

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

NATO as an example for UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

According to its mission statement, UNESCO contributes “to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue”, but in these four fields UNESCO has few results to show. The contributions of the World Bank, UNICEF and others to the alleviation of poverty dwarf those of UNESCO and the contribution of UNESCO to the building of peace, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue consists mainly of good intentions.

Although UNESCO made important contributions to oceanography, bio-ethics, statistics, anti-doping, the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and in other fields, it did, so far, not fulfil its self defined mission. The question is why?

Some might argue that the general goals in UNESCO’s mission statement should not be taken too seriously and that for a description of what UNESCO really tries to accomplish one should rather look to its five “overarching objectives”:

- Attaining quality Education for All;
- Mobilizing scientific knowledge and science policy for sustainable development;
- Addressing emerging ethical challenges;
- Promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- Building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication.

Unfortunately UNESCO has not reached these objectives either, although it has contributed to each of them.

The thesis of this paper is that UNESCO had no chance to succeed, because, apart from the field of culture, the preconditions for success were not fulfilled. A comparison with the way NATO fulfilled these preconditions might help to illustrate this point.

The main reason to create NATO was to guard against the military threat of the Soviet Union. Now that the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact no longer exist, it can be said that NATO has fulfilled that purpose. (The new tasks that NATO took upon itself after the end of the cold war fall outside the scope of this article.) Part of the explanation for this success is that some general preconditions for success were fulfilled. These preconditions are a clear goal, a sensible division of labour, availability of the necessary means, close involvement of the Member States and procedures to stimulate implementation of what has been agreed.

SUMMARY

UNESCO will not reach its goals unless its Member States accept their responsibility. This means that the organisation has to be turned upside down: from an organisation where the Secretariat tries to fulfil these goals with support from the Member States, into an organisation where the Member States fulfil these goals with support from the Secretariat.

A CLEAR GOAL

A SENSIBLE DIVISION OF LABOUR
availability of necessary means

CLOSE INVOLVEMENT OF THE MEMBER STATES

procedures to encourage member
states to fulfil their obligations

A CLEAR GOAL

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An essential condition for reaching a goal is to know what the goal is. For NATO the original goal was clear: confronting the Soviet threat by joining political and military forces. The goal of UNESCO is much less clear. It is described in many different ways, such as to construct “the defences of peace” in the minds of men, to advance “the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind”, “to contribute to peace and security” and “to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms”. These quotes are all from the Constitution and they are all very recommendable, but they differ and what complicates things even more, they differ from what UNESCO is considered to be in practice: the specialized organisation of the United Nations in the fields of Education, Science, Culture and Communication.

As a result UNESCO’s official mission statement is overloaded: “UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information”. This sounds nice, but it is impossibly wide. By pointing in almost all directions at the same time, UNESCO is in reality going nowhere.

Compare this mission statement with the mission statements of other specialized organisations of the United Nations. Those can be summarized in a few words, like “the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health” for the World Health Organisation and “achieving food security for all” for the Food and Agricultural Organisation. The WHO and FAO have their own problems, but at least it is clear what their main priority is.

The lack of focus in the constitution and in its mission statement is reflected in UNESCO's work plan. This includes two global priorities (Africa and gender equality), five Overarching Objectives and fourteen Strategic Programme Objectives and comes close to listing all the world's problems. It is no wonder that UNESCO by spreading its small resources over so many objectives and target groups usually accomplishes very little.

TARGET GROUPS

mentioned in the introduction to the Work Plan for 2012 & 2013

- Africa
- Small Island Developing States
- least developed countries
- middle-income countries;
- youth
- poorest segments of society,
- indigenous peoples
- post-conflict and post-disaster situations

PRIORITIES

mentioned in the introduction to the Work Plan for 2012 & 2013

- gender equality
- science, technology and innovation;
- protecting biodiversity;
- culture and development;
- freedom of media and press;
- internet;
- building a culture of peace
- taking new paths towards peace
- education for all
- inclusive knowledge societies
- encourage cultural diversity
- sustainable development,
- climate change
- HIV/AIDS;
- human rights
- South-South cooperation

A SENSIBLE DIVISION OF LABOUR ²

An other precondition for reaching a goal is a division of labour that is based on the capabilities of the different actors. Because it was clear that only NATO's Member States themselves would be able to develop and maintain the capability to resist an armed attack, the NATO Charter gives this responsibility explicitly to them: the *Parties* will maintain and develop their capacity to resist armed attack, they will consult together whenever the security of any of the Parties is threatened and they agree that an armed attack against one shall be considered an attack against them all. The Secretary General of NATO and the international staff play an important role by preparing, promoting and facilitating cooperation between the allies, but they cannot take over these responsibilities.



UNESCO's Constitution lacks clarity about the distribution of responsibilities. Article 1 speaks about "the Organization". But who or what is "the Organization"? The Constitution does not answer that question. Logic would require that Member States accept the main responsibility to fulfil the purposes of UNESCO, because the chances that the Secretariat on its own would be able to attain objectives like *quality Education for All* are comparable with the chances that the International Staff of NATO would have been able to fight the Warsaw Pact on its own. It is therefore very remarkable, if not weird, that UNESCO's strategy and work plan seem to give the full responsibility to reach UNESCO's objectives to the Secretariat.

AVAILABILITY OF THE NECESSARY MEANS ³

Another necessary condition for reaching a goal is to make the necessary means available. The division of this burden has always been a point of discussion among the Member States of NATO, but they never denied their responsibility to make the necessary means available.

In UNESCO the setting of goals and the provision of the means to reach those goals are often dealt with as completely separate issues. It is not unusual that Member States agree with a lofty goal without seriously considering the provision of the necessary means to reach that goal. Such an inconsequential way of governing the organisation would be unthinkable within NATO.

It should be noted here that the UNESCO Secretariat is smaller than one might expect from an organization with such a broad mandate. It has about 2000 staff members and a regular budget for 2010 and 2011 of US \$653 million. That is about the same as the income of Greenpeace¹. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an organization with a much smaller mandate than UNESCO, has 2300 staff members and had a regular budget for the same two years of about \$870 million.

Because of the recent decision of the United States to stop paying its dues, the available budget will be even smaller than it was. However, even when the regular budget would be doubled or quadrupled, it would be impossible for the Secretariat to take over the responsibilities of Member States to make good education available to all, etc.

CLOSE INVOLVEMENT OF THE MEMBER STATES ⁴

When countries attach high priority to an objective, they should remain closely involved. That is why the Atlantic Council, NATO's highest organ, meets at least once a week at the level of Permanent Representatives, at the level of ministers at least once a year and at the level of Heads of State and Government as often as needed. To prepare these meetings and to promote practical cooperation a large number of committees was set up, that also meet as frequently as needed.

NATO

Art 3 the Parties, (...), will maintain and develop their (...) capacity to resist armed attack.

Art 4 The Parties will consult together (...).

Art 5 The Parties agree that an armed attack against one (...) shall be considered an attack against them all (...).

UNESCO

Art 1.1. The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms (...).



NATO

Most Member States have a Permanent Representative

Council meets at least once a week

Committees such as the Political Committee meet very frequently

UNESCO

Most Member States have a Permanent Representative

General Conference meets once every 2 years

Executive Board meets twice a year

CULTURE AS THE EXCEPTION

UNESCO is often described as the cultural organisation of the United Nations, ignoring its role in the fields of education, science and communication. This error is regrettable but understandable, because only in the field of culture does UNESCO play a leading role. The reason is that this role is based on a number of treaties, such as the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the World Heritage Convention (1972).

These conventions provide a clear goal and a sensible division of labour. The responsibility to implement these treaties lies with the State Parties, while the Secretariat plays an important but mainly facilitating role. When a State Party is not able or willing to protect a World Heritage Site, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) can place the endangered site on the Danger List and, if necessary, remove it from the World Heritage List. This is what happened to the German city of Dresden when, against the strong advice of the WHC, a bridge was built that damaged the Outstanding Universal Value of the site.

This close involvement of the Member States of NATO contrasts sharply with the detached attitude of UNESCO Member States. Although most of them have a permanent representation to UNESCO, they seldom meet for a formal discussion of UNESCO affairs. Most of them are formally involved only once every two years during the General Conference. Whereas the Permanent Representatives to NATO have at least once a week an official meeting, even the 58 members of UNESCO's Executive Board meet only twice a year.

What makes things even worse is that UNESCO's General Conference and Executive Board spend most of their time on issues of secondary importance, like the budget and the organisation of the Secretariat, or on issues that fall in essence outside UNESCO's mandate, such as the status of Palestine. Issues that are crucial for fulfilling UNESCO's mandate, such as the state of education in the world, are seldom discussed in a result oriented manner at these meetings. Some of these issues are discussed at UNESCO World Conferences on specific subjects, such as the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development that took place in Bonn in 2009. However, these conferences lack a proper follow up.

PROCEDURES TO ENCOURAGE MEMBER STATES TO FULFILL THEIR OBLIGATIONS 5

The credibility of NATO's collective defence depends on the provision by individual allies of the necessary capabilities. A Defence Planning Process was therefore set up that included a regular review of the contributions of individual Member States to the common goals. The Member States retained their full sovereign rights, but the process generated peer pressure to fulfil their commitments.

Like NATO, UNESCO is confronted with the problem that it has few formal instruments to force Member States to honour their commitments. Peer pressure and "name and shame" can be quite effective, but within UNESCO little use is made of these possibilities. Apart from the cultural conventions, the only exception is the confidential procedure of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR) that can deal with individual complaints about non-compliance by Member States. But usually Member States easily get away with not doing what they agreed to do.

WHAT NOW?

UNESCO was built upon good intentions, but without the necessary preconditions for success. These preconditions would not have been sufficient, but without them success became unattainable. The result is that UNESCO specializes in reproducing good intentions rather than in producing concrete results. World wide cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication is of such importance for addressing major world problems, that a more effective organisation is needed.

This will require fundamental reform. UNESCO should be turned around into an organisation:

- with ambitious, but clear and realistic goals,
- where Member states accept their responsibility for fulfilling these goals,
- where cooperation between Member States is therefore the heart of the organisation,
- where Member states stimulate each other to implement agreements,
- that provides the Secretariat with the necessary means to fulfill its tasks.

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