Sir/Madam,

The 38th session of the General Conference completed its work recently, and I noted with pleasure that many of you participated actively in that session, which was of particular significance for all of us. Member States renewed their commitment to work closely with the Organization to take forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Marking the culmination of UNESCO’s 70th anniversary celebration, the Leaders’ Forum (16-17 November) saw a resounding reaffirmation of the importance of UNESCO’s mandate, notably its role in the fight against violent extremism through education.

2nd Interregional Meeting of National Commissions on 2 November 2015

I am pleased that the 2nd Interregional Meeting of National Commissions organized on the eve of the General Conference recorded the highest rate of participation, with approximately 210 representatives from more than 140 National Commissions/Permanent Delegations. The discussions held on the topics selected by National Commissions were fruitful and demonstrated an increasing complementarity among National Commissions. You will find enclosed an executive summary of the meeting.

As promised, I would like to inform you that the majority of the 59 participants in the survey (the questionnaire distributed at the end of the meeting), marked their overall evaluation at level 5 (the ranking of satisfaction ranged from 0 to 6), so it was very positive. The topic “Public and private partnerships” received the highest score with 42 votes, followed by “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Role of National Commissions” with 37 votes. Some of you made comments for organizational improvement, which we will certainly take into account for our future meetings.

In this connection, as I already announced, please take note that the 3rd Interregional Meeting of National Commissions will be hosted by China in Shanghai, next year. Further information will be communicated to you in due course.

Celebration of anniversaries with which UNESCO will be associated in 2016-2017

The 38th session of the General Conference approved the List of anniversaries to be celebrated in 2016-2017 in association with UNESCO. Member States who have anniversaries approved are kindly reminded that they are responsible for the implementation of the activities relating to the celebration of anniversaries and must submit to the Director-General, on completion of the project, a detailed activity report on the results achieved and their usefulness to the Member State(s) and UNESCO.
Should your country intend to organize a related event (exhibition, concert or conference) at UNESCO Headquarters during the next biennium, please make the necessary reservation of space or rooms directly with the Conference and Cultural Events Management Section (MSS/C CLD/C e-mail: k.koch@unesco.org) well in advance and preferably one year before the date of the envisaged event, in order to ensure proper planning. You may also wish to contact the Public Relations and Partnerships Unit of my sector (ERI/DPI/PRP e-mail: f.kouadio@unesco.org), for public information purposes.

Cooperation with NGOs

In terms of UNESCO’s partnership with NGOs, the General Conference had the opportunity to review the quadrennial report of the Director-General on the contribution made to UNESCO’s activities by non-governmental organizations. The General-Conference welcomed the new mobilization of NGOs, in particular regarding the impact and quality of international NGO forums organized under the direction of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in collaboration with the Secretariat and invited Member States to support the organization of such forums in different regions.

Participation Programme for 2016-2017

As confirmed by several Member States at recent sessions of the Organization’s governing bodies, the Participation Programme is a significant means of supporting the projects submitted by the concerned National Commissions in line with the Organization’s global priorities. You have expressed your satisfaction with the improved management and administration of the Participation Programme during this biennium.

We are now preparing the online submission modality for your requests for 2016-2017. You will receive shortly a Circular Letter from the Director-General on this matter. I wish to assure you that we take all necessary steps to improve this exercise in order to allow you to submit your requests in the best conditions possible.

Concerning the 2016-2017 exercise, I would like to remind the concerned National Commissions that they must include at least one gender-equality project among their first four priorities. I would like also to remind them that the required financial and activity reports for the projects paid before 31 December 2015 should be submitted to the Secretariat as soon as possible, but no later than 30 March 2016. Your support in this exercise is essential, as the timely submission of these reports would enable us to accelerate the Participation Programme approval process.

2015 Annual Report of National Commissions

I am pleased to inform you that we will begin the preparation of the third edition (2015) of the Annual Report. I encourage you to actively participate in this exercise. As you know, the Annual Report aims at making our cooperation more visible and facilitates the sharing of information amongst the National Commissions themselves as well as with interested stakeholders. The 2015 Report will thus provide a convincing snapshot of your work implemented during the course of the year and give prominent examples of your activities in 2015.

In order to facilitate the collection of your contributions, you will find attached a form we have prepared to that effect. We would be grateful if you could kindly complete it and send it back to us (natcom@unesco.org) together with photographs, by 10 January 2016 at the latest. As in the past, this form is divided into the following three parts:
1. Identification of your National Commission (name, address, email, etc.)
2. Summary of your activities implemented in 2015 (maximum 400 words)
3. Example of one successful activity in 2015 (maximum 200 words)

May I recall that due to the high number of National Commissions for UNESCO (199), and for the sake of equity, the Secretariat will not be able to devote more than one page per National Commission. Therefore, I would like to ask you to kindly ensure that your contribution does not exceed 600 words in total. I also wish to draw your attention to the visual and technical requirements for the photographs as mentioned in the form.

14-16 December 2015 – Ninth ordinary session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

Composed of 24 States Party, the Committee meets annually in ordinary session. On this occasion, it will have several items on its Agenda, including the Secretariat’s activities during 2014 and 2015 as well as the workplans for the Committee during 2016 and 2017; the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), with a review of its implementation and fundraising strategy, and approval of new projects; implementation and impact of Articles 16 (Preferential Treatment for Developing Countries) and 21 (International Consultation and Coordination) along with the data base for sharing best practices; the engagement of civil society in the implementation of the Convention; and a preliminary framework for draft Operational Guidelines on Digital Issues. Additionally, the Director-General will launch the first global report to monitor the implementation of the Convention on 16 December.

I know that many of you are actively involved in the implementation of the 2005 Convention, which provides a framework to forge new pathways that encourage creativity and innovation in the pursuit of inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth and development. I wish you fruitful discussions and achievements at the forthcoming Committee’s session. More information and the registration form are available under [this link](#).

Contact: Ms Rochelle Roca-Hachem (r.roca-hachem@unesco.org)

14 December 2015 - Coordination Meeting of Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO and UNITWIN Networks/UNESCO Chairs related to Culture, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

The first Coordination Meeting of UNESCO category 2 institutes and centres (C2Cs) and UNITWIN Networks/UNESCO Chairs, will be held on 14 December 2015, in Room IX at UNESCO Headquarters.

C2Cs and UNITWIN Networks/UNESCO Chairs are valued intellectual and strategic partners of UNESCO, that share the common objective to contribute to the execution of UNESCO’s strategies and programmes through research, knowledge-sharing and advanced training, and to mobilize national and regional institutions and networks for the execution of UNESCO’s programme. There are currently 24 C2Cs and more than 65 UNITWIN Networks/UNESCO Chairs related to Culture.

This meeting will provide an excellent opportunity for those institutions to share experiences and knowledge, to promote interaction, and to explore the possible establishment of a network to strengthen cooperation and synergies among C2Cs and Chairs in the field of culture.

I encourage those who are interested in this cooperation to participate in the Coordination Meeting.

Contact: cultureC2C@unesco.org
UNESCO Publications

- Designed on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of UNESCO, the book “70 Quotes for Peace” bring together 70 quotes of artists, intellectuals, activists, politicians and statespersons. Each in their own way, they reflect the conviction that to be sustainable, peace must be built on mutual understanding of peoples and intellectual solidarity of humankind. Based on an original idea of Guila Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for peace, this book is available in bilingual edition French/ English under [this link](#).

- Compiled by UNESCO’s EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), the publication *Gender and EFA 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges* provides detailed evidence of how much has been achieved in the past 15 years but also where considerable - some quite intractable – challenges remain. It highlights notable progress in gender parity in primary and secondary education, particularly in South and West Asia, while underscoring the persistent barriers to achieving gender equality in education. It is available in English under [this link](#).

- “Climate change” is the title of issue N° 77 of the “World Heritage” series. Published ahead of the COP21 meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) held from 30 November to 11 December 2015 in Paris, France, this issue will focus on methods of adaptation and best practices for dealing with the consequences of climate change at World Heritage sites, both cultural and natural, and will also examine some recent experience in mitigating the effects of climate change for intangible heritage. The new sites inscribed on the World Heritage List during the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee, held in Bonn (Germany) from 28 June to 8 July 2015, are also presented. Please click [this link](#) to get more information.

Appointments of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (October – November 2015):

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

In Jordan, Mr Ziad Kareem Al-Nsour has been appointed Secretary-General, succeeding Mr Suheil Shaleen.

In Trinidad and Tobago, Mr Anthony Garcia has been appointed Chairperson, succeeding Mr Tim Gopeesingh.

Warm regards,

Yours sincerely,

Eric Faït