

PRESS NOTE

UNESCO's Executive Board approves India's proposal to set up Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development as UNESCO Category-I Institute

India is poised to become the first country in Asia to have an UNESCO Category - I Institute, which will be named Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development. The Executive Board of UNESCO has approved India's proposal to set up a Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development as UNESCO Category I Institute. This approval was accorded **by acclamation** in the Joint Administrative and Finance Commission of the Executive Board at its 182nd Session which was held on 18th September, 2009. This would be the first Category-I Institute of UNESCO to be established in the Asia Pacific region. At present, there are eleven UNESCO Category-I institutes and except 3 of them, all are located in developed countries and none is located in Asia.

2. The proposal to set up Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development as UNESCO Category I Institute was submitted to UNESCO earlier this year. This proposal resonates with UNESCO's aims and objectives enshrined in its Constitution and mandate of building the defences of peace in the minds of men. The proposal in the name of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, whose birthday is commemorated by the UN General Assembly as the International Day of Non-Violence, will help to spread UNESCO's message internationally.

3. The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Kapil Sibal had earlier met D.G. UNESCO Mr. Koichiro Matsuura on 9th July, 2009 this year and sensitized upon him India's keenness for establishing the Institute. During the meeting with DG, UNESCO, HRM, Shri Sibal had said that the proposed Category-I UNESCO institute will symbolize the rich heritage and values of peace and diversity that India stands for.

4. At the initiative of the HRM, DG UNESCO had sent two mission teams of UNESCO for appraisal of the proposal, who visited New Delhi from 25th to 30th June, 2009 and from 27th to 29th July, 2009 to discuss the various aspects of the proposal before its submission to the Executive Board for its consideration. Finally, the proposal was put up as a joint proposal of India and DG, UNESCO in the Executive Board Meeting on 18.09.2009.

5. The proposal was supported by a number of countries cutting across regional groups and adopted by acclamation. In fact, the Chairman of the

Executive Board commended India and this Institute which when established “would belong to the whole world”. The Chairman of the Board further stated “We are proud of India for bringing this initiative to the Board. We call upon the Secretariat to fully support this initiative”.

6. Category - I institutes and centres are integral part of UNESCO and its governing bodies are either elected by the General Conference or appointed in whole or part by the Director General, UNESCO and report to the General Conference. These are governed by UNESCO’s rules and regulations and are integral part of Organization’s Programme and Budget. These institutes are designed to serve as centres of excellence and expertise in the area of specialization to Members States and to contribute to UNESCO’s programmes, objectives and strategies. Having an UNESCO Category - I institute is considered to be an honour for any country.

7. The overall focus of the activities of the proposed Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development activities will be on fostering a culture of peace through education, promoting sustainable economic and social development and respect for human rights. The decision is being viewed as a historic one and reinforces India’s key role in UNESCO and its leadership position in building the defences of peace in the minds of men.

8. The proposal will be formally approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in its 35th Session, which is going to be held from 6 - 23 October, 2009 at its headquarters at Paris.