



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Public Information

To Non-Governmental Organizations, Official partners of UNESCO

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22 November 2017

Dear Partners,

The major event of this month of November was, of course, the **39th session of the General Conference** which ended on 14 November. This session was marked by the election of **Ms Audrey Azoulay** as the 11th Director-General of UNESCO, the second woman to occupy this position. You will find below detailed information on the main outcomes of this Conference.

Regarding the participation from non-governmental organizations in official partnership with UNESCO, you may wish to know that there were more than 400 representatives from 100 NGOs who attended the 39th session of the General Conference.

The space dedicated to NGOs this year was in many ways improved, bigger and more impactful, providing a greater visibility of our collective action. Every day, the **NGO space** welcomed many participants in conferences that focused on the collective work of NGOs such as Forums, celebration of international days as well as projects jointly implemented by NGOs. The space was an important opportunity to help raise awareness of our partnership among the participants in the General Conference, including Member States and Ambassadors, who visited the space and met the representatives of our network of non-governmental partners.

With December fast approaching, we are now turned towards the forthcoming **Eighth International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO on Climate Change**, which will take place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on **7 and 8 December 2017**. In the wake of the adoption of the updated UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change, endorsed by the 39th session of the General Conference, the Forum will focus on the contribution of the civil society to the implementation of the UNESCO's Strategy in its fields of competence - education, sciences, culture and information and communication.

I invite you all to join us on this occasion, and register your representatives online at www.ong-unesco.org by 1 December 2017 at the latest. We are very much counting on your presence and hope you will share the invitation with any other organizations and partners potentially interested in joining.

39th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO

UNESCO's Member States reaffirmed the pertinence of the Organization to the challenges facing the world and adopted the Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 – first biennium.

As regards to **education**, the General Conference reaffirmed the Organization's role in coordinating and monitoring progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda's Goal for education, [SDG 4](#). It also mandated UNESCO to pursue work on the development of a Global Convention on the [Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications](#).

The General Conference also revised the [strategy](#) it adopted two years ago for UNESCO's work in protecting **culture** and cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict. The revised strategy now covers natural disasters alongside armed conflicts. Member States also launched an Appeal on Protecting Culture and Promoting Cultural Pluralism as a key to lasting peace. The appeal calls for culture, cultural heritage and diversity to be factored into international humanitarian, security and peacebuilding policies and operations, building on UN Security Council [Resolution 2347](#).

Climate change and efforts to contain it featured prominently on the General Conference's agenda. The General Conference adopted an **updated Strategy for Action on Climate Change**, which aims at enabling Member States to take urgent action to combat climate change. It adopted also a global [Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change](#), which aims to help governments, businesses, and civil society mobilize people around shared values on climate change.

The Conference also adopted a revised version of the [1974 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers](#), aiming to strengthen confidence and support for science technology and innovation in every country,

Member States reaffirmed UNESCO's mandate to defend **freedom of expression and access to information** both on and off-line, as inalienable human rights, notably through the Organization's leadership in the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#).

The General Conference also endorsed the [Call for Action](#) adopted at the end of the Quebec-UNESCO Conference on "Internet and the **radicalization** of youth".

203rd session of the Executive Board of UNESCO

As customary, the Executive Board, in its new composition further to the elections that took place during the General Conference, met on Thursday 16 November, and elected its Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and also the composition of its subsidiary bodies. You will find more information [under this link](#).

I am pleased to inform you that H.E. Mr Lee Byong Hyun, Ambassador and the Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO, was elected as Chair of the Executive Board for a two-year mandate.

You will also find soon the composition of the NGP Committee for the 2018-2019 biennium. Its new Chairperson is Dr James Gichiah Njogu, Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the Executive Board and Head of Conventions and Research Authorization in the Kenya Wildlife Service.

The next session of the Executive Board is expected to be held from 4 to 17 April 2018. I will not fail to keep you informed in this regard.

4 December 2017 – Celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Paris, France

In accordance with the Organization's strategic objective to build a sustainable and resilient society for all citizens, UNESCO promotes this International Day and celebrates the extraordinary potential of persons with disabilities. The theme for this year's International Day is "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all", focusing on enabling conditions for the transformative changes envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At Headquarters, the celebrations will focus on the role of inclusive arts in creating sustainable and resilient societies, where persons with disabilities are integrated as one of the main actors of our society. The half day event will include:

- a roundtable discussion with high-level speakers, international experts and artists on the role of inclusive arts towards creating sustainable and resilient societies;
- a theatrical performance of artists with disabilities "InTouch" by the Inclusion Theatre Company and Theatre of Nations (co-production);
- a concert by Ms Zarifa Mgoyan, UNESCO Artist for Peace;
- and a Master Class for Learning Sign Languages.

I invite you to share with us any initiatives from your organization concerning the celebration of this day. For more information or to register for the events at Headquarters, please consult the [dedicated webpage](#).

Contact: Ms Marie-Christine Botte (mc.botte@unesco.org)

4 - 8 December 2017 – 12th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Jeju, Republic of Korea

Composed of 24 States elected by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Committee meets once every year.

During this session, chaired by Ambassador Lee Byong-hyun (Republic of Korea), the Committee will examine the periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention and the reports of States Parties on the current status of elements inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The Committee will also examine the nominations for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. For more information, please consult the dedicated webpage of this session: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/12com>.

With a view to sharing information and experiences between accredited NGOs internationally, the Intangible Cultural Heritage NGO (ICHNGO) Forum has begun a capacity-building programme that will hold its first workshop in the Republic of Korea from 1-3 December 2017, prior to the 12th session. The Forum is a platform for communication, networking, exchange and cooperation for NGOs accredited to the Committee. Further information on the forum and the agenda for that meeting are available at <http://www.ichngoforum.org>.

Contact: Mr Timothy Curtis (t.curtis@unesco.org)

12 January 2018 – Call for Applications for the 2017 UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education

The call for applications for the 2017 edition of the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education has been extended to **12 January 2018**.

Funded by the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Prize was established in 2005 to recognize innovations in teaching and learning that leverage technology to improve outcomes. The 2017 edition of the Prize will reward the organizations and individuals that are carrying out innovative practices to leverage ICT's so that they can significantly increase access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. The winning project should also promote the values that underpinning Education 2030 and the broader Sustainable Development Agenda.

Nominations can be submitted by NGOs in official partnership through their leadership or representatives at UNESCO, with the online application form available here: www.unesco.org/ict-ed-prize. NGOs should prepare a written nomination letter for each of the nominated candidates (up to 3) to be attached to the online application form. The nomination letter should include (in English or French) the following elements: a description of the nominee's background and achievements; a summary of the work or the results of the work, publications and other supporting documents of major importance, submitted for consideration; and a succinct evaluation of the nominee's contribution to the Prize's objectives.

For further information, please consult the dedicated webpage under [this link](#).

Contact: Ms Milica Mitrovic (ictprize@unesco.org)

UNESCO Publications

- *The 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report – Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments* is the second report in the GEM Report series and investigates accountability in education, analyzing how all relevant stakeholders can provide education more effectively, efficiently and equitably. The Report shows also that not all accountability methods are currently helping us achieve SDG 4. In some parts of the world, teachers and schools are sanctioned for poor test results, in the name of purported attempts to improve quality instruction and learning. The Report concludes this must be approached with great caution to avoid having unintended, contrary consequences. View the full report in English under [this link](#).

- Addressing different issues related to Internet governance and multistakeholder participation practices, UNESCO's new publication [*What if we all governed the Internet?*](#) unpacks assumptions on how the Internet is shaped and stresses the ongoing relevance of involving multiple actors in the development of a collaborative and sustainable Internet. The study was elaborated in an effort to implement UNESCO's Internet Universality framework, which advocates for a Human-rights-based, Open and Accessible Internet, governed by Multi-stakeholder participation". It is available in English only [under this link](#).
- The October-December 2017 issue of the UNESCO Courier, *Culture: the bedrock of peace* looks at the emergence of a new awareness of the role that culture plays in security and peace. For the first time in history, a United Nations Security Council resolution, Resolution 2347, adopted unanimously on 24 March 2017, deals with the various threats to cultural heritage. The International Criminal Court also convicted for the first time, on 27 September 2016, someone for a war crime involving the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. The issue goes through these events, including various interviews, stories, news articles and editorials. It can be obtained in [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#), [Russian](#) and [Spanish](#).

Finally, I am pleased to announce the admission of three organizations to official partnership with UNESCO (consultative status), namely:

- The [Aladdin Project](#), an international NGO based in France;
- The [Geneva Call](#), an international NGO based in the Swiss Confederation;
- The [Wapikoni Mobile](#), an NGO based in Canada;

I am also pleased to announce the admission of the [Fondation Esprit de Fès](#), based in the Kingdom of Morocco, to official relations as a foundation.

By clicking on their names, you will be redirected to their websites for more information. I welcome them and am happy to extend even further our network of partners.

Yours sincerely,



Eric Falt