

Nettleford elected chairman of UNESCO Slave Route project



NETTLEFORD... served as Caribbean representative and rapporteur of the first international Scientific Committee established in 1994

UNIVERSITY of the West Indies vice-chancellor emeritus Professor Rex Nettleford, was last week named chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Slave Route project at its first

meeting in Paris.

The Committee, which was first established in 1994, has been reduced from a membership of 44 to 20 experts drawn from all regions of the world. The vice-presidents of the new

body are B Zimba (Mozambique), Professor JH Devereau (France) and Miguel Barnett (Cuba). Rapporteurs are Dr A Bilkari-Khalifa (United Arab Emirates) and A Chin-Low (Mauritius).

The opening session of the February 22 to 24 meeting was addressed by UNESCO Director-General Koichuro Matsuura, who mandated members to facilitate research activities and disseminate information

“concerning the identification of the causes, the stakes, the modalities and the consequences of the slave trade and slavery”.

This is to be done through the initiation of new research, the propositioning of collaborative research with universities and cultural institutions, and the examination of requests for either research assistance or the publication of works on the subject of the slave trade and slavery.

The committee, which discussed plans for its advocacy, partnership and monitoring roles, has expanded its work beyond the transatlantic slave trade to the trade across the Indian Ocean, with emphasis on the African presence in India.

A special programme of partnership with the Mayor's Office of London in the planning of the bicentenary celebrations in 2007 of the abolition of the slave trade was adopted.

The CSI bureau will meet in April with the special committee set up by the mayor of London for this purpose.

Professor Nettleford brought to the Scientific Committee's attention the establishment by the government of Jamaica of a national committee dealing also with the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade.

Nettleford, a cultural historian and a Jamaican Ambassador-at-large, formerly served as Caribbean representative and rapporteur of the first international Scientific Committee established in 1994 under the chairmanship of Amadou M'tar Mbou, a former director-general of UNESCO.

B/N REX NETTLEFORD