



**General Assembly**  
**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/45/277 ✓  
E/1990/77  
17 May 1990

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Forty-fifth session  
Item 12 of the preliminary list\*  
REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL  
Second regular session of 1990  
CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

Mid-term review of the World Decade for Cultural Development  
(1988-1997)

Report of the Secretary-General

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\* A/45/50.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 41/187 of 8 December 1986, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1988-1997 the World Decade for Cultural Development, to be observed under the auspices of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO to report biennially to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the progress in the implementation of the goals and objectives set out for the Decade.

2. At its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly, having considered the progress report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/44/284-E/1989/109), in its resolution 44/238 of 22 December 1989 expressed its support for the recommendation contained in paragraph 92 of the report, which reads:

"With a view to carrying out a mid-Decade evaluation and giving the Decade fresh impetus, the international community might wish to consider organizing a global review during the course of the Decade under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO".

In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Director-General of UNESCO, to obtain the views of Governments, organs and organizations of the United Nations system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on the objectives and scope of the global mid-Decade review in 1993, as recommended in paragraph 92 of the report, and to submit those views to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, through the Economic and Social Council.

3. Information received from other Governments and organizations of the United Nations system at a later date will be issued as an addendum to the present report.

## II. SUMMARY OF REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

### A. Governments

4. The Government of China stated in its reply that the four objectives of the Decade as defined in the Plan of Action summarized comprehensively the main task of the Decade and constituted general guidelines for the activities of Member States in the area at the national level. Those objectives were also important criteria for evaluating the success or failure of the Decade.

5. In the view of the Government of China, the five modalities for action contained in the Plan of Action would facilitate the co-ordination of activities of the Decade at the global level.

6. It was emphasized in the reply of China that the activities of the Decade should be developed in various ways and should take into account regional and national characteristics and cultural identities. In that regard the Government of China felt that the programme for the activities of the Decade in the Asia and the Pacific region had not been fully addressed. That region of the world was heir to an ancient civilization. It was made up mainly of developing countries with their own problems of economic and cultural development, and due consideration should therefore be given to the region in formulating programmes and guidelines for the Decade or in implementing them.

7. In its reply, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany supported the idea of carrying out a mid-term review of the Decade, which in its view should concentrate on the effort to identify difficulties in the implementation and possible ways to overcome those difficulties, rather than on a stock-taking of individual projects and contributions made so far by Member States.

8. The most appropriate forum for a mid-Decade review, in the view of the Federal Republic of Germany, could be an international meeting of experts, as suggested in paragraph 147 of the Plan of Action.

9. Taking into account rapid changes in international relations and in global political life, the Member States might need to redefine more thoroughly some of the Decade's goals. In that case Governments would have to be involved in the mid-term review process, and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany suggested that that procedure take place in the form of written consultations among countries.

10. As far as the proposal contained in UNESCO document CC-90/CONF.203/9 of 23 February 1990 is concerned, namely, that the review could also take the form of "an intergovernmental meeting preceded by regional consultations and a preparatory conference", the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany considered that that type of review would not only be out of line with the general policy of the United Nations system of trying to reduce the number of conferences and meetings, but would also absorb the scarce resources available in Member States as well as in United Nations bodies for the purposes of the Decade. At the same time it would jeopardize the reasonable balance between substantive activities within the Decade and procedures administering those activities.

11. The Government of the German Democratic Republic welcomed the idea of undertaking a mid-term review of the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade. Such an event, in the view of the German Democratic Republic, could take stock of the activities organized during the first half of the Decade and give fresh impulses towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the Decade in the remaining period.

12. The German Democratic Republic suggested that the mid-term review could be undertaken at a conference of experts to be sponsored jointly by the United Nations and UNESCO.

13. The Government of the German Democratic Republic did not exclude the possibility of holding a global cultural conference, but such a conference, at the level of ministers of culture or other government representatives, should be convened, in its view, at the end of the World Decade for Cultural Development and could be preceded or followed by regional conferences.

14. In its reply, the Government of Malta supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 92 of the report on the Decade concerning a global mid-Decade review; nevertheless, it recommended stronger regional co-operation in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Cultural Development Decade.

15. In its turn, Malta provided information about the activities of the national committee and the two sub-committees aimed at the development of wide regional co-operation in the field of culture. In particular, one of the sub-committees was preparing a festival of the settecento and the second was responsible for organizing a Mediterranean ethnographic film and video week. Major attention in the country's activities within the Decade was being paid to promoting women's participation in those activities.

16. The Government of Mongolia stated in its reply that it fully endorsed the recommendation for organizing a global review of the status of the Decade with a view to carrying out a mid-Decade evaluation and giving the Decade a fresh impetus. The Government of Mongolia considered that the scope of the review should be so broad as to involve all nations.

17. In its reply, the Government of the Netherlands stated that the Intergovernmental Committee on the World Decade for Cultural Development, established within UNESCO, should play a central and co-ordinating role in the preparation of the review and, in co-operation with some other United Nations bodies, should undertake to formulate the terms of reference for such a review.

18. In the view of the Netherlands, the mid-term review should include an examination of organizational and administrative matters concerning the Decade, as well as an evaluation of project implementation, assessment of financial needs and available means.

19. The mid-Decade review might also serve to re-examine and eventually to adapt the goals that were set at the beginning of the Decade. The role of the Decade in the light of the fourth United Nations development decade, notably its contribution to the cultural dimension of development, should also be assessed in the process of a global review.

20. The Government of the Netherlands suggested that the following topics closely related to the cultural dimensions of development should be addressed during a global mid-Decade review:

(a) The protection of the natural and cultural heritage against the effects of demographic and economic growth;

(b) The development of traditional human and cultural capital, in particular, traditional skills and crafts;

(c) The improvement of access to information on social and cultural aspects of the development process, in order to facilitate an open discussion based on solid criteria, and so on.

21. The Government of the Netherlands believed that, depending on the outcome of the mid-term review in 1993, it might be appropriate to design a strategy for the second half of the Decade.

22. The Government of Norway stated in its reply that the national committee for the Decade would host a meeting of representatives of the decade committees of some European countries, probably in December 1990. Norway therefore wished to defer its contribution to a global mid-Decade review until after such a meeting had been held.

23. In its reply, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic supported in principle the idea of conducting an evaluation and a global review at the mid-point of the Decade. At the same time, it considered that the question required much in-depth study in order to determine the criteria for such an evaluation. In particular with regard to the first objective - the acknowledgement of the cultural dimension of development - it would be necessary to define the extent of evolution in the convictions of decision-makers in the fields of economic and social development with regard to cultural dimensions in order to establish the links between the Cultural Decade and the fourth United Nations development decade.

24. As far as the second objective of the Decade was concerned, namely, the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, in the view of the Syrian Arab Republic, taking into account the cultural characteristics common to certain States in the same region or the number of ethnic groups within a single country, regional consultations would be required.

25. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic suggested that the basic objectives of a mid-Decade evaluation could be:

(a) To focus on a perspective for the future and to define what additional steps must be taken to provide stimulus for the Decade, in order for its activities to be continued and extended beyond the end of the Decade;

(b) To evaluate the achievements under the major projects, such as the silk routes, the revival of the library of Alexandria, the observance of the five-hundredth anniversary of the encounter between the two worlds, the Seville Exhibition, and so on;

(c) To evaluate the degree of participation of UNESCO, United Nations organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in supporting the activities of States, particularly developing and least developed countries, within the Decade.

26. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic pointed out in its reply that the above views were submitted on the understanding that a mid-point evaluation of the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade could be carried out in the form of an international conference during the Decade under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO.

27. The Government of Turkey stressed in its reply the lack of substantial results in the implementation of the objectives during the first two years of the Decade. Among major obstacles, it pointed to the lack of financial resources and recommended that all the international organizations make their contribution to the case.

28. Having expressed its support for the idea of a mid-Decade review at a global level, the Government of Turkey suggested that such a review, besides identifying bottle-necks, shortcomings and other problems, should also help to identify viable projects to be executed within the Decade.

#### B. Organizations and agencies of the United Nations system

29. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization expressed support for the idea of convening an international intergovernmental meeting in 1993, with the purpose of reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the Decade's objectives. In that regard it referred to UNESCO General Conference resolution 3.4, adopted at its twenty-fifth session, which invited the Director-General "to take the necessary steps, in co-operation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to define the modalities for a mid-Decade evaluation, in the form of a global review to take place in 1993".

30. The Intergovernmental Committee established within UNESCO for the co-ordination of activities at the national, regional and global levels for the Decade, in the view of UNESCO, could serve as the preparatory body for a global intergovernmental meeting in 1993. At its second regular session, in February 1990, the Committee discussed the matter and decided to reconsider it at its special session, scheduled for September 1990, taking into account the results of the consultations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with Governments and international organizations.

31. UNESCO believed that an intergovernmental meeting could be accompanied by a forum of non-governmental organizations. It might also be preceded by regional consultations. UNESCO, as the lead agency for the Decade, would be ready to co-ordinate the preparation of working documents for a global intergovernmental meeting, as well as for regional meetings.

32. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) stated in its reply that while ILO activities falling within the framework of the Decade could be identified, their actual impact on cultural development would be extremely difficult to evaluate. In the view of ILO, a meaningful evaluation of the Decade would have to be closely linked to its objectives, which, however, were outlined in such broad terms that it was difficult to translate them into clearly defined operational categories.

33. In this connection, ILO suggested that UNESCO be invited to prepare a paper indicating the possible scope, objectives and methods of a global review, which could be submitted to various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system for their comments.

34. In its reply, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) welcomed the proposal to conduct a global mid-Decade review and suggested that the scope of such an exercise include, *inter alia*, some objectives relating specifically to the work of the agencies involved in relief aid and development assistance activities.

35. Among those objectives, UNHCR mentioned, in particular, the inventory of measures taken by the agencies to incorporate socio-cultural analyses and assessments as institutionalized features of their programme cycles; the assessment of the efficacy and the impact of the foregoing measures in terms of tangible improvements in needs assessment and in the identification, design, execution and outputs of projects; and the inventory of measures planned or proposed by those agencies in order to strengthen further their institutional capacity to identify, analyse and assess the socio-cultural factors within the framework of their respective programme cycles and mandated activities.

36. UNHCR was prepared to assist in planning that aspect of a global mid-term review of the Decade.

37. The reply of the World Bank contained the proposal that the scope of a global mid-Decade review include, as a priority, the safeguard of cultural property and heritage under World Bank-financed projects. For the projects with significant cultural property issues, the World Bank required the cultural property assessment to be carried out by national Governments.

38. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) suggested in its reply that a mid-Decade evaluation include the actions that had already been taken to limit or minimize the impacts of anthropogenic pollution on a number of historical and cultural monuments and structures, as well as on some national forests that were of great social and cultural significance.

39. From the standpoint of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the scope of a global mid-Decade review should include the following issues:

(a) Women's contribution to development, particularly in the household and informal sectors of the economy, taking account of cultural aspects;

(b) Women, environment and sustainable development;

(c) The problem of choice of technology, with particular attention to the cultural context of both most advanced technology and technology suitable for rural and urban areas, with the purpose of alleviating the burden of women's work, thereby strengthening the cultural dimension of development and reaffirming cultural identities.

40. In its reply, the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs suggested that in identifying the forms of evaluation and review of the Decade, consideration should be given to initially organizing a series of regional seminars under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO during the course of the Decade. In the view of the Department, an international conference with participation of prominent figures in the field of culture from all over the world could also contribute to the success of the Decade.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

41. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/238, the Secretary-General of the United Nations sent communications to the Governments of all the Member States, to 39 organizations, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and to 7 departments of the United Nations Secretariat with the request that they give their views concerning a global mid-term review of the World Decade for Cultural Development in 1993 and the possible form of such a review and its scope and objectives.

42. Replies have been received from only 10 Governments, 12 organizations and agencies, and 1 Department. Moreover, out of those 23 replies, only 15 contained the information requested by the Secretary-General. These circumstances made it difficult to arrive at definitive conclusions that would represent the more or less complete view of the world community on the subject.

43. Nevertheless, the analysis of the replies available gives tentative indications of the views of Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system.

44. In their replies almost all the Governments and organizations supported in principle the idea of conducting a mid-Decade review and evaluation of the status of implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade. Three countries and two organizations supported the convening for that purpose in 1993 of an international conference with the participation of ministers of culture, prominent figures in the field of culture or experts in the area. There was a suggestion that the Intergovernmental Committee for the Decade, established within UNESCO, serve as the preparatory body for such a conference.

45. Five replies contained proposals to carry out a mid-Decade evaluation in the form of seminars, meetings of experts, consultations and other forums at the regional level under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO. Some Governments and organizations believed that such regional forums could precede or follow an international event and thus contribute to the global review of the Decade.

46. Some Governments mentioned the slow start of the Decade, referring to the very broad spectrum of objectives included in the Plan of Action, as well as to the lack of appropriate financial resources. Bearing that in mind they suggested that a mid-Decade review should concentrate on reconsidering some of the objectives and setting out concrete tasks for the second half of the Decade.



47. Much attention was paid in the replies to the first objective of the Decade, namely, the acknowledgement of cultural dimensions of development, and thus to the link of the Cultural Development Decade with the fourth United Nations development decade, the goals and objectives of which should include cultural aspects of development.

48. Among the objectives to be concentrated upon during a mid-Decade review, the Governments mentioned in the first place such problems as cultural aspects of the socio-economic development of developing countries, especially of least developed States, questions of cultural identity, cultural property and heritage, problems of many ethnic groups within a single State, and so on.

49. The organizations of the United Nations system suggested the inclusion in the mid-Decade review of objectives and issues that are of concern to them in the context of their activities in their respective fields of competence.

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