



WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE

ROME, 5-16 November 1974

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CONF.65/8
5 November 1974

Original: ENGLISH

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO,
TO THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE

No international conference of recent years has been called upon to face such pressing world problems calling for immediate action as the present World Food Conference. The realistic assessment of the world food situation which is presented in Document E/CONF.65/3 in factual, objective terms, forecasts a human situation of misery and deprivation for the alleviation of which all national and international resources must be mobilized.

Unesco warmly supports the initiative of the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization in calling this Conference now and welcomes the opportunity to participate in its deliberations.

Unesco endorses fully the thesis, developed in Document E/CONF.65/4 and supported by the Preparatory Committees of the Conference, that the whole problem of increased food production must be viewed in the wider context of overall development, and that integrated rural development is one of the essential elements in any strategy for accelerating the expansion of food production in developing countries. The starting point here is the recognition that human resources are the most precious component of economic and social progress and that the fuller development of this human potential holds the key to the solution of the food problem. Unesco, for its part, is becoming increasingly conscious of the role it must play in assisting the rural development process, and many of its programmes in the field of education, natural sciences and social sciences are now being oriented to the needs of rural population, and coordinated for assistance to integrated rural development.

Unesco also agrees with the priority which is proposed for investments in agricultural research in developing countries, and which should be geared to the changing needs of their agricultural industries. It seems, however, that insufficient stress has been laid on the complementary aspects of education and training: not only do research institutions themselves demand increasingly highly-trained personnel, but the transmission of research results to the farmer, and their application to farm practice, demand the services of well-trained extension workers and a better informed and literate farming community. The subject of the inter-relationships of research, extension and farm application, and in particular the educational and training needs for increased agricultural production, was discussed in depth at the World Conference on Agricultural Education and Training, held in Copenhagen in 1970, which was sponsored and prepared jointly by FAO, Unesco and ILO. I would like to commend the deliberations and recommendations of the Copenhagen Conference to the special attention of the delegates to this World Food Conference. As to the agricultural research programmes they must be viewed also in the wider context of national science policies and their application to development.

./..

Some of Unesco's major intergovernmental programmes in the scientific field have a direct bearing on the world food situation: the relationship between man and the biosphere is relevant to the problems of increasing productivity. For example, the new long-term Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme which Unesco is to launch in 1975 will study the consequences of human action on the water cycle, including the availability of water for agricultural production; and some of the research being undertaken in cooperation with FAO under Unesco's marine sciences programme and by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission is of obvious interest for augmenting the supply of food from the ocean.

Apart from its programmes in agricultural education, in which Unesco works in close collaboration with FAO and ILO, many of the activities of the Organization in the field of general education have an impact on the development of rural areas. Its efforts in the promotion of life-long education, which implies and aims at the complementarity and interlocking of the formal and non-formal education systems, its literacy and adult education programmes, its programmes in nutrition education and the special educational needs of women and rural youth all have immediate relevance to the problems of integrated rural development.

Unesco awaits with the keenest interest the conclusions and recommendations of this Conference concerning national and international action to be taken to alleviate the hunger and malnutrition facing large sections of the world's population.

The problem, as we see it, is no longer one of international aid as we have known it so far, but one of a true international cooperation built on the human solidarity of mankind. From this point of view your conference, on which the fate of hundreds of millions of people depends will be one of the first occasions to test the readiness of the world community to establish a new international economic and social order based on social justice and equity within and between nations. It is a most challenging task for which I wish you, on behalf of Unesco, every success.