

**PEACE PROGRAMME**  
**Steering Committee Meeting**  
(UNESCO, Paris 27-28 June 2004)

**Record of the meeting**

**Attendance.** Seven out of the ten members of the Steering Committee were present: M. Hassassian, Gianni Vaggi, Rami Hamdallah, Luc Francois, Jan Peters, Annick Suzor-Weiner and Radwan Barakat. Professor Gabi Baramki was invited to attend in his capacity as honorary member of the Committee and as responsible for the PEACE Office in Ramallah. Professor D. Chitoran and Ms Zaina El Moje attended the meeting in their capacity as advisor to the PEACE Programme Office at UNESCO and, respectively, as part time secretary.

Mr M. El Tayeb, Director, and Mr. M. Miloudi, Senior Officer of SC/PA, UNESCO, and Mr. M. Yakoub, Palestinian Observatory Mission to UNESCO, attended part of the meeting.

**Summary of debates and main decisions**

The Committee adopted the draft agenda (attached) and proceeded to examining its items. The main points of discussion and major decisions are summed up below.

**Item 1: Preparation of the International Conference on Palestinian Higher Education of the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly of PEACE.**

The members of the Committee, after careful examination of various issues involved, decided that it is both necessary and possible to go on with the plans to

organise the International Conference and the General Assembly meeting of PEACE in Bethlehem, from 19 to 21 November 2004. They acknowledged the difficulties that might be encountered because of the uncertainties of the political situation, but considered it essential for PEACE to organise a major event in Palestine as part of its current effort to revive its activities. It was mentioned that visits to the Palestinian Universities by European academics continue to take place. It was recommended that members of the Committee, who travel to Palestine and know about other academics doing the same, should write to the universities and individuals who will be invited to the Conference in order to explain how travel could be best arranged, particularly with the support of the consulates of their countries in Jerusalem. The support of UNESCO and of the EU for the organization of the meeting should also be secured.

As for the participation of the Palestinian universities, it was pointed out that it could be assured, if well-prepared in advance, despite the serious restriction imposed by the occupation authorities.

The theme and topics of the International Conference as proposed originally for May 2004 were retained. Several proposals for change of speakers were mentioned, namely:

- For Panel three, it was recommended to contact Mr. Terjie Roed Larsen, UN special coordinator for the peace process in the Middle East, and invite him to be one of the main speakers. It was also recommended to invite Professor André Hurst, Rector of the University of Geneva as a panellist.
- Professors Jan Peters, President of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, Professor Andres de Leenheer, Rector of the University of Ghent, Belgium will be invited as panellists for the other panels.

Other speakers and contributors should be invited, including academics from the United States. Professor Annick Suzor-Weiner, who was to attend a meeting in Brussels organized by Faculty for Israeli Palestinian Peace (FFIPP) at the beginning of July 2004, was mandated to bring the Conference to the attention of the participants and to invite them to attend.

A first announcement of the Conference should be made by e-mail as soon as possible (not later than mid-July 2004) to be followed by the official invitation letters. The members of the Steering Committee and the two offices of peace - in Ramallah and at UNESCO – should take the necessary steps to assure wide publicity to the Conference and to secure the quorum for the Session of the General Assembly.

With regard to *technical and logistic arrangements* for the conference, Professor Hassassian assured that the University of Bethlehem has the capability to provide them. Financial assistance will be requested from UNESCO and from the European Union to cover part of the costs.

It was decided to also have in mind the contingency plan to hold the conference at UNESCO in Paris, should last minute difficulties render it impossible to be held in Bethlehem. However, all efforts are to be made in order to hold the Conference in Bethlehem.

## **Item 2: Plan of Action of the PEACE Programme**

### ***2.1. PEACE Scholarship Scheme***

The committee members took note with satisfaction of the fact that there are several firm offers for grants beginning with the academic year 2004-2005. It was agreed to clarify the situation of the placement of the 15 candidates for the academic year 2004/2005 as soon as possible, in order to also plan the costs, to be covered from the AGFUND allocation and form the current budget. Professor Hassassian mentioned the request of a former PEACE grantee for a PEACE contribution (a monthly contribution by the PEACE Programme of 200 to 250 Euros per month) to cover his stay abroad in order to meet all requirements for the recognition of his studies, which are linked to the period effectively spent at the respective university. No decision was taken in this regard, but several speakers indicated that all possibilities to have his studies recognized without a prolonged stay abroad should be explored, in order to save costs.

Professor Baramki mentioned that, in case only a few candidates will be placed next autumn, it would be advisable to consider sending 3 to 5 candidates to universities which will exempt payment of fees, while staying expenses could be covered from PEACE funds. No decision was taken in this respect either. It will be taken function of the final number of accepted candidates for 2004/2005, the conditions of their acceptance and a careful examination of the funds available.

It was pointed out that the President, the Treasurer and the Head of the Rammallah PEACE Office should clarify with Prince Tallal and AGFUND the continuation of the US\$ 50,000 allocation for 2005 and subsequent years. Placing at least 5 PEACE grantees this autumn, would be a good argument to secure the extension of the grant. Member-universities, beginning with those of the members of the Steering Committee were requested to make an effort for the Scholarship Scheme of PEACE. It would also help to have a situation of Palestinian academics who have

spend time (or are currently) at PEACE member universities through arrangements that do not fall within the Scholarship Scheme. They are nevertheless, forms of direct support to faculty development of Palestinian universities, which is the basic role of PEACE grants.

Unplaced candidates will be renewed for the academic year 2005/2006 and new candidates will be submitted before the end of the year, preferably before the General Assembly of PEACE in November. The Assembly will discuss the issue of the PEACE Scholarship Scheme, including the new candidates and will approve the Guidelines updated by Professor Radwan Barakat. New candidates should be identified, preferably before the General Assembly meeting in November 2004 so that they can be discussed, approved and formalities completed, to begin studies in the academic year 2005/2006.

A special item for discussion should be the length of studies. The Palestinian candidates need longer periods of studies to obtain doctoral degrees. However, the present trend with all international cooperation programmes (e.g. TEMPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS) is to offer short-term studies of maximum one year, leading to a Master degree. Member-universities will be asked to assist the Palestinian universities by offering grants for a PhD degree. At the same time, efforts should be made to reduce the period of study abroad (and consequently of costs). For instance, grantees could write their theses in Palestine, under supervision of their professors at European universities via e-mail and Internet. Visits by European professors to Palestinian universities should be better linked to the scholarship scheme, as means to contribute to faculty and staff development of Palestinian universities.

## **2.2. Academic Programs**

Several programs were discussed and supported by the SC members, notably:

- The *Avicenna Project for Palestine*, which could become a major activity of PEACE for the immediate future. Mr. Miloudi, the UNESCO specialist in charge of the AVICENNA Project, presented its current state and outlined steps that could be taken to launch a special project for Palestine. It was agreed that a meeting of the Palestinian Universities should be organised with the AVICENNA Knowledge Centre established at Al Quds Open University in order to examine how its facilities could be expanded in order to benefit all Palestinian Higher Education institutions. At the same time, European PEACE member Universities should form a consortium of institutions interested by the project. UNESCO will help PEACE to elaborate a special Avicenna Project for Palestine, which should be submitted to various donors, beginning with the EU.
- ***AAB/PEACE Project for Palestine.*** Mr. Chitoran informed that the outline of an AAB Pilot Project for Palestine was submitted to the Division of Higher Education, which received it with interest. There are good prospects to launch it soon. For that purpose, it is necessary to secure the commitment of the member-universities for the implementation of the foreseen activities (university volunteers, transfer of knowledge – TOKTEN – and the Open Educational Resources – OER).

Member universities should take the initiative to prepare and submit projects to various international cooperation programs for which Palestinian universities qualify, such as TEMPUS. In this regard, the members of the Committee

appreciated the efforts of the Vice President of PEACE and of the University of Pavia to launch the Master Course on International Cooperation, Development and Innovation (ICDI). Initial funding has been secured to launch the Project first at Bethlehem University. It will be further developed and submitted to the EU as TEMPUS project, thus allowing for its extension to other Palestinian universities. Several other projects, which are still at an initial phase, were mentioned at the meeting. They should be presented at the General Assembly meeting, which will decide on their inclusion in the future plan of Action of PEACE. This is also the case of the proposal of Al Aqsa University of Gaza to set up a PEACE Centre, with international support.

### **Item 3: Cooperation with UNESCO**

Discussions on this item were focussed on the preparations of the meeting that members of the Steering Committee were to have with Mr. M. Barbosa, DDG of UNESCO on 29 June 2004. The results of those discussions are presented in a separate document.

### **Item 4: Organisational Matters.**

Discussions on this item referred to the composition of the Steering Committee and of its Bureau. The Committee was elected in October 2004. Its mandate (four years according to the By Laws) ends in 2005. It was agreed to proceed to changes in the membership of the Committee in 2005.

### **Item 5: Situation of membership fees payments; steps to secure additional funding for PEACE activities**

The members of the Committee examined the document presented by the PEACE Office at UNESCO, which indicates that there has been a decline in the payment of membership fees over the last three years. This is also the period when PEACE was confronted with many other difficulties. It was decided to make a special effort in order to collect the fees for 2004 and the arrears for previous years and then present a detailed situation to the General Assembly, which should take appropriate decisions in this regard.

**Item 6: Miscellaneous.**

Under this item, the members of the Committee approved the employment of Ms. Zaina Al Moje as a part time secretary until 30 November 2004, with a salary of 400 Euros per month. The contract for her employment could be renewed. They expressed thanks to Professor Chitoran for his contribution to PEACE on a voluntary basis.