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Human development through education

by Prof Quazi Faruque Ahmed

TODAY, 4 November, is the founding day of UNESCO comprising 184 member states. UNESCO gives top priority to its education programme: a) basic education for all b) education for the twenty-first century c) action for progress in education UNESCO's constitution says that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed. Building these defenses through international intellectual cooperation remains UNESCO's prime objective. The object of UNESCO, to quote its constitution, is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed... by the charter of the United Nations.

The activities of UNESCO fall under eight broad headings 1) Education, eliminating illiteracy and encouraging fundamental education, raising educational standards, protecting through education greater respect for human rights, making available information on education techniques, 2) Natural Sciences: creating greater collaboration between scientists and encouraging the popularisation of science, 3) Social Science: encouraging the study of the psychological and social problems involved in the development of mutual understanding such as racial prejudice and religious differences, 4) Cultural Activities: developing cultural exchanges between member states and giv-

ing people access to works of literature and philosophy, 5) Exchange of Persons: providing information as to the opportunities for works and study abroad, and providing travelling fellowships, 6) Mass Communication: keeping the public informed about the work of UNESCO and significant events in the fields of education, science and culture and campaigning to help people to obtain easier access to knowledge, 7) Rehabilitation: assessing and making provision for the educational needs of schools, libraries, and scientific institutions in war-devastated areas and under-developed countries 8) Technical Assistance: providing expert advice in the fields of fundamental education, teacher training, technical and general education, scientific research and scientific advisory services. Member states are advised in such matters as their literacy campaigns, school building programme, teacher training.

UNESCO also contributes to the translation of certain masterpieces of world literature, recording of traditional music form all regions of the world and thus renders valuable assistance and advice in the maintenance of cultural heritages of nations and nationalities throughout the world and participates in the prevention of drug abuse and AIDS through education programmes and through a centre set up to gather, assess and distribute educational material on AIDS prevention.

Teacher training access to education for girls and women, education for peace and international understandings, environ-

mental education, education for AIDS prevention, nutritional education, scientific and technology education, vocational and technical education—these are some of the important aspects of education covered by the organization, particularly under its Education for the Twenty first Century Programme. UNESCO publishes and distributes numerous periodicals, documents and books dealing with the various aspects of education, including the World Education Report, which first appeared in 1991, and which analyses major educational trends and policies in today's world.

Why is UNESCO held in high esteem in the eyes of teachers worldwide? To recall a few words of history, it was at the first session of the UNESCO General Conference that a delegate requested to "draft and promulgate—a World Teachers' Charter, which would tend to 1) ensure the material conditions of the teacher 2) Raise his moral condition 3) Protect freedom of teaching". As a follow up to this, a special inter-governmental conference held in Paris on October 5, 1966 under the auspices of UNESCO adopted the Magna Carta for teachers worldwide known as the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers. Again at the twentysixth session of the UNESCO General Conference it was decided that a World Teachers' Day should be observed and accordingly October 5 was chosen in view of its historic importance due to adoption of the "Recommendation".

Bangladesh became a member of UNESCO in October 1972 in pursuance of Article VII of UNESCO Constitution. Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO has also been setup by the government with the Education Minister as its Chairman and 69 government and non-government members including eminent personalities in the field of education, science and culture.

Its activities centre around UNESCO headquarters in Paris and different regional offices viz, the Regional Offices for Science and Technology for South and Central Asia in New Delhi (ROSTSCA), Principle Regional office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok (PROAP), Regional Offices for Communication in Kuala Lumpur, for book development in the Asia-Pacific Region in Karachi. Besides these the Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), Tokyo, Japan jointly organized by the Japanese governmental and non-governmental organizations organizes regular annual co-operative programmes of activities on culture including book development and literacy materials development in the member countries of UNESCO through the National Commission.

In the international arena UNESCO also works in many fields hand in hand with other international bodies. Still then UNESCO is pioneer and the only body that works extensively for human development.

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