

cultural activities designed to meet the needs and aspirations of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples.

- ◇ Promotion of peace, human rights and democracy through education, information, research and standard-setting activities.

2. *Functions*

31. Intellectual co-operation, which is UNESCO's main *raison d'être*, assumes various forms. Chief among these - which may be referred to as 'functions' - are the following:

- facilitating conceptual advances and assisting in the formulation of strategic options (early warning and forward-looking function involving the convening of international forums or participation in future-oriented studies; convening of intergovernmental conferences to establish goals and plans of action for the international community);
- contributing to the preparation of standard-setting instruments and monitoring their application; promotion of public awareness;
- acting as a clearing-house in our fields of competence (collection and distribution of specialized information through publications such as world reports and through the establishment of networks and data banks);
- facilitating the transfer of knowledge (training activities, twinning of universities and research establishments);
- responding to requests for expert assistance formulated by Member States (advisory services based on the possession of 'know-who', that is to say, knowing the best specialists in a given field);
- participating in co-operation for development (project identification, resource mobilization and project execution).

Which functions should UNESCO perform as a matter of priority?

3. *Target groups*

32. The Organization's action in recent years has been focused on satisfying the needs of three priority target groups: the least developed countries, the Member States of Africa, and women. These groups are the principal beneficiaries of multilateral co-operation as a whole. Should this priority be maintained and, if so, how can it best be expressed over the range of UNESCO's action?

33. More generally, should our activities not be directed more systematically to combating the various forms of exclusion, focusing as a matter of priority on the most deprived, the disenfranchised and the social rejects? The threats to international security have changed in nature: they today derive much more from these new divisions affecting the essential fabric of society and from the chronic drift into which countries and even whole continents can be drawn. In order to protect the fragile achievements resulting from current changes, combating exclusion could be made the watchword of the next Medium-Term Plan.