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UNESCO chief bows to US probe



PARIS — In a major political climbdown, UNESCO Director-General Amadou Mahtar M'bow has agreed to a probe by the US Congress of his organisation's internal workings, diplomats said yesterday.

The decision was a direct result of the Reagan Administration's announcement in December that it would pull out of UNESCO at the end of this year unless the organisation reformed itself, they said.

The agreement, in an exchange of letters with congressman James Scheuer, will be announced here today at a press conference given by the New York Democrat, who chairs a House of

Representatives Subcommittee on Science and Technology.

It allows experts from the US General Accounting Office (GAO) to go to Paris to look at the way the organisation is run and examine its accounts.

"This decision raises the stakes in the confrontation between M'bow and the United States," one Western diplomat said. "If they find concrete evidence of malpractice M'bow will be

under pressure to resign and if they don't Reagan will be under pressure to revise his decision to withdraw."

The US has complained that "trends in the management, policy and budget of UNESCO have detracted from the organisation's effectiveness" but Washington has not publicly levelled any charges of mismanagement against M'bow.

The Reagan Administration has however accused the UN body of excessive politicisation and hostility to the basic institutions of a free society, including a free press.

Aides to Scheuer said he was meeting ambassadors from other Western countries yesterday to brief them on his agreement with M'bow, negotiated on behalf of his own committee and the House of Representatives Foreign Relations Committee.

Diplomats said the accord was reached under the terms of UNESCO's charter providing for member states to have full access to the workings of the Paris-based secretariat, which M'bow has headed since 1974.

M'bow, a former Senegalese Minister of Education, is due to complete his second term of office in 1987. He has indicated he does not intend resigning. — Reuter

Ehuzu (Cotonou, Bénin) 29-II-84

UNESCO : Remise de prix à trois chercheurs

Paris. — Le nutritionniste britannique Roger Whithead, dont les travaux ont contribué à réduire la mortalité infantile dans les zones rurales d'Afrique a reçu mercredi dernier à Paris le prix scientifique 1983 de l'UNESCO des mains de son Directeur Général, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow.

M'Bow a également remis les prix Kalinga 1982 et 1983 de vulgarisation scientifique au généticien brésilien Oswaldo Frota Pessoa et au physicien du Bangladesh Abdullah Al-Muti respectivement.

Le docteur Whithead, professeur à l'Université de Cambridge, poursuit des travaux depuis 28 ans sur le rôle de

la nutrition et de la lactation maternelle dans la croissance de l'enfant et a travaillé notamment dans les régions rurales d'Ouganda et de Gambie.

Dans une courte intervention M'Bow a rappelé que quinze millions d'enfants étaient morts l'an dernier avant l'âge de cinq ans et que quinze millions d'autres resteront handicapés du fait de la déficience nutritionnelle. Le Directeur Général de l'UNESCO a salué les travaux du docteur Whithead, qui ont permis à de nombreux pays de relever le terrible défi de ces chiffres avant de lui remettre la médaille du prix et un chèque de 15.000 dollars américains.