
Response of Canada

While the contribution of each Major Programme to the achievement of the two cross-cutting themes is clearly identified at the end of each section of the 31 C/5 Approved, we find that the document lacks an overall, coherent presentation of the work of the Organization in the realization of the themes. This could be addressed in the 32 C/5 by having a specific section on the cross-cutting themes and by addressing them in a "cross-cutting" way, rather than emphasizing a vertical (sectoral) approach to horizontal issues. This would then provide a transversal programmatic, not a structural, approach in the 32 C/5.

We support the continuation of a specific financial allocation for projects related to cross-cutting themes, but we also favour greater transparency in the selection process for the projects that are funded through this mechanism. Information about the number and type of projects submitted – not just those that were approved - as well as the criteria used to select the successful projects would add greater openness to this process.

As is evident in several of our previous comments, we strongly support transdisciplinarity in the programme activities of UNESCO. In the 31 C/5, and in the questions as they are posed here, the emphasis is on projects, not programme activities, pertaining to the cross-cutting themes. This suggests that transdisciplinarity has been externally imposed or applied to these projects instead of being integrated into programme activities. Co-operation between and among sectors must therefore become part of the culture of UNESCO, not an activity that is pursued in the hope of additional programme funds. One way to address this would be to develop activities such as workshops or symposia that specifically address one of the cross-cutting themes, and to have each sector participate in the content development.

Finally, a distinction must be made between cross-cutting themes that are tools or the means to an end, and those that are ends in themselves. The "contribution of information and communication technologies" provides the tools to achieve the end – the construction of a knowledge society. The eradication of poverty, in contrast, is an end in itself. When developing cross-cutting themes this must be borne in mind to ensure that the strategic objectives are developed to achieve the desired results.

Paragraphs 10, 11 & 12 – Main functions of UNESCO

Question 13

Bearing in mind the necessity for streamlining and focusing efforts and resources on a limited number of objectives, would you favour the prioritization of such activities and contributions, and if yes, how would you propose to do it? Are there any other specific subjects/topics or issues which you believe the Organization should be addressing on a priority basis and which UNESCO would be best placed to explore?