To the Secretaries-General of the National Commissions for UNESCO

Ref.: ERI/MSP/15/36  24 December 2015

Sir/Madam,

As we look forward to a New Year, let me first extend to you my warmest wishes of health, happiness and success in 2016.

2015 was particularly significant for us, as we deployed our efforts to celebrate the 70th anniversary of UNESCO by taking stock of the Organization’s achievements over the past 70 years while looking to the future in order to tackle today’s global challenges in our fields of competence.

The historic agreement reached by participants at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on 12 December demonstrated unprecedented commitment by the international community to protecting the planet through solidarity and joint action.

UNESCO worked actively in close synergy with the French authorities, as the Conference’s host and the overall UN system in support of the UNFCCC and COP21. Under the motto “Changing minds, not the climate”, UNESCO’s programmes and expertise were showcased in a wide range of side events during the Conference, highlighting the potential of the natural and social sciences, ocean research, education and culture to foster new approaches to development with a view to reaching the goals of the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, approved by the United Nations General Assembly last September.

To find out UNESCO’s concrete actions on climate change mitigation, please click on the following link: http://en.unesco.org/themes/changing-minds-not-climate. The brochure entitled “UNESCO, Climate Change and COP 21” can also give you a panorama of UNESCO’s contributions to rethinking sustainability globally through a wide range of projects.

**Participation Programme for 2016-2017**

I have the pleasure to inform you that on 11 December 2015, the Director-General signed the Circular Letter on the Participation Programme for 2016-2017. In conformity with the resolution on the Participation Programme, the deadlines set for the submission of requests is 28 February 2016 for African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and 31 August 2016 for all other eligible countries and non-governmental organizations in official partnership with UNESCO. You can get more details at UNESCO.int under this link. The online form for the submission of requests is available under the link www.unesco.org/pp/submissions38c5.

Contact: Mr Stoyan Bantchev (s.bantchev@unesco.org)
5 February 2016 – Symposium: News organizations standing up for the safety of media professionals, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

UNESCO is organizing an international conference for the decision-makers of news organizations, especially the owners, publishers, and editor-in-chiefs. This follows the Executive Board’s decision (196EX/Decision 31), which requests “the Director-General to convene a conference with high-level representatives of news organizations from all regions, open to stakeholders, in order for them to share good practices on the safety of journalists and more proactively highlight the issue of journalist safety”. The event aims to provide news organizations with a platform to discuss existing and new measures aimed to strengthen journalists’ safety worldwide and engage with Member States on these issues.

The conference is organized under the auspices of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and guided by a number of international legal documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as UNGA Resolution on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (RES/68/163) and the Human Rights Council Resolutions 81/20015 and 21/2012 addressing the issues of impunity and the safety of journalists. It will also look into how to harness the opportunities opened for the UN Plan of Action by the newly adopted UN Security Council Resolution 2222 on safety of journalists.

I am sure that many of you are interested in this theme. I encourage you to participate in this event and disseminate the information to news organizations in your country. You can get more detailed information and on-line registration form under this link.

Contact: Ms Sylvie Coudray (s.coudray@unesco.org) and Mr Marius Lukosiunas (m.lukosiunas@unesco.org)

10 February 2016 – Netexplo Forum 2016, University Paris Dauphine, Paris

Organized with UNESCO’s support, the 9th edition of the Netexplo Forum will once again highlight some of today’s most promising global innovators in digital technologies, who are inventing new forms of education, communication, information, solidarity and management around the globe. This edition will focus on very sensitive innovation themes, such as the “Bio-Makers” and the “Emancipation of Robots”.

The Forum will be an opportunity to discover new and emerging trends in the use of digital technology, and to meet the creators of these innovations. As is customary, Netexplo will emphasize the impact of innovation on development for both the public and private sectors. The Netexplo laureats will be unveiled at the end of January. I am confident that many of you will participate physically or virtually in this event.

For more information, please consult the website of Netexplo: https://www.netexplo.org/en/event/netexplo-forum-2016 and UNESCO Site: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/programme-meetings/?tx_browser_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=32553

Contact: Mr Davide Storti (d.storti@unesco.org)


In 2016, the theme of the Day is “Radio in Times of Emergency and Disaster”. From conflicts resulting in large populations of people seeking asylum, to increasing and more severe weather related emergencies, it is important that UNESCO highlight the critical influence of Radio in times of emergency and disaster.
We are gathering many partners, from both radio broadcasting and humanitarian sides. Our usual longstanding radio broadcasting partners are still with us, and this year we welcome major humanitarian organizations, from the UN system and NGO world (e.g. OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Radio, CDAC, Red Cross Red Crescent and BBC Media Action).

They will all contribute to the success of the WRD 2016 - by enhancing UNESCO’s web and social media programme on their own media, by providing relevant and inspiring content and stories, by locally becoming UNESCO partners to set amazing events on 13 February 2016 everywhere on the planet.

The WRD website - www.worldradioday.org - will go live on 11 January 2016, as the start of the global online mobilization programme that will run throughout January until 13 February 2016. There is one full month to create a positive momentum of interest and awareness on radio and its unique impact in disaster situations.

I invite you to celebrate this Day by planning activities in collaboration with other partners such as NGOs, foundations and the media and by sharing our webpage and 15 ideas with your networks, as since 2012, the massive mobilization of UNESCO National Commissions to celebrate World Radio Day has always made it a success.

Contact: Ms Mirta Lourenço (m.lourenco@unesco.org)

UNESCO Publications

- As part of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of UNESCO’s water programmes, the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) produced the book entitled “Water, People and Cooperation: 50 Years of Water Programmes for Sustainable Development at UNESCO”, released on 2 December 2015 during Water and Climate Day at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP21). This book summarizes the past achievements, current activities as well as present options for the desired future of IHP in an illustrated full-color publication in English, French and Spanish. You can consult this book in English edition under this link.

- The book entitled “Not Just Hot Air - Putting Climate Change Education into Practice” represents UNESCO’s work on Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development (CCESD) in 2012/2013. It is composed of national case studies on five CCESD country pilots conducted by UNESCO in 2012/2013; 16 short country profiles from around the world on policy development regarding ESD and CCE; and recommendations developed by UNESCO in order to establish a common understanding of what needs to be done to enhance education responses to climate change. This publication supported by the government of Japan, is intended to provide policy makers and teacher educators with a compact source of information on how to mobilize education to address climate change. This publication is available under this link.

- Launched on 16 December last at UNESCO Headquarters, the report “Re / Shaping Cultural Policies: A Decade Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for Development” is UNESCO’s first follow up to the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions worldwide. Compiled with the support of the government of Sweden, the report takes stock of developments in the cultural and creative industries and looks at the trade in the cultural products, notably between developed and developing countries. The report is available in English and French under this link.
Appointments of Chairpersons and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (October – December 2015):

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

In the Central African Republic, Mr Bernard Simiti has been appointed Chairperson, succeeding Mr Elois Anguimate.

In Nepal, Mr Girirajmani Pokharel has been appointed Chairperson, succeeding Ms Chitra Lekha Yadav.

In Sint Maarten, Ms Silveria Jacobs has been appointed Chairperson, succeeding Ms Josianne Fleming-Arsten.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Eric Paté