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**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS
AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND
THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

PART I

PROGRAMME ISSUES

SUMMARY

Part I of this document concerning Programme issues is designed to inform the Members of the Executive Board of the progress achieved in the follow-up to the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Board and the General Conference at their previous sessions.

Part I of this document contains information on the following programme issues:

A. Progress report on the UNESCO Engineering Initiative (UEI)

This document has been prepared in response to a request by the General Conference at its 36th session (36 C/Resolution 30), inviting the Director-General to present a progress report on the UNESCO Engineering Initiative as a follow-up to 186 EX/Decision 15 adopted by the Executive Board and the General Conference in previous sessions.

The financial and administrative implications of the UNESCO Engineering Initiative activities fall within the parameters of document 36 C/5. No decision is proposed.

B. Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNESCO and the World Bank

No decision of the Executive Board is proposed.

C. Implementation of 36 C/Resolution 43 and 187 EX/Decision 5 relating to the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem

D. UNESCO and the ethical dimensions of the information society

At the 36th session of the General Conference, a Code of Ethics for the Information Society, proposed by the Intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP) was presented to Member States for their consideration (Document 36 C/49). Member States acknowledged the efforts of IFAP in developing this Code, took note of it and invited the Director-General to suggest to the Executive Board, possible ways in which the Organization could address the ethical dimensions of the information society (36 C/Resolution 61).

This document provides the proposals by the Director-General for possible ways to addressing the ethical dimensions of the information society.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 18.

E. Cultural and educational institutions in Iraq

This document is presented in compliance with 187 EX/Decision 6. It summarizes progress achieved by UNESCO since the 187th session of the Executive Board in implementing assistance in favour of Iraq.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Draft decision is proposed in paragraph 35.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
A. Progress report on the UNESCO Engineering Initiative (UEI) (Follow-up to 36 C/Resolution 30)	1
B. Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNESCO and the World Bank (Follow-up to 186 EX/Decision 42)	4
C. Implementation of 36 C/Resolution 43 and 187 EX/Decision 5 relating to the Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem (Follow-up to 189 EX/Decision 5 (II))	6
D. UNESCO and the ethical dimensions of the information society (Follow-up to 36 C/Resolution)	7
E. Cultural and educational institutions in Iraq (Follow-up to 187 EX/Decision 6 (II))	12

D. UNESCO and the ethical dimensions of the information society
(Follow-up to 36 C/Resolution 61)

Background and context

1. The ongoing revolution in the area of information and communication technologies (ICT) has led to ICT playing ever increasing but also constantly evolving roles in the lives of people and societies. By the end of 2011 it was estimated that the average global Internet penetration was 32.7% with over 2.3 billion Internet users worldwide. The advent of lower cost, more powerful mobile devices, multilingual platforms, and the reduction of other access barriers will make global Internet penetration rise and in a virtuous circle further accelerate these technological and societal trends.
2. ICT are reaching new horizons in many fields – education and learning, knowledge dissemination, employment opportunities, social and political interaction among others – and offering tremendous potential for contributing to global peace, universal human rights, progress and true mutual understanding which underpin UNESCO's mandate and its vision of a new humanism. However, these advances equally provide opportunities for further entrenching and exacerbating existing inequalities, creating new forms of tensions, disadvantages and inequity. In addition, the rise of new forms and modes of interactions boosted by ICT has impacts and consequences on societies' architecture that are not yet fully captured.
3. It is therefore essential to give attention and encourage thoughtful reflection on the rapid advancements taking place in the information society as they may have far-reaching and unforeseen consequences that may not be in line with internationally agreed norms. Promoting awareness of values and principles based on fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, is therefore central to the development of equitable and sustainable knowledge societies.
4. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides the universal set of values and principles – including *inter alia*, the right to freedom of expression, universal access to information, particularly to information in the public domain, the right to education, the right to privacy and the right to participate in cultural life – that should inform ethical choices, practices and decision-making in the knowledge societies. The internationally agreed norms and standards are equally relevant and applicable in cyberspace.
5. The complex and socially transformative relationship of cultural, legal, technical, political, economic and other forces of the information society impinge on all of UNESCO's fields of competence. These technological evolutions and their tangible societal impacts should be taken into due consideration in the design and formulation of the strategic orientations of the Organization.
6. Thus, UNESCO has a key role to play in bringing ethical perspectives to the harnessing of the present trends and opportunities of the information society to enable social and human progress. Foresight, simulation and other future studies approaches should be harnessed to enrich this work, enabling the Organization to assist policy-makers in anticipating the longer-term impacts of current trend as well as the inevitable fast arrival of technological innovations and breakthroughs. By raising awareness and collectively discussing possible future outcomes and responses, UNESCO could empower policy-makers and society to both prepare for, and better cope with technological challenges.

UNESCO's contribution to the international debate on the ethical dimensions of the information society¹

7. UNESCO's work in the area of information ethics dates back to July 1995, when an international expert meeting on legal and ethical issues of access to electronic information was held at the Organization's Headquarters, followed by a series of three international congresses on the legal, ethical and societal challenges of cyberspace.

8. The first International Congress on the Ethical, Legal and Societal Aspects of Digital Information was organized with the cooperation and support of the Government of the Principality of Monaco and several UNESCO National Commissions. A Virtual Forum on the Internet established in July 1997 with the University of Constance (Germany) contributed to the preparation of the second Info-Ethics Congress hosted in Monte Carlo, Monaco, in October 1998. This was followed in November 2000 by the third Info-Ethics Congress which was held at UNESCO Headquarters under the theme, "The Right to Universal Access to Information in the 21st Century".

9. The discussions at these international meetings by practitioners, policy-makers and researchers generated awareness of the urgent need to undertake actions to mitigate the potential adverse impacts of the information society. These concerns also served to spur and shape the development of UNESCO's *Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace*, which was adopted by the General Conference in 2003.

10. This work on info-ethics was subsequently fed into UNESCO's preparatory processes for the 2003 (Geneva) and 2005 (Tunis) phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). UNESCO's recognized leadership in this area saw it being given responsibility for the WSIS Action Line C10 – Ethical dimensions of the information society. In this regard UNESCO has been organizing both through its regular programme and in the framework of its intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP), annual thematic debates at the various post-WSIS events and Internet Governance Forums (IGF).

11. In the post-WSIS period, regional Info-Ethics Conferences were organized for each of UNESCO's regions in the Dominican Republic, France, Mauritania, South Africa and Viet Nam. The declarations and other output documents of these regional conferences have in turn served to identify principles and values seen as necessary for informing choices, participation and policy-making in the emerging knowledge societies. Given its key role in contributing to the formulation of national information society policies, its representative nature and expertise, IFAP, in particular its expert Working Group on Information Ethics has played an important role in refining these inputs into the Code of Ethics for the information society.

Ongoing global efforts in the field of ethical dimensions of the information society

12. A number of networks of researchers and practitioners such as the International Center for Information Ethics (ICIE) and the African Network for Information Ethics (ANIE), are among the international and regional networks actively contributing to research and international debate in this field. Several other international professional NGOs and civil society organizations such as the Association for Progressive Communication (APC), the Internet Society (ISOC), the International Federation of Information Professionals (IFIP) and the Electronic Freedom Frontier (EFF) are active in this area. Civil society initiatives have led to the creation of various non-binding Charters and frameworks addressing the ethical dimensions of the information society. Other inter-governmental bodies working on this subject-area include the Council of Europe (COE) and the European Commission through its European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies.

¹ Member States have defined the Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society in paragraph 25 of the Geneva Plan of Action adopted at the 2003 WSIS Geneva Summit:
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html>

While global awareness is growing, most research and normative actions in the field of info-ethics remain concentrated in Europe and North America.

Proposals for possible ways UNESCO could address ethical dimensions of the Information Society

13. The proposals are the result of extensive consultations with Member States that build on past and ongoing UNESCO initiatives, and draw on the recommendations of various international and regional consultation meetings, IFAP's Working Group on Information Ethics and inputs from prominent experts and specialized NGOs which are official partners of UNESCO. These proposals underscore key areas where UNESCO's intervention is considered essential.

14. The scope of ethical challenges is vast and will only continue to expand as the number of Internet users grow. In line with its mandate and expertise, UNESCO will address the ethical dimensions of the information society as an integral part of its regular programme activities and through the extrabudgetary projects around enlarging access to information; ICTs and societal transformation; freedom of expression and access to information; the use of ICTs in education; strengthening info-ethics education particularly within media and information literacy programmes as an essential component in the preparation of all, in particular youth, for an active engagement in an inclusive information society. UNESCO will seek to further position itself as a global leader in the field of Info-Ethics supporting sustainable and equitable human-centred knowledge societies. UNESCO's interventions will value the inherent worth of diversity, pluralism and specific contexts in a manner consistent with the underlying guiding principles of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity.

15. In line with its mandate and subject to funding availability, the Organization could pursue the following activities:

Building multi-stakeholder partnerships to raise awareness of the ethical dimensions of the Information Society and strengthen action in this area

- Conduct global mapping of expertise, initiatives and resources in this field;
- Leverage UNESCO's networks of expertise to support the establishment and strengthening of global research networks, centres of excellence and communities of practice;
- Organizing multi-stakeholder events aimed at raising awareness of and deepening understanding about info-ethics;
- Supporting Members States in identifying and addressing gaps in national information policies, methodologies and processes.

Contribute to the international debate on the ethical dimensions of access to, and use of information

- Support the revival of info-ethics debates at national, regional and international levels, involving high-level experts and well-known personalities capable to strongly advocate, promote awareness and foster understanding about the ethical dimensions of the information society;
- Support establishment of various fora and networks of policy-makers, practitioners, researcher and other stakeholders to stimulate exchange and debate, including about applied ethics of the Information society.

Supporting capacity-building at national level

- Assess feasibility of the development of info-ethics curriculum and their dissemination using a range of existing formats and platforms;
- Strengthen the capacity of developing countries to conduct research in info-ethics by supporting the establishment of linkages with regional and international networks;
- Supporting the development of tools, resources and training in integrating info-ethics issues into national policy and decision-making frameworks;
- Make available in accessible formats, educational resources and programmes for supporting stakeholders, particularly youth in understanding and applying ethical behavior online and including such material as a core component of all media and information literacy programmes.

Research

- Lead the development of assessment methodologies and best practices in the field of info-ethics that serve as a resource for policy-making and benchmarking;
- Conduct studies on current and emerging trends such as the impact of new approaches to content creation and consumption and their influence regarding the equitable balance between the interests of right-holders and the public interest, as well as future-oriented research into the implications and potential societal impacts of digital development; and
- Strengthen North-South and South-South cooperation in capacity-building, research and exchange of best practices.

16. The accelerating technological changes and their wider deployment in all areas is likely to amplify both the importance and complexity of the ethical questions that may need to be addressed in the information and knowledge societies.

17. The decision taken by Member States may imply a need for additional extrabudgetary resources so as to ensure that UNESCO has the capacities to provide adequate and timely responses to the info-ethics challenges as outlined above.

Proposed draft decision

18. After examining this document, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document EX/5 Part I (D),
2. Recalling UNESCO's mandate to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image and to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge,
3. Recognizing the essential role of ethical principles and values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the attainment of the Organization's objectives of promoting freedom of expression, access to information and knowledge for all,

4. Further recalling the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, that conferred to UNESCO the responsibility of implementation of Action Line C10 “Ethical dimensions of the Information Society”,
5. Commends the Director-General for her efforts in developing the proposals contained in this document concerning the future orientation of the work of UNESCO on the Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society, and endorses the proposed approach;
6. Invites Member States to participate in, and contribute to, the realization of the objectives outlined in this document;
7. Requests the Director-General to report periodically in her statutory reports (EX/4) to the Executive Board on the progress made in the implementation of the related activities.