Wednesday, 11 April 2018

Opening session

Appointment of the President
Ms. Amal Al-Koos, Secretary-General of the National Commission of the United Arab Emirates, was unanimously appointed Chair of the meeting.

Adoption of the agenda
The agenda of the meeting was adopted without modification.

Opening address by Mr Nicolas Kassianides, Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Public Information (ADG/ERI) a.i.

- After his welcoming remarks, Mr Kassianides, ADG/ERI a.i. launched the 5th edition of the annual report of the National Commissions for UNESCO, which highlighted numerous activities undertaken by the National Commissions during 2017. He appreciated the inputs from 150 National Commissions and emphasized that this bilingual report, available online (see www.unesco.int), had become an important tool for sharing information between National Commissions on good practices and challenges encountered.

- ADG/ERI a.i. then briefly explained the agenda of the two morning meetings that would be mainly devoted to the preparation of the 5th Interregional Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO to be held from 19 to 21 June 2018 in Diani, Kenya. In this regard, he expressed his gratitude to the Kenya National Commission and its Secretary-General, Ms. Evangeline Njoka, for their generous offer to host this important event.

- He then debriefed on the process of strategic transformation that was presented by the DG in her introductory address in the plenary session of 9 April, summarizing the process of strategic transformation, which includes the following four axes: Programmes that are the core of UNESCO's mandate; Laboratory of ideas; Opening up of UNESCO and Improving efficiency, procedures and administration. In this connection, he stressed the importance of the role played by the National Commissions and the need to make the interaction between the National Commissions and UNESCO more effective.

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1 More than 110 participants representing 78 National Commissions/ Permanent Delegations attended the meeting.
Open discussion

At the invitation of the President, a dozen National Commissions took the floor:

- It was recalled that National Commissions are statutory bodies established in accordance with Article VII of UNESCO's Constitution.

- Many participants expressed their wish that the National Commissions be fully involved in the process of reflection for UNESCO's strategic transformation.

- Some representatives stressed the importance of regular communication with the UNESCO Secretariat and, as a result, appreciated the informal meeting of the National Commissions on the occasion of the Executive Board.

Other suggestions and comments made by participants were:

- In the context of strategic transformation, how do we manage the situation differently to fully exploit the potential of National Commissions and what exactly should we change?

- The National Commissions are at the heart of the transformation, because there is already a beautiful network with a phenomenal capacity for mobilization. The presence of the Director-General was desired for the next meeting.

- Regional dynamics such as the European network must be established and a kind of solidarity fund must be set up for countries in need, given the extreme heterogeneity of the National Commissions;

- It is desirable that the role of the National Commissions, which has grown recently, be more visible within the Secretariat and that it can make efforts to increase communication concerning National Commissions.

- It is desirable that the mandates and roles of the various Field Offices be better defined.

- National Commissions have a key role to play as an interface with UNESCO in the field, to ensure both the visibility of the Organization and the mobilization of diverse resources on the ground.

- An update of the interregional meetings should be considered, bringing National Commissions together as a normal and usual practice for debate and reflection on proposals for the strategic transformation of the DG. There is already a working group on the method of governance. We should see how to use this working group as part of this new proposal.

- That the strategic transformation includes a strengthened ERI sector (thanks to extrabudgetary resources), which can ensure good relations/coordination with the National Commissions.

- It is interesting to see how strategic transformation contributes to strengthening coordination with National Commissions and how information will flow in the Secretariat, between the Secretariat and Member States, without ADG/ERI.
ADG/ERI a.i took the floor to answer the questions asked:

- He first thanked the participants for the interest and support expressed by the National Commissions in the process of UNESCO's strategic transformation; it seemed to him that there was a consensus that things would change, despite several reforms undertaken in the past. He also assured the National Commissions that the Secretariat understood the importance of their roles and commitments.

- He noted the extreme heterogeneity of the National Commissions, particularly in their responsibilities, which made the discussion more complex than the expectations of UNESCO. The constitutionality of National Commissions is a fundamental element, but there is a great deal of thought on the question of partnership in which the definition of the responsibility of National Commissions is not yet entirely clear. He nevertheless assured the National Commissions that each one will be consulted and can give its opinion on the terms of cooperation to be defined.

- Regarding the issue of the ERI sector, he mentioned that this was not a question from the sector hierarchy and that the only real question was how National Commissions should be handled by the Secretariat (by a separate entity or could they be treated consubstantially with our relations with the Member States). Finally, he assured that National Commissions were essential and that the Secretariat was working hard on this.

**Suspension of the meeting**

The President expressed her gratitude to Mr Nicolas Kassianides and the participants of the meeting and declared the first session of the meeting closed.

**Thursday, 12 April 2018**

Ms Amal Al-Koos, Secretary-General of the United Arab Emirates National Commission and Chair of the meeting, opened the second morning of the meeting.

The Chairperson first proposed a small change to the agenda for the meeting to start with the presentation by Ms Evangeline Njoka, Secretary-General of the Kenya National Commission, on the Fifth Interregional Meeting of National Commissions, including its logistical aspects. Before giving her the floor, the President made a small remark on the discussions on the first day of the meeting, noting the importance of UNESCO’s strategic transformation. According to her, reflection on this process offers a good opportunity to reconsider UNESCO as a laboratory of ideas. On this occasion, she also expressed to all the National Commissions her appreciation for their contributions.

**Presentation by Ms. Evangeline Njoka, Secretary-General of the Kenya National Commission**

- Ms Evangeline Njoka, Secretary-General of the Kenya National Commission, made a power-point presentation on the trip to Kenya, where the Fifth Interregional Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO will be held from 19 to 21 June 2018. She provided practical information such as location, visa application, travel, accommodation and tourism.

- The meeting will be held at the Leisure Lodge Beach and Golf Resort in Ukunda, Diani, Kenya. She pointed out that participants will need to apply for their visa online at [http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html](http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html). The visa will cost around 50 USD. Since the processing of visa applications takes 2-5 working days, she encouraged participants...
to apply in due time and to check the website for more information on the visa. To this end, she emphasized the need to have a valid passport for a period of at least six months after the date of arrival.

- With respect to air transport, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi is a regional hub. To come to Moi International Airport in Mombasa, Kenya Airways has 9 daily domestic flights between Nairobi and Mombasa. She announced that the government would provide the transfer to Diani and take care of the accommodation and meals of one participant per National Commission. She informed that other delegates will be able to book their rooms at two other hotels near the meeting venue: Kaskazi Beach Hotel and Jacaranda Indian Ocean Beach Resort. She finally presented some sightseeing attractions such as Fort Jesus, Sacred Mijikenda Kayas Forests and Shimba Hills National Reserve.

**Open discussion**

21 participants took the floor on the preparation of the 5th Interregional Meeting, including its provisional agenda and possible outcomes.

Several participants expressed their gratitude to the Kenya National Commission for their generous offer to host the meeting and two representatives stressed the importance of the DG’s participation in this event, with a view to the “strategic transformation” element in particular.

Two representatives announced their plans to hold regional meetings respectively for Asia and Pacific, and for Latin America and the Caribbean, next autumn to follow up on the Kenya meeting.

Other highlights of the interventions were:

- Several representatives expressed the wish that the “Strategic Transformation” be added as a discussion point on the agenda of the 5th Interregional Meeting and that the Secretariat provide relevant information on the Strategic Transformation process during the meeting;

- One representative emphasized that a key role for National Commissions should be clearly indicated in the “Strategic Transformation”.

- One representative drew attention to the importance of brainstorming in Kenya on the issue of interregional coordination among National Commissions;

- One representative proposed, as a possible outcome of the Kenya meeting, that a semi-formal steering group of 2 or 3 National Commissions from each region be established, adding that a presentation on this proposal could be done as part of the Kenya meeting programme; This proposal was supported by other representatives but with minor nuances (whether this group remains a representative, informal consultative body or semi-formal working group continuing to work between the interregional meetings of the National Commissions);

- One representative expressed the wish that the question of a real position of UNESCO in the field and that of the National Commissions in the Secretariat will be discussed at the Kenya meeting;
• One representative thanked the Secretariat for analyzing the contributions of National Commissions to the 2017 Annual Report, which leaves a lot of room for reflection;

• In highlighting the importance of the agenda of the next Kenya meeting, one representative expressed particular support for items 2, 4 and 6 of the draft agenda prepared by the Secretariat; Another representative suggested that the role of National Commissions in the coordination of UNESCO nominations such as Geoparks and others be included for discussion under item 6 of the discussion points of the Kenya meeting. One representative proposed adding topics on climate change and UNESCO nominations to the agenda of the Kenya meeting. One representative proposed to reflect the MOW program in the agenda of the Kenya meeting;

• One representative proposed "working arrangements between field offices and National Commissions" for discussion at the Kenya meeting;

• One representative requested the possibility of obtaining a visa upon arrival at the airport during the 5th interregional meeting;

• One representative shared the feeling expressed by other representatives that National Commissions were marginalized and emphasized the need to streamline them as a single source of technical and academic expertise. She proposed, in the light of the ongoing reform process, to prepare a document with the ideas of National Commissions on how they should be better integrated within the Organization;

• One representative stressed the need to bring back a section of National Commission Focal Points to the Secretariat.

Following the debate, the Chairperson gave the floor to Ms Njoka, Secretary-General of the Kenya National Commission, who supported the inclusion of an item on strategic transformation in the agenda of the Kenya meeting. Regarding the issue of the possibility of obtaining a visa upon arrival in the country, she confirmed this possibility under certain circumstances, determined on a case-by-case basis.

The Chairperson then gave the floor to Mr Genc Seiti, Director of the Member States and Partners Division (DIR/MSP), who gave his answers to the questions posed as follows:

• First, he thanked the National Commissions for sharing their ideas and comments, which were very relevant and important to guide the Secretariat. He also thanked, on behalf of the Director General, the Kenya National Commission for offering to host the 5th Interregional Meeting of National Commissions.

• Noting that most Member States highlighted the importance of strategic transformation and the need to discuss this issue at the meeting in Kenya, he welcomed the proposal to include this item in the agenda of the Kenya meeting.

• He also said that the Kenya meeting would provide a good opportunity to reflect on the proposal made by several National Commissions to establish a working group to follow up in-between meetings of National Commissions. With regard to the follow-up of the interregional meeting in Kenya, he appreciated that some National Commissions took the initiative to organize regional meetings.
He further stated that the list of the 6 proposed discussion points for the Kenya meeting was provisional and would be supplemented by the views expressed. With regard to the format of the meeting in Kenya, National Commissions are invited to send relevant proposals to the Secretariat. In conclusion, he introduced the Secretariat team dealing with National Commissions and stressed the need to build on existing human resources due to lack of funds for staff expansion.

Presentation of the 2018 UNESCO Young Professionals Program

After opening remarks by the Director of the Office of Human Resources Management (HRM) Mr Hong Kwon, Ms Rossella Salvia, Coordinator of Human Resources Partnerships, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the "Young Professionals Program (YPP) 2018".

She indicated that the call for applications would be launched in late April or early May 2018 and specified that only candidates from 64 under-represented Member States and 39 unrepresented Member States would be eligible. National Commissions will have three months to prepare and send a list of up to 15 candidates, who will then be contacted by HRM for their detailed CVs and video interviews.

During the Q & A session, 4 countries took the floor and welcomed the restart of the YPP in 2018. Ms Salvia was invited to share her PowerPoint presentation with the National Commissions and to clarify the requirements for the university diploma degree. One representative asked if it was possible for the HRM to name 10 posts identified for the YPP in the Secretariat so that National Commissions could orient their selection in a more efficient way. One representative stressed the importance of giving priority to unrepresented States candidates during the selection process.

In her response, Ms. Salvia specified that the advanced university degree would mainly correspond to a master's degree or a study of at least four academic years. Noting that the sharing of information on the posts identified for the YPP would be risky because of their variability, she confirmed the possibility of sending to National Commissions a more generic type of description of posts with relevant requirements (project management, policy development or research staff).

Closing of the meeting

After expressing her appreciation to all National Commissions, the Secretariat and the technical staff concerned, the Chair closed the meeting by wishing the success to the Interregional Meeting in Kenya.