



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 Priority Africa and External Relations

To Secretaries-General
of National Commissions
for UNESCO

4 May 2020

Ref. : PAX/DRX/NAC/2020/01

Sir/Madam,

This is the first edition of our Newsletter for National Commissions during this pandemic and containment with telework supported from all of us to tackle this unprecedented crisis together. We are realizing the importance of the role that UNESCO plays with the population of the whole world, and of the importance of the National Commissions which link its actions, quickly and effectively, at the national level in this emergency state.

I salute all the National Commissions and their staff and thank them for their excellent work in carrying the torch high during this crisis to ensure the continuity of education in their country. I sincerely hope that our actions, advice and follow-up will be useful to you in coping. As expressed by the Director-General: "UNESCO is fully committed to supporting governments for distance learning, open science, knowledge and culture, as fundamental means for us stand together and tighten the bonds of our shared humanity".

We are all mobilized at Headquarters, as at our Field Offices, to keep you informed, in particular by making available to the Member States, Permanent Delegations and our precious network of National Commissions, several communication tools containing information relevant, whether through the messages sent, the UNESCO website, the National Commissions Platform, or the Info Radar. This letter presents a selection of the highlights of the past week in terms of virtual meetings, actions and initiatives undertaken in front of the Covid-19.

I am also delighted that the numerous information, including the adopted strategies, the initiatives launched, the official declarations or even the minutes of the major meetings organized by UNESCO have been shared with all the National Commissions to provide you with the best possible information on what constitutes today, all of the priority actions, and which we unanimously call "UNESCO's response to COVID-19".

Since this crisis, the Director-General has set up an online information meeting with the Member States on 9 April. As a follow-up, from 15 April to 28, a series of online thematic information meetings was organized with ADGs from the five Sectors and with that of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). Many of you followed and contributed to these discussions.

As you know, I also wanted to meet online the five regional groups at UNESCO in April in order to stay connected, share UNESCO's responses to Covid-19 and improve the capacities of countries to cope with the short and long term, especially when this pandemic end. In the same spirit, and on the initiative of the Director of UNESCO in Abuja, I have already started online meetings with the National Commissions of West Africa. I invite all National Commissions to work hand in hand with our Field Offices to ensure cohesion in the field.

I also extend my warmest thanks to all the National Commissions and Permanent Delegations which have actively participated in the first online meeting since this crisis, between the Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations and the National Commissions of the five regions with the participation of Field Offices, the five program sectors, the Office of Strategic Planning, the Division for Gender Equality and that of Priority Africa, held on 29 April.

Despite the difficulties, such as the jet lag for certain regions, and in particular, for the Pacific and Latin America, the technical connection difficulties that some of you were facing or even the confinement, many of you participated and shared with us and with your counterparts from other National Commissions, your own experiences and your current and future actions to respond to Covid-19. I am pleased to announce that we were more than 250 people following the live discussions (102 National Commissions, more than 20 representatives of the Permanent Delegations and 30 Directors of UNESCO Field Offices) and about 230 people were connected to this meeting via web-streaming. This is a strong indication of the importance of this meeting for all of us. We will also send you very shortly the summary report of this meeting.

I would also like to thank some 50 National Commissions who were kind enough to send us, before the meeting on 29 April, the main activities of their actions and initiatives relating to COVID-19. This information is precious to us and will be shared with all the National Commissions, and I encourage all those who have not yet sent their contribution to do so.

As I told you during the meeting, it was the first exchange with you. Still, I would also like to meet with you at the regional level to deepen the specific needs of each region, keep us informed of initiatives and concerted actions and above all to share the learning of best practices. Helping each other is the cornerstone of our collective success to combat the devastating consequences of this pandemic on education, culture and the sciences. I will inform you of the dates of these regional meetings soon.

Finally, let us remind us that, if nothing can replace human presence, before being able to return to it, it is more than ever necessary to maintain links and exchanges between us.

I wish a happy Ramadan to all those who celebrate this sacred month. May it bring you health, joy, tranquility, serenity and prosperity.

Take good care of yourself, your families and your loved ones!

EDUCATION SECTOR

Global Education Coalition #LearningNeverStops

More than 1.5 billion students and youth across the planet are affected by school and university closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Global Education Coalition launched by UNESCO seeks to facilitate inclusive learning opportunities for children and youth during this period of sudden and unprecedented educational disruption. Investment in remote learning should both mitigate the immediate disruption caused by COVID-19 and establish approaches to develop more open and flexible education systems for the future.

For more information: [Global Education Coalition](#)

Plan for school reopening

Regardless of a country's capacity to provide appropriate, continued access to learning during crises and school closures, all education systems should prepare for schools to reopen when the time comes. This process poses many challenges for education authorities, and [careful planning is essential](#).

For more advice and information for education planners and decision-makers who are anticipating the reopening of schools following closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak, please consult this site:

Plan for schools reopening: <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/plan-school-reopening>

- **Future initiatives**

1 April - 28 May 2020 – UNESCO Learning Cities respond to COVID-19 – Webinars

Many of the 173 UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) members around the world face severe challenges due to the coronavirus (COVID-19). These challenges include a record number of children and youth who are not in school or university because of temporary or indefinite closures mandated by governments in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus.

In order to exchange solutions, discuss contingency plans and share distance-learning approaches, members of the UNESCO GNLC will convene webinars organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). Non-member cities are also invited to join the online events, share their experiences and learn from other cities.

For more information: [UNESCO Learning Cities respond to COVID-19](#)

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23 June 2020 – 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report – Inclusion and education: All means all – virtual launch

The GEM Report will host its first-ever virtual launch of the 2020 GEM Report on inclusion and education: All means all. The webinar will include a presentation of the 2020 GEM Report and an interactive discussion with inclusion and education champions, education policy makers and donors. Moderated by the GEM Report's

Advisory Board Chair and former Prime Minister Helen Clark the webinar will offer a deep dive into the 2020 GEM Report's findings and recommendations.

The session will include welcome remarks from UNESCO's Director-General Audrey Azoulay, a presentation by the Report's Director Manos Antoninis and an interactive dialogue on inclusion education with Brina Kei Maxino from the Philippines, DFID Minister, and the Minister of Education from Sierra Leone.

For more information: [Global Education Monitoring Report](#)

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CULTURE SECTOR

- **COVID-19 / UNESCO's Response**

More than 130 Ministers call for support to culture sector in COVID-19 crisis response

Over 130 Ministers and Vice-Ministers of Culture joined the online meeting convened by UNESCO to discuss actions to bolster the cultural sector, which is facing unprecedented upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministers spoke of the direct effects of the current crisis on tourism, museums, cultural production and artists, as well as the measures that they have taken to mitigate the impact of the crisis. They reaffirmed their commitment to intergovernmental dialogue and international solidarity in order to strengthen and unite their efforts.

For more information: [Culture Online Meeting](#)

Regional Intergovernmental Organizations: Pledge to Support Cultural Sector

The economic importance of culture, as well as the fundamental role culture plays as a resource for resilience, hope and social inclusion, means that culture must be a key component of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the major conclusion of the online consultation with representatives from twelve regional Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and development banks*, convened by UNESCO on 17 April to discuss approaches to address the impact of this unprecedented health crisis on the cultural sector.

Participants agreed on the importance of providing data to measure the impact of COVID-19 on culture and culture-related activities, in order for culture to be included in post-COVID-19 recovery efforts. Intensified dialogue with Ministries and concerted action at the regional and international levels are vital to support the cultural sector, which has been devastated by the effects of this pandemic.

For more information visit: [Regional Intergovernmental Organizations](#)

30 April 2020 - International Jazz Day

As the great Nina Simone said, "Jazz is not just music, it is a way of life, it is a way of being, a way of thinking". The story of Jazz is written into the quest for human dignity, democracy and civil rights. It has given strength to the struggle against discrimination and racism. UNESCO believes in the power of Jazz as a force for peace, dialogue and mutual understanding and this is why in November 2011, the UNESCO General Conference [proclaimed 30 April as "International Jazz Day"](#).

This Day is intended to raise awareness of the virtues of jazz as an educational tool, and a force for empathy, dialogue and enhanced cooperation among people. Many governments, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and private citizens currently engaged in the promotion of jazz music will embrace the opportunity to foster greater appreciation not only for the music but also for the contribution it can make to building more inclusive societies.

For more information please visit the site: [International Jazz Day](https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/jazzday)
<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/jazzday>

- **Future initiatives**

1 June - 15 July – Responding to the global COVID-19 crisis: the training on illicit trafficking of cultural property in Africa going online

The UNESCO Dakar Office, in partnership with INTERPOL, is organizing an online training workshop from 1 June to 15 July 2020 to build the capacities of museum/heritage professionals as well as law enforcement and security forces including customs and police in six countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Senegal. This training is part of a programme to strengthen mechanisms to combat illicit trafficking of cultural property in Africa, which has been under way since 2015.

For more information: [Training on illicit trafficking of cultural property](#)

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NATURAL SCIENCES SECTOR

- **COVID-19 / UNESCO's Response**

UNESCO mobilizes 122 countries to promote open science and reinforced cooperation in the face of COVID-19

UNESCO on 30 March hosted an online meeting of representatives of ministries in charge of science all over the world. Participants included 77 ministers, including governmental secretaries representing a total of 122 countries, as well as Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Sarah Anyang Agbor, African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Moisés Omar Halleslevens Acevedo, former Vice President of Nicaragua and Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, the World Health Organization's Chief Scientist.

The objective of the meeting was to exchange views on the role of international cooperation in science and increased investment in the context of COVID-19.

For more information: [Open science and reinforced cooperation](#)

UNESCO Global Geoparks continue supporting communities during COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 epidemic, a global public health crisis, resonates particularly strongly with UNESCO's core missions. The Organization, through its sites and through its partnerships and cooperation with territories throughout the world, is committed to supporting and enhancing scientific, cultural, and educational cooperation and promotes solidarity-initiatives that enable us today to face together this unprecedented crisis.

In Thailand, in the Satun UNESCO Global Geopark, local textile companies manufacture masks in the Geopark's colours to protect the community. Through their communication with the inhabitants, Geoparks also contribute to the enforcement of safety regulations and state directives: in the Itogawa UNESCO Global Geopark in Japan, for example, mascots now wear masks, and the logo has been modified to promote social distancing.

For more information visit: [UNESCO Global Geoparks](#)

- **Future initiatives**

31 May 2020 - Call for Nominations – 2021 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science International Awards

Scientists from around the world are invited to nominate candidates for the 2021 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science International Awards. The 2021 International Awards will designate five outstanding researchers in Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science, each working in one of the following regions: Africa and the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America.

Please note that nomination files must be submitted by midnight on 31 May 2020 (France GMT/UTC + 2h). Only completed nominations received through the platform by this deadline will be considered.

For more information: [Call for Nominations](#)

SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES SECTOR

- **COVID-19 / UNESCO's Response**

UNESCO experts urge collective responsibility to protect vulnerable persons in global battle against COVID-19

UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) have issued a joint statement to guide policy makers and inform the public about essential ethical considerations that need to be addressed during the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Statement on COVID-19: Ethical Considerations from a Global Perspective draws attention to a range of issues of particular importance as public health authorities battle the pandemic. It notes that the pandemic may generate aggravated psychological stress among vulnerable and marginalized people and groups in all parts of the world and even more so in developing countries.

For more information: [Collective responsibility to protect vulnerable persons](#)

UNESCO provides Ethical Frameworks to COVID-19 Responses - Harare, Zimbabwe

As the world is responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic, quick decision-making is vital. But it can also become a challenging exercise when ethical questions and sometimes dilemmas arise in a context of emergency where human lives and human dignity are threatened. The UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA)

has stepped up to provide ethical frameworks to decision-makers and frontline professionals in this difficult time.

In their Joint Statement on COVID-19: Ethical Considerations from a Global Perspective, UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and UNESCO's World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) insisted that "a bioethics and ethics of science and technology perspective, rooted in human rights, should play a key role in the context of this challenging pandemic".

For more information: [Ethical frameworks to COVID-19](#)

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COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SECTOR

- **COVID-19 / UNESCO's Response**

4 May 2020 - World Press Freedom Day - Online High-Level Dialogue: Press Freedom and Tackling Disinformation in the COVID-19 context

UNESCO's flagship event of World Press Freedom Day brought together UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the Republic of Liberia George Weah, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, journalist Younes Mujahid, President of the International Federation of Journalists, Maria Ressa, investigative journalist from the Philippines, founder of the Rappler news website, and the Secretary General of Reporters Without Borders, Christophe Deloire, alongside a number of other high level participants. Prominent Mexican-born American journalist Jorge Ramos moderated the debate.

On this occasion, a series of videos featured messages from Heads of State and Government, Ministers and other high-level figures.

The event was organized with the support of members of the Group of Friends of the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO with the aim to draw global attention to the need for press freedom and independent journalism to provide reliable, life-saving information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when we are mired in worry and uncertainty because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, free information is essential to helping us face, understand, think about and overcome this crisis (Extract from the Message by Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day).

For more information:

- [World Press Freedom Day](#)
- [COVID-19 Response](#)

4 May 2020 - UNESCO, WHO and Knight Center launch a MOOC for journalists facing the COVID-19 pandemic

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organization (WHO) launched a new Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) "Journalism in a pandemic: Covering COVID-19 now and in the future", organized by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin.

The MOOC, which received the support from the Knight Foundation and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is a four-week online training programme aiming at providing journalists with the necessary knowledge and tools to cover the COVID-19 health crisis, and the social, financial and political consequences it entails. The MOOC will be offered simultaneously in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French.

For more information: [MOOC for journalists facing the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

UNESCO to support media in developing countries to face Coronavirus challenge

In Eastern and Southern Africa, a network of 25 community radio stations serving 250,000 citizens living in rural and marginalized communities will be strengthening collaboration mechanisms to better cover the Coronavirus-related challenges in these remote areas. About 100 community radio practitioners in this region will be closely working with national and local governments as well as with development partners to respond to the current pandemic.

UNESCO is closely monitoring the impact of this crisis on media freedom, safety of journalists, and the fundamental right to access information. In a context of unprecedented challenges for the media and digital technology sectors, UNESCO has created a “resource center of selected responses to COVID-19” with actions to support media, enhance access to information, and leverage digital technologies in the fight against the pandemic.

For more information: [Information Sharing and Countering Disinformation](#)

- **Future initiatives**

20 April - 31 May 2020 – 2020 Edition of Online Course: international legal framework of freedom of expression, access to public information and journalists’ protection, Montevideo, Uruguay

The course was designed for justice system operators in Latin America, particularly magistrates.

The online course "International legal framework of Freedom of Expression, Access to Public Information and Protection of Journalists" is co-organized by UNESCO and the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The course was designed for justice system operators in Latin America, particularly magistrates, judges, prosecutors, public defenders and members of Judiciary Power. In addition, students and professors in Judiciary Schools. It lasts six weeks (from April 20th to May 31st of 2020) and on each of them one specific topic regarding freedom of expression is addressed. The course is entirely free, and participants have the option to apply a certificate of participation.

For more information: [Registrations](#)

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8 - 11 June 2020 – Regional capacity development workshop on preservation of documentary heritage in Africa – Cape Town, South Africa

This capacity building workshop will aim to ensure availability and active dissemination of available policy guidelines and strategies, including enhancing

knowledge of and techniques about sustainable preservation of documentary heritage, with a specific focus on disaster risk reduction and management, among the memory institutions targeted, especially SIDS and LDCs in Africa.

For more information: [Regional capacity development workshop](#)

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UNESCO publications

- **“My Hero is you: how kids can fight COVID-19!”** This book was a project developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (IASC MHPSS RG). The project was supported by global, regional and country based experts from Member Agencies of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee IASC, Mental Health and Psychological Support in Emergency Settings MHPSS RG, in addition to parents, caregivers, teachers and children in 104 countries. A global survey was distributed in Arabic, English, Italian, French and Spanish to assess children’s mental health and psychosocial needs during the COVID-19 outbreak. A framework of topics to be addressed through the story was developed using the survey results. The book was shared through storytelling to children in several countries affected by COVID-19. Feedback from children, parents and caregivers was then used to review and update the story. Over 1,700 children, parents, caregivers and teachers from around the world took the time to share with us how they were coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appointment of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions for UNESCO

I am pleased to welcome to the network of National Commissions the following new members:

In Japan, Mr Michinari Hamaguchi has been appointed President, succeeding Mr Yuichiro Anzain.

In Lybia, Mr Mohamed Ammari Ziad has been appointed President, succeeding M. Othman Abdel Jalil.

In Morocco, Mr Jamal Eddine El Aloua has been appointed Secretary-General a.i., succeeding Mr Abdeljalil Lahjomri, who currently holds the post of Vice-President of the National Commission.

In Nigeria, Mr Idowu L. Olangunju has been appointed Secretary-General, succeeding Ms Florence Oguah.

In Uruguay, Mrs. Ana Ribeiro has been appointed President, succeeding Mrs. Edith Moraes.



Firmin Edouard Matoko