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Topic: United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

1. INTRODUCTION:

The constitution of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), signed on 16 November 1945, came into force on 4th November, 1946 after ratification by 20 countries including India. Today, UNESCO functions as a laboratory of ideas and a standard-setter to forge universal agreements on emerging ethical issues. It also serves as a clearinghouse – for the dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge – while helping Member States to build their human and institutional capacities in diverse fields. UNESCO promotes international co-operation among its 193 Member States and 6 Associate Members in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.

2. Historical Background:

World War II provided the impetus for the establishment of UNESCO. In 1942, the Ministers of Education from the countries of occupied Europe met in London to examine the possibility of setting up an international organization to address the problems in education created by a devastating war. As more meetings were held, the number of participating countries increased. In November 1945, an inaugural general meeting was called by Great Britain and France in London, and 44 nations attended. When they deliberated the UNESCO charter, the member nations were influenced by the tragedy of the use of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. The charter was adopted on November 16, 1945. The charter came into effect on November 4, 1946, by which time 20 nations had signed and UNESCO was inaugurated as an international body.

3. Objective:

UNESCO's Constitution define its responsibilities and sets out its Objectives. A key phrase, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed", is based on the words of a man of State and a poet stand at the forefront of UNESCO's Constitution and contain the key to all its objectives.

- to collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of people;
- to give fresh impulse to popular education and the spread of culture;
- to help to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity;
- to assure the conservation and protection of the World's inheritance of books.

- to give the people of all countries access to the printed and published material produces by any one of them and to realize these purposes the organization will:
- collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding
- of people, through all means of mass communication and to that end
- recommend such international
- give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture; by collaborating with members.
- maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge; by assuring the conservation and protection of the World's inheritance of books, works or art.
- with a view to preserving the independence, integrity and fruitful diversity of the cultures and educational systems of the member states of this organization.

4. Organizational Structure:

At the time of its establishment, UNESCO had a membership of 20 states. At present it includes 192 member states. UNESCO's constitution provides for three structural organs; (i) Assembly, (ii) Executive Board, and (iii) Secretariat.

General Conference

The general conference is the supreme body of UNESCO. In the association of states making up UNESCO, it serves as a general assembly of Member States. The other two structural components being the Executive Board and the Secretariat, which are headed by the Director General.

Constitution

This General Conference is made up of the representatives of all the Member States of UNESCO. It meets in ordinary session every two years for a period of approximately five weeks, either at its headquarter in Paris or in another capital city of its choice, may meet in extraordinary session if it decides to do so itself, if summoned by the Executive Board, or at the request of at least one-third of the Member States.

Executive Board

The executive Board is the pivot between the General Conference, which is the sovereign legislative body, and the Secretariat, which executes the programmes, deriving its authority from the General Conference which chooses Board members from among its delegates. The executive Board supervises all the operations of UNESCO, either by following instructions received from the

General Conference or by acting on its own initiative, in which case it is accountable to the higher body. The meetings of the Board are held at least twice a year. The tenure of the office is four years. But generally half of the members of the Board retire every 2 years and new ones are elected in their place.

The Secretariat

UNESCO's Secretariat is divided into 5 main sectors, each headed by an Assistance Director General. He is responsible for all the activities and functions of the divisions under his sector. Almost all of them are concerned with libraries, information etc., however, the following deal specifically with these subjects with which we are concerned in this study. They are eight sectors of UNESCO. They are: (i) Education Sector, (ii) Natural Science Sector, (iii) Social and Human Sciences Sector, (iv) Culture Sector (v) Communication Sector, (vi) External Relations and Information Sector, (vii) General programmes and Programmes support Sector, and (viii) General Administration Sector.

5. Activities:

Archives: Archives are important components that help at improving information access, both for the public at large and for specialised groups. Since its creation, UNESCO has contributed to the reinforcement of these types of services. The development of information technologies and in particular the Internet, networking, cooperation and digitisation modify substantially the functions of acquiring, storing and disseminating information and knowledge. UNESCO pays special attention to the underdeveloped countries so that they do not lag behind technological advances. In the area of archives, UNESCO, through its Records and Archives Management Programme - RAMP (established in 1979) aims at:

Memory of the World:

UNESCO established the Memory of the World Programme in 1992. It provides access to the documentary heritage of the world. The programme was envisioned to protect and preserve documents that are endangered due to natural or manmade disasters.

Community Multimedia Centres:

UNESCO's International Initiative for Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) promotes community empowerment and addresses the digital divide by combining community broadcasting with the Internet and related technologies.

Multimedia databases for development:

The CMC can gradually build up its own database of materials that meet the community's information needs.

E-Governance:

E-governance is the use of ICT by different actors of the society with the aim to improve their access to information and to build their capacities. The principal on-going UNESCO activity in the field of e-governance is a crosscutting project on E-Governance Capacity-Building.

Information Processing Tools:

UNESCO develops, maintains and disseminates, free-of-charge, two interrelated software packages for database management (CDS/ISIS) and data mining/statistical analysis (IDAMS).

Public Domain Information:

UNESCO strongly promotes access to public domain information, also known as the "information commons". International organisations should recognise and promulgate the right for each State to have access to essential data relating to its social or economic situation.

General Information Programme:

The General Information Programme was created bringing together two series of activities so far separately conducted by UNESCO: the UNISIST Intergovernmental Programme dealing with scientific and technical information, on the one hand and NATIS, UNESCO's concept of integrated national information concerned with documentation, libraries and archives, on the other hand. The work of the General Information Programme is guided by the Intergovernmental Council for the General Information Programme whose members are elected by UNESCO's General Conference. The General Information Programme has been replaced by Information for All Programme (IFAP) since 2001. IFAP strives to overcome the digital divide in the society. It advocates for all people on the wrong side of the information divide. The programme takes special concern of the needs of women, youth and the elderly and the differently abled.

6. Publication:

- UNESCO Bulletin.
- Copyright Bulletin.
- Public Library Manifesto.
- Index Translationum.
- Informatics.
- Handbook Of International Exchange.
- UNESCO Journal of Information Sciences, Librarianship and Achieve Administration.
- World Guide to Library School and Training Course in Documentation.
- Directory of Education, Documentation and Information Service.

7. SUMMARY:

UNESCO was established as an international organization devoted to the pursuit of peace, at a time when the world was reflecting on World War II. UNESCO's Constitution defines its responsibilities and sets out its Objectives. "UNESCO has neither the intention nor the resource to take upon itself any vast national development scheme and keep it going for any length of time. Expertise and equipment for a period of time, just enough to start a chain reaction within the area, just enough to give body to the initiative to act as a trigger mechanism for further national effort, has always been the aim of UNESCO. UNESCO was given responsibility for organizing International Literacy Year 1990, which was proclaimed by the UN as a means of initiating a plan of action for the spread of literacy.