To Secretaries-General of National Commissions for UNESCO

Ref.: ERI/MSP/2016/14  12 May 2016

Sir/Madam

I was pleased to see many of you during the traditional morning meeting of the National Commissions organized on 11 and 12 April 2016 in the margins of the 199th session of the Executive Board.

During these meetings, copies of the 2015 National Commissions Annual Report (published in English and French), which showcase your success stories, were distributed. Allow me to reiterate to you my thanks for your contributions and the increased level of interest to make UNESCO’s mission and mandate more visible through your events. The Annual Report is now available online.

In addition, the preparations for the upcoming 3rd Interregional Meeting of National Commissions to be held in Shanghai, China, from 13 to 15 June 2016 were discussed. May I remind those who have not yet responded to the invitation letter sent on 9 April, to send urgently the pre-registration form to both the Secretariat (natcom@unesco.org) and the National Commission of the People’s Republic of China (gw@moe.edu.cn) as the deadline was 29 April last. Your quick response will allow us to ensure that all information concerning visas, travel and logistics is timely dealt with. More than one hundred countries have already confirmed their participation. More details of this meeting will be communicated to you in due course.

As you are aware, UNESCO has also embarked in the preparation of the Organization’s Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 (39 C/5), through a series of consultations with Member States and Associate Members, including their National Commissions for UNESCO, as well as of intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations, culminating in the elaboration and submission of the Draft document to the Executive Board at its spring session in 2017.

I hope all of you actively contributed to the first phase of consultations, by filling in the questionnaire circulated to you on 18 April last.

I wish also to recall your active participation in the electronic discussions and online consultations concerning the 39 C/5 which will be launched shortly by the Secretariat. The information collected will be essential in preparing the regional contributions which will be addressed during the Shanghai meeting.
21 May 2016 - European Night of Museums at UNESCO, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

UNESCO is proud to support the European Night of Museums for the 8th consecutive year by giving its patronage to the event, and by inviting the public to discover its buildings and art collection.

In opening the doors to its Headquarters in Paris, UNESCO will this year give the public the opportunity to visit the temporary exhibition “Art for Peace”, co-organized by the Permanent Delegation of Belgium to UNESCO and the Permanent Delegation of the People’s Republic of China to UNESCO, partners of the Organization for the 2016 edition of the European Night of Museums.

Visits will take place from 8:00 p.m. until midnight (last admission). Entrance at 7 place de Fontenoy (exit at 125 avenue de Suffren). Free entry, without prior booking.

Contact : Ms Raya Fayad (r.fayad@unesco.org)

22 May - 4 June 2016 - 12th Festival of Pacific Arts, Guam, United States of America

The Festival of the Pacific Arts (FOPA) is held every four years since 1972, bringing together artists, practitioners of performing arts and knowledge holders of craftsmanship from around the Pacific region for two weeks of festivity. It is a major regional cultural event and meeting opportunity in the Pacific that unites Pacific peoples, enhance mutual understanding and celebrate its cultural diversity.

During the Festival, the Third Meeting of the Pacific Ministers of Culture will take place on 25 May, providing an opportunity for the cultural authorities in Pacific island states and territories to review the Regional Cultural Strategy (2010-2020) and discuss a regional approach to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted in 2005.

A Forum on Culture, Arts and Sustainable Development in the Pacific will also be held from 30 May to 1 June. The Forum will bring together practitioners, academics, and partners in heritage and creativity to highlight good practices that demonstrate the contribution of culture and arts to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Pacific.

I have no doubt that many National Commissions will be interested in this event, and I encourage you to inform your partners in the region who could eventually participate.

More information can be found under this link.

Contact: Ms Akatsuki Takahashi (a.takahashi@unesco.org)

30 May - 1 June 2016 - 6th session of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO Headquarters Paris, France

The General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention is the sovereign body of the Convention and meets in ordinary session every two years. The General Assembly gives strategic orientations for the implementation of the Convention and elects the 24 members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
The General Assembly will also examine a revision of some of the operational directives to guide the implementation of the Convention and proceed with accreditation of non-governmental organizations for advisory services to the Committee.

National Commissions interested in attending this session as observers may find information on how to register on the dedicated website at the following address: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/6.ga.

Contact: Ms Elena Constantinou (e.constantinou@unesco.org)

30 May - 3 June 2016 – 6th Biennial Meeting of the Human Variome Project Consortium (HVP6), UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

This biennial meeting will bring together professionals from around the world who address many aspects of human genetics, to explore and share their knowledge on data sharing, interpretation of unknown variants and collaboration between developing and developed countries and much more. It will provide an opportunity for an update on plans and progress for the global collection, curation, interpretation and sharing of genetic variation information. All of these areas involve the development and dissemination of standards and guidelines, ethical frameworks, and education.

On this occasion, the exhibition Positive Exposure will be displayed as a side event of HVP6 meeting. It features young people with genetic diseases from albinism to autism: through photography and video, the exhibition aims to transform public perceptions of people living with genetic, physical and behavioral differences.

National Commissions are invited to attend both the Opening Ceremony of HVP6 and the official launch of the Positive Exposure’s exhibition on Wednesday 1 June at 1:00 p.m.

For more information, please visit http://hvp6.variome.org/.

Contact: Mr Casimiro Vizzini (c.vizzini@unesco.org)

8 June 2016 - World Oceans Day 2016, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

The theme for this year celebration of the World Oceans Day is “Healthy Oceans, Healthy Planet”, with a focus on plastic pollution.

8 June has become a symbolic moment to raise awareness on the protection of the oceans and to discuss ways to further develop ocean science communication. By bringing together scientists, decision-makers, civil society and youth, World Oceans Day provides a unique framework for the protection of marine ecosystems.

The programme at UNESCO Headquarters includes thematic round tables, exhibitions and a UNESCO Open campus for youth, as well as the Roger Revelle Memorial Lecture dedicated to the issue of ocean acidification.

We encourage the National Commissions to join in the events organized all over the world to celebrate World Oceans Day 2016. A dedicated World Oceans Day Web Portal within the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO) website will provide National Commissions with the opportunity to share their events and attract wider visibility. Please contact Mr Vincius Lindoso at the address below if you are interested in promoting your event and for more information.
Relevant information on the celebration of World Oceans Day will be available soon on the UNESCO website and on the web portal that will be launched on 8 June 2016.

Contact: Ms Rejane Hervé-Smadja (r.herve@unesco.org) and Mr Vincius Lindoso (v.lindoso@unesco.org)

National Commissions’ Community Board – sharing initiatives

- The Portuguese National Commission for UNESCO organized on 16 and 17 April at the High School of Dr. Bernardino Machado Figueira da Foz, the 15th Meeting of the National Network of UNESCO Associated Schools, with the participation of representatives from Portuguese and Cabo Verde schools, and the National Commissions of Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau. This meeting was an opportunity to exchange projects and activities, promote networking, present activities and good practices and establish partnerships between the participating schools.

- At the initiative of UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for Central Africa in Yaoundé, National Commissions for UNESCO (Angola, Burundi, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Chad), UNESCO Chairs, Federations of UNESCO Clubs, senior officials of ministries of culture and environment and interregional organizations met from 20 to 22 April 2016 in Yaoundé.

  Taking into account the current context marked by the start of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 107 participants from nine countries of ECCAS focused on UNESCO Priority Africa, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the importance of foresight in the implementation of programmes, the international conventions in the field of culture, heritage management and natural resources of ECCAS, climate change and strengthening partnerships.

- The Swiss Commission for UNESCO, in collaboration with the Sector for External Relations and Public Information (ERI), is organising a meeting at UNESCO Headquarters from 12 to 13 May 2016 for the new members of the Commission. The visit to UNESCO Headquarters will include a presentation on the roles of National Commissions, followed by a presentation on the global vision of UNESCO and the Agenda 2030 by the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP) and discussions with the Sectors of UNESCO on their activities and programmes.

- On 9 June, the Flemish Commission for UNESCO is organizing in Brussels an international conference aiming to increase the public awareness for the fragility of the World Cultural Heritage. In line with UNESCO social media campaign #Unite4Heritage, the Flemish Commission for UNESCO (Belgium), would like to mobilize the European National Commissions network to increase awareness on this important issue.

  The Flemish Commission is calling upon all members of civil society to take part in this initiative and submit two drawings, paintings or sketches of their ‘National Monument’. Selected artworks will be displayed during an international conference, in presence of high personalities including several ministers of Foreign Affairs. The exhibition will be digitized and launched via several communication channels. The selection of the pictures will be done by a jury of experts in Belgium. The Flemish Commission invites all European National Commissions to send the original artwork before 25


May 2016 to Mr. Tijs D’Hoest, Secretary General of the Flemish Commission for UNESCO.

- During the celebration of poetry week, the Cabo Verde National Commission for UNESCO organized a teachers training entitled "The Art of telling stories and tales", in partnership with the National Library. The training was conducted by Olinda Beja (writer, Sao Tome and Principe) and Filipe Santo (musician, Cabo Verde) at the National Library, in Praia, from 28 April to 2 May 2016.

**UNESCO Publications**

- The *Power of Sport Values photo book* is a bilingual (English-French) collection of the best 15 entries of UNESCO’s photo contest on the power of sport values, selected from over 300 photos submitted by photographers from 76 countries all around the world. Be it in South Sudan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Bangladesh or Cuba, sport provides joy, helps inclusion, strengthens social mobilization. You can download the study in English [under this link](http://www.lacult.unesco.org/lacult_en/docc/CyD_14_en.pdf).


**Appointments of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (April 2016)**

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

In Canada, Ms Michelle Chawla has been appointed Acting Secretary-General.

In Guatemala, Ms. Sara Peralta de Rodríguez has been appointed Secretary-General.

In Hungary, Mr Gábor Soós has been appointed Secretary-General.

In Italy, Mr Franco Bernabe, has been appointed President.

In Philippines, Mr Jose Rene D. Almendras, has been appointed Chairperson.

In Zambia, Mr John J.N. Phiri has been appointed Chairperson.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Eric Falt