the grouping of member states established by the General Conference at its fifteenth session for the purpose of elections to the Executive Board, and the list of member states as of November 20, 1976. Group I, therefore, includes Australia and New Zealand, which, for the purposes of the UNESCO program, have been included since 1974 in the Asian and Oceanian region. In addition, since that year, Canada and the United States have been part of the European region, which also includes Israel (since 1976) and the countries of Eastern Europe.

(2) Between 1946 and 1956, the African membership, with the exception of Liberia, consisted entirely of UNESCO's Arab member states.

(3) When UNESCO has been advised as to Angola's having deposited the instrument of its accession to the Convention, the African group will include 54 member countries, or 36.8 per cent of all member states. This will raise the number of member states to 141.

(4) The countries in the Asian group, with those in the African group, represent a total of 75 countries, or 53.6 per cent of all member states, and over 64 per cent of the world's population.