



cmec

Conseil des
ministres
de l'Éducation
(Canada)

Council of
Ministers
of Education,
Canada

**Education Commission of the
37th Session of the UNESCO General Conference**
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Report of the Canadian Delegation

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1. Introduction

UNESCO was founded on November 16, 1945, and currently has 195 Member States. The General Conference is made up of representatives of all UNESCO Member States and meets biennially. Non-member states, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are also invited to attend as observers. Each Member State has one vote regardless of its size or the amount of its budgetary contribution.

At the 37th Session of the General Conference, Education Commission participants determined policies and areas of interest in the field of education and adopted the Programme and Budget for 2014–2017 (Major Programme I – Education). Members of the commission also explored a number of specific issues and made decisions concerning them.

Irina Bokova (Bulgaria) was re-elected Director-General of the organization for another four-year term.

This report will be included in the General Report of the Canadian Delegation to the General Conference prepared by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU). As such, it refers only to the Education Commission.

2. Canadian delegation

- Marie Malavoy, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports (Quebec), Chief Spokesperson for Education
- Jean Bissonnette, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports (Quebec)
- Anne Rhéaume, UNESCO Affairs Coordinator, *direction des organisations internationales, ministère des Relations internationales, de la Francophonie et du Commerce extérieur* (Quebec)
- Isabelle Tremblay, Advisor, *direction des Affaires internationales et canadiennes, ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* (Quebec)
- Antonella Manca-Mangoff, Coordinator, International, CMEC
- Marcel Courchesne, Analyst, International, CMEC

The list of participants at the General Conference, which includes the other members of the Canadian delegation, is available at

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/GBS/37GC/pdf/Liste_des_participants_COMPLETE.pdf.

3. Main issues discussed that are relevant to CMEC and main messages conveyed by the Canadian delegation

The members of the Education Commission considered 12 items on the General Conference agenda, divided into six debates. The provisional timetable of work of the Education Commission is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002243/224325e.pdf>; the revised provisional agenda of the General Conference is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002223/222361e.pdf> and organization of the work of the General Conference session is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002223/222362e.pdf>.

First debate – Education beyond 2015

Given the importance of preparing the follow-up to the Education for All initiative, which ends in 2015, the Education Commission held a debate on post-2015 education. The debate opened with a panel discussion consisting of six ministers and vice-ministers, each representing a UNESCO regional group, and two people from Education International and the Global Campaign for Education, representing civil society.

Ms. Malavoy spoke on behalf of Regional Group I – North America and Europe. She pointed out that in addition to ongoing efforts to improve school outcomes for young people, notably through the quality and relevance of vocational training programs and the alignment of education with jobs, Quebec is also focusing on school dropout rates, particularly among boys and Aboriginal children. She also stressed the importance of adult education and continuing education, both of which promote the development of core skills in literacy and numeracy from the perspective of lifelong learning. She closed by emphasizing the need to engage all education partners and stakeholders in developing an integrated global vision to reduce school dropout rates and promote student success.

To summarize, the main points raised by participants were:

- the need for a degree of flexibility with respect to the post-2015 education goals so that each country can adapt them to their own priorities;
- the need to factor in all aspects of learning and establish pathways between the different levels of education;
- the importance of continuing consultations until 2015 in order to develop global goals and objectives that will lead to individual country goals, as well as a framework for action for the post-2015 education agenda.

The Director-General will report on the progress of Executive Board consultations at each of the sessions until 2015. Member States also agreed to develop concrete recommendations and a framework for action in anticipation of the Global Education Forum to be hosted by the

Government of the Republic of Korea on May 19–22, 2015. Following that, a consensus position on education as part of the post-2015 development agenda will be submitted for adoption by the Heads of State at the United Nations Summit in New York in September 2015 (date to be confirmed).

Second debate – Implementation of 36 C/Resolution 81 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories

The resolution was adopted without debate.

Third debate – Consideration and adoption of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2014–2017 and the conclusions of the Youth Forum

The conclusions of the 8th Youth Forum, held on October 29–31, 2013, were presented by two delegates, one from the Netherlands and one from Norway. The UNESCO Youth Forum has been an integral part of the General Conference since 2009. Its purpose is to establish ties between the work of UNESCO and that of youth organizations, allowing the latter to submit their recommendations to Member States.

In Canada, youth consultations organized by CCU took place in October 2013. The Canadian delegation to the forum consisted of two members of the CCU's Youth Advisory Group: a young woman from Gatineau and a young man from Winnipeg. As is customary, CCU also supported the participation in the Youth Forum of a delegate from a developing country — this year, a young woman from Saint Kitts and Nevis.

In their recommendations,¹ the young people emphasized that media and information literacy, entrepreneurship skills, technical and vocational education, and education for sustainable development and peace need to be included in curricula. They also mentioned the importance of a global convention for the recognition of higher-education qualifications to facilitate mobility of young graduates.

In the course of these discussions, Ms. Malavoy noted, on behalf of the Canadian delegation, that UNESCO needs to adopt performance and benchmark indicators to monitor the progress of education programs in order to obtain measurable and sustainable results. She also emphasized the importance of developing policies on access to and quality of education that target school dropout rates.

In general, participants at the Education Commission expressed support for the three medium-term strategic objectives (37 C/4²) and the three guiding objectives of the Draft Programme and

¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002243/224390e.pdf>.

² <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002200/220031e.pdf>.

Budget (37 C/5³), which emphasize thematic priorities for teachers, literacy, and higher education, as well as technical and vocational education.

Fourth debate – Preliminary study on the technical and legal aspect relating to the desirability of a global standard-setting instrument on the recognition of higher-education qualifications; Preliminary study on the technical and legal aspect relating to the desirability of revising the 1976 recommendation on the development of adult education; Preliminary study on the technical and legal aspect relating to the desirability of revising the 2001 revised recommendations concerning technical and vocational education; Revision of the International Standard Classification of Education: Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F)

Canada, like other Member States, supported the revision of the two standard-setting instruments (the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education and the 2001 Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education) and also approved the revised version of ISCED-F 2013. Given UNESCO's current budget context, Ms. Malavoy supported the recommendation concerning on-line consultations, noting the need to introduce an official validation process for Member States. With respect to the two standard-setting instruments, she suggested that UNESCO examine them from a crosscutting perspective in order to enhance lifelong learning and skills.

The plans for a global standard-setting instrument on the recognition of higher education qualifications generated much discussion during the session. Some concerns were raised by Member States, which led to an amendment proposed by an informal drafting group. The main concern was the need to yet again undertake vast consultations with Member States to further clarify the key issues involved in the establishment of such a convention. Participants were also reminded of the importance of continuing to review existing regional conventions on higher education.

Fifth debate – Proposals for revision of statutes of education-related category 1 institutes; Establishment of category 2 institutes and centres under the aegis of UNESCO

The debate opened with oral reports by the chairs of the governing boards of the six UNESCO category 1 educational institutes.⁴ The report of the seventh category 1 institute, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), was presented by the interim director of that institute. A report on the activities of the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (EFA/PRELAC) was also presented. Major changes in the status of the institutes include fine-tuning the mandates of the institutes, reducing the number of members appointed to the councils, and establishing term limits for directors. The

³ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002200/220074e.pdf>.

⁴ The six institutes are the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE), UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE), the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), and the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC).

Commission adopted all the proposed revisions to the statutes of the category 1 institutes, with the exception of the IESALC statutes, a decision on which was deferred to the 194th Session of the Executive Board in 2014.

Ms. Malavoy spoke in support of defining specific objectives for improving governance, accountability, human-resource management, and the financial viability of the institutes, and encouraged UNESCO and the category 1 institutes to implement the recommendations of the Internal Oversight Services (IOS), particularly those respecting the composition of the boards and the terms for directors.

Lastly, two category 2 centres, one in Saudi Arabia (a regional centre for educational quality and excellence) and another in Egypt (a regional centre for adult education), were established without debate.

Sixth debate – Follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development post-2014 – Global Action Programme; Implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012) and specific recommendations for the post-Decade period

Like most Member States, Canada supported the Global Action Programme on ESD. To enable Member States to set their own targets and strategies, Ms. Malavoy suggested that implementation of the action program be coordinated in a loose and flexible manner with due regard for existing arrangements. The UNESCO Secretariat will prepare a road map for the implementation process. The action program project will initially be presented to the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development,⁵ to be held in Japan on November 10–12, 2014. It will then be submitted for adoption at the United Nations General Assembly in the fall of 2014 (date to be confirmed).

In connection with the United Nations Literacy Decade, Ms. Malavoy noted that literacy is the foundation of lifelong learning and accordingly must remain central to UNESCO's programs. The UNESCO Secretariat added that literacy, particularly through information and communications technology (ICT), will be an integral part of the proposed post-2015 global agenda for education.

4. Main outcomes of the conference

Overall, the six debates took place in an atmosphere of relative consensus, with the exception of the proposed global standard-setting instrument for the recognition of higher-education qualifications, which required lengthy discussions before consensus was reached.

Over the course of the six debates, more than 148 interventions were made by UNESCO Member States. The main themes were:

⁵ [http://www.unesco.org/new/fr/unesco/events/all-events/?tx_browser_pi1\[showUid\]=7156&cHash=bac2fd4d7b](http://www.unesco.org/new/fr/unesco/events/all-events/?tx_browser_pi1[showUid]=7156&cHash=bac2fd4d7b).

- a holistic approach to access and equity from the perspective of lifelong learning;
- the following priority areas that merit continued attention: early childhood care and education, literacy, the quality and role of teachers, global citizenship, and cross-cultural understanding, as well higher education and the use of ICT;
- the development of core skills to facilitate the integration of young people into the workforce;
- the need to adopt an integrated approach to education that takes into account formal, non-formal, and informal components;
- the need to strengthen ties between Education For All and Education for Sustainable Development;
- the use of existing structures, like the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) and UNESCO chairs in the promotion and implementation of UNESCO activities;
- literacy as a pillar of UNESCO programs.

In concrete terms, with respect to UNESCO's activities for 2014–2015, the General Conference approved not only a total budget of US\$653 million but also an expenditure plan of US\$507 million based on a realistic cash-flow position that factors in the suspension of the US financial contribution. Lastly, US\$117,964,600 has been set aside for Major Programme 1 – Education, including US\$18.5 million for category 1 educational institutes. It is therefore clear that education remains a top priority for UNESCO.

The complete *Report of the Education Commission* is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002247/224742e.pdf>.

The *Oral Report by the Chairperson of the Education Commission* presented at the 16th Plenary Meeting on November 19, 2013, is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002249/224929e.pdf>.

5. Follow-up for CMEC

To conclude, the members of the Canadian delegation were pleased to see that most Canadian positions coincided with those of other countries. They agreed that most of the delegation's education objectives had been achieved. Given the importance of UNESCO as a priority international organization for CMEC, as well as the large number of participants — over 130 delegations, many headed by a minister — it is strongly recommended that CMEC continue to coordinate participation in the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2015.

The delegation also recommends that CMEC closely monitor:

- UNESCO's financial position in consequence of the suspension of the US financial contribution in 2011 and, more specifically, the impact of the new projects and programs

adopted in 2013 by the Member States: the revision of the two standard-setting instruments and the establishment of a global convention;

- the Global Action Programme on ESD;
- the formulation and inclusion of education priorities in the post-2015 development agenda, for presentation at the Global Education Forum 2015 in Korea and subsequent submission for adoption at the United Nations General Assembly in New York;
- effective revision of the statutes of category 1 educational institutes to ensure that UNESCO resources are used efficiently, given that approximately 16 per cent of the education budget goes to the institutes.

Lastly, the members of the Canadian delegation would like to highlight the outstanding work of the CCU Secretariat in organizing consultations and the exceptional cooperation among the staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development; the Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO; and the Government of Quebec in the development of Canada's position on education.