

***Delegation from  
The Republic of Slovenia***

***Represented by the  
University of Heidelberg***

***Position Paper for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organization (UNESCO)***

The issues before the UNESCO Plenary are: The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict, and the Rebuilding, Educating and Sustaining of Afghanistan. Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the formation of the Slovenian state, it was necessary to create a new legal basis for international cooperation between Slovenia and other countries in the fields of culture, education and science. In the period from 1992 to 2002, Slovenia therefore signed 43 international umbrella agreements on cooperation in the fields of culture, education and science with a wide range of countries and joined the United Nations in 1992. One of Slovenia's primary international development cooperation objectives is to contribute to diminishing the developmental lagging behind of developing and transition countries by assisting them in their sustainable economic and social development. Slovenia's image as a country assuming, within its capacities, its share of responsibility for the fate of the least developed regions of the world. Slovenia is taking on its international commitment towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit. Slovenia is also convinced that Cultures and Cultural heritage must be recognized as comprising the heritage of values, knowledge and skills upon which identities are based, and as embodying the creative visions and energies that empower people to enrich and renew those identities through interaction with other cultures, with a view to consolidating both peace and human development. Slovenia sees education as the basis of its and the world's society. It is the key to economic and cultural development. Therefore, the goal of the education action plan is very important to Slovenia.

**I The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012)**

In accordance of UNESCO's three main strategic thrusts, Slovenia promotes education as a fundamental right, works to improve the quality of education, and tries to stimulate innovation and the sharing of knowledge. The realization of the six goals of the Dakar Framework for Action will also be the overriding priority for Slovenia. Slovenia is absolutely in accordance with these goals, which are: expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality, ensuring that all young people and adults have equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programme, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015. Slovenia is convinced that the focus has to be on capacity-building, information exchange, and other modalities of international cooperation. To achieve the goals, the external finances for education have to be increased, more donor countries have to be won, and earlier as well as more extensive debt relief for poverty reduction, with a strong commitment to basic education, has to be achieved. Slovenia is one of the lucky countries where illiteracy rates play no important role. With a total literacy rate of 99, 7% (Male: 99, 7%; Female: 99, 6%) and with just 0,7% of the population who have not attained school and gained any kind of education, and just 0,9% from the female population, we can consider us as a literate and consequently as a developed country. But this fact does not mean that we would neglect this part in our society. The opposite is the case. Our focus is on the quality of education and the improvement of our education system to be able to compete with other developed countries at a high level.

**II Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict**

As a signer state of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, as well as the Hague Convention, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict, Slovenia is firmly committed to these Conventions. Especially, as a former part of Yugoslavia and a country which had been affected by war. We know from our own experience how important it is to protect effectively cultural property in wartimes. With the Skocjan Caves enlisted in the World Heritage List, and with our inhabitants who are traditionally attached to the mountains that present an important ecosystem, landscape, biodiversity, and are of cultural, scientific and recreation value, we know how important it is to be aware of the

responsibility for future generations. Cultural heritage is a key component of identities and is rapidly becoming a key factor for economic growth, development, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. It also plays an increasingly important role in providing young people in particular with a sense of who they are, where they have come from and what their lives mean. Heritage buildings, locations and sites, artworks and artefacts, as well as languages, customs, communal practices and traditional skills articulate identity and meaning at a local, national and regional levels. Slovenia is convinced that advocacy will be central for a successful continuation and further strengthening of the heritage regime. One has to launch special campaigns to broaden understanding of compliance with and accession to the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and to the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970. Slovenia supports the combat of illicit cultural property trafficking and supports the encouraging of drafting national legislations and the improvement of professional training. Slovenia is also convinced that it is from outstanding necessity to be able to protect the cultural heritage in war times with UN troops and that violations of the Hague convention must be effectively sanctioned.

### **III Afghanistan: Rebuilding, Educating and Sustaining**

Slovenia reaffirms the necessity of rebuilding, educating and sustaining Afghanistan. Being a country with a substantial mountain area and having a specific interest in sustainable development not only in mountain regions, Slovenia was among the first countries to have established an interdepartmental working group and adopted and implemented a National Programme. Therefore, Slovenia sees and understands the necessity of the rebuilding process in Afghanistan. The atrocities committed by all parties involved in the conflict over the past years have widened the ethnic and religious divide between different Afghan communities and have further undermined the social fabric of Afghanistan, which has been rendered fragile by almost two decades of war. The current general situation in Afghanistan is close to appalling. The situation is further aggravated by organized production of drugs and drug trafficking. It is a big challenge for the international community to overcome the breaches in the country and to help Afghanistan to grow into a developed country. This is only possible if the education system is fully rebuilt, gender equality is implemented, if the drug problem is under control and the regional and ethnic differences are overcome. Slovenia has a unit of 20 members of the Slovenian Armed Forces serving in ISAF. Slovenian police instructors participate in the training of the Afghan police. We also donated military equipment to the Afghan National Army, and provided humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in the amount of US \$200.000. In November 2002, the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) carried out a training course for the central management structure of Afghan deminers. Slovenia is very active on the field of humanitarian assistance especially to the victims of wars in the Balkans. In that regard there are two institutions worth of particular attention: the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) and the Regional Centre for Psychological Well-being of Children. Both institutions are concentrating most of their work on the Balkans but there are serious considerations that they might expand their activities also on the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan, what ITF already did.