

compared - for instance - with technologies which are to a large extent the result of the application of scientific knowledge.

26. There is however a fairly clear need to link more closely the two major fields of scientific knowledge and research concerned with the functioning of natural environments and of environments modified by human beings (including human settlements). Instead of separate programmes for geology, hydrology, ecology and marine sciences, could we not envisage, after more than two decades of activity, more integrated projects combining several disciplines aimed at combating certain forms environmental degradation (for example, desertification, deforestation and the erosion of biodiversity), or at addressing the problems of regions of biogeographic confluence, characterized by a very high density of human settlement and economic activity, such as the coastal zones? This would entail linking certain intergovernmental programmes, which have made it possible to build up extensive networks of co-operation, with more circumscribed projects of major interest to the Member States. Such projects would make use of the achievements of the intergovernmental programmes but would be easier to manage and would specify the results to be obtained by the end of the Plan period. They would focus primarily on the state of knowledge, on direct assistance to institutions or organizations working locally and on the implementation of research, training and demonstration activities. Another particularly important aim of these projects would be the formulation of recommendations for decision-makers, consistent with the principles of sustainable human development and based on rigorous scientific data.

27. The interdisciplinary project 'Environment and population education and information for human development' is a good example of the kind of initiative that could be adopted in order to overcome disciplinary and sectoral compartmentalization. This project, conceived following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in keeping with the agreed division of responsibilities between the different institutions of the United Nations system, should remain a top priority throughout the period of the next Medium-Term Plan.

28. More generally, UNESCO's action to promote a culture of peace demands a genuinely transdisciplinary approach. This is particularly obvious today when the Organization is being called upon increasingly to help find solutions to pre- or post-conflictual situations. The post-conflict consolidation of peace is a particularly complex task since it involves at one and the same time reconstituting social infrastructures, fostering national reconciliation, re-integrating displaced persons, constructing a basis for a democratic citizenship, helping to create endogenous capabilities and ensuring the broadest possible involvement of the population in development efforts. This is a real methodological challenge for the Organization, requiring innovative approaches spanning all its fields of competence.

C. Concentration

29. While significant progress has been made in concentrating the Organization's programme and resources on a smaller number of high-priority activities, it cannot be said that enough has been done. There is a need, given our resources and the growing range of participants in international co-operation, to continue to focus our action more exclusively on a limited number of tasks likely to have a major and lasting impact. What should be the centres around which this increased concentration should take place? The following criteria could serve as a guide to reflection on this important question.

1. *Fields of activity*

30. In the light of the foregoing considerations and having regard to the lessons derived from the implementation of the last biennial programmes and the debates of the General Conference at its twenty-seventh session, the following fields or groups of activities could be considered as meriting