Sir/Madam,

Following my letter of 8 June last, I would like to thank those National Commissions who have sent us the results of the census of the clubs, centres and associations for UNESCO located in their respective countries. However, we are still waiting for the contribution from a large number of National Commissions. Allow me to reiterate my request once again to provide us with your inputs for the general census, by the end of July.

I am pleased also to announce that a training seminar for newly appointed Secretaries-General will be organized during the week preceding the 38th session of the General Conference. For those who are interested in and will be able to attend it, please let us know as soon as possible.

As you are certainly aware, during the month of June, 20 new sites were added to UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves, which now has 651 sites - including 15 transboundary sites in 120 countries. Myanmar had its first biosphere reserve inscribed this year. Those of you who are interested in learning more about these new sites, can connect to this link. Please also consult the World Heritage website: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/note, where new inscriptions are being announced.

27-29 July 2015 - “Rapprochement of Cultures: one Humanity beyond Diversity”- Fifth International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO- Beijing, People’s Republic of China

Following the fourth International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, on the theme of “The Role of Women in Fighting Poverty” (UNESCO Headquarters on 29 and 30 June 2015), the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee will organize, in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat and with the support of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, the Fifth International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, in Beijing, People's Republic of China, from 27 to 29 July 2015.

The topic chosen for this Forum - “Rapprochement of Cultures: One Humanity beyond Diversity” - falls within the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, and concerns all fields of competence of UNESCO and its partners: education, science, social and human sciences, culture, communication and information.
The Forum is intended primarily for NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, but is also open to the participation of other institutions and representatives of Member States, subject to prior registration on the website of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee (www.ong-unesco.org). The provisional programme, practical information and working documents are available on this link, as well as that of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee. Do not hesitate to visit the website of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee to register and get additional information.

Contact: Ms Sabina Colombo (ngo@unesco.org)

23-28 August 2015 - World Water Week, Stockholm, Sweden

Hosted and organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), the World Water Week in Stockholm is the leading annual global event for addressing the planet’s water issues and related concerns of international development. Under the theme “Water for Development”, leaders and experts from the world’s scientific, business, government and civic communities will gather in Stockholm to exchange views, experiences and shape joint solutions to global water challenges.

Within this strategic framework, UNESCO’s International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO-IHP) will organize several sessions on key pressing water-related challenges, including climate and disaster risks, global water resources in emergency situations, Emerging pollutants in water and wastewater, gender indicators, etc.

If you are interested in knowing more about this week, please find all relevant information under this link.

Contact: Mr Alexander Otte (a.otte@unesco.org) and Ms Natalia Uribe (n.uribe-pando@unesco.org)

8 September 2015 – International Literacy Day

Every year, on 8 September, International Literacy Day (ILD) celebrations are held at the global, regional and country levels around a selected theme to remind the international community about the centrality of literacy to lifelong learning and to the creation of sustainable and inclusive societies.

This year’s theme is “Literacy and sustainable societies”. The year 2015 presents a special opportunity for the international community to take stock of progress made towards the achievement of the internationally agreed goals, notably the six Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to shape the new agenda for education and sustainable development. The main idea behind this theme, therefore, is to explore critical links between literacy and the future sustainable development agenda which will be adopted during the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.

In this connection, please note that at UNESCO Headquarters, there will be a global event on “Literacy and sustainable societies” (provisional) scheduled for 8-9 September 2015 which is intended to prepare the ground for intensified literacy efforts of countries and partners in the post-2015 era. On this occasion, a 2015 Awards Ceremony of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes will also take place.

Within this framework, I encourage National Commissions to organize related activities, in collaboration with key partners, including UNESCO Field Offices. Please feel free to send us information on any activity you intend to coordinate, and we shall publish it on our website.

For more information on the International Literacy Day, I invite you to visit a UNESCO webpage dedicated to ILD through the following link: www.unesco.org/literacy.

Contact: Ms Mari Yasunaga (literacy@unesco.org)
26-28 October 2015 – 9th UNESCO Youth Forum

Held every two years since 1999, the 9th UNESCO Youth Forum will take place this year from 26 to 28 October at UNESCO Headquarters, prior to the 38th session of the General Conference, with the purpose of bringing the Organization's work and realities of youth and youth organizations closer to each other.

This edition’s theme is “Young Global Citizens for a Sustainable Planet”, to allow discussion of sustainable development challenges in the post-2015 context, while also maintaining a focus on climate change and related global debates around the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21). This year, the Forum will also be part of the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO.

All National Commissions have been invited by the Director-General to nominate at least one youth participant, along with specific nomination criteria and through a participatory process, to represent their respective countries’ youths to the Forum. The active participation of young women and men from all Member States and Associate Members is essential to ensure the Forum’s universal character, diversity and representativeness, and therefore enhance the pertinence and impact of its outputs. For more information on the 9th UNESCO Youth Forum, I invite you to visit the following link: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-forums/9th-unesco-youth-forum-2015

Contact: Mr Alexander Schischlik (9th UnescoYouthForum@unesco.org)

UNESCO's 70th anniversary – Updates

The Namibian National Commission for UNESCO and the UNESCO Office in Namibia will jointly organize a series of activities for the celebration of the 70th Anniversary of UNESCO, which will be launched this summer. These events will include a main celebration in August (a half evening activity with prominent Namibian personalities who will talk about Namibia’s interaction with UNESCO) and a concluding event in September (which will be focused on Namibia’s longstanding cooperation with UNESCO in the training of journalists).

UNESCO Publications

- Three new issues of the World Heritage Magazine are available in English, French and Spanish: titled Nature-Culture interlinkages, issue N°75 seeks to review recent findings concerning the nature-culture interlinkages (it can be found under this link); issue N°76 is devoted to World Heritage in Germany (available under this link); and finally, a special issue on Iraq’s Heritage – a Treasure under Threat can be found here.

- The study Countering Online Hate Speech has been developed in cooperation with the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP) at the University of Oxford. It provides a global overview of the dynamics characterizing hate speech online and some of the measures that have been adopted to counteract and mitigate it, highlighting good practices that have emerged at the local and global levels. While the study offers a comprehensive analysis of the international, regional and national normative frameworks developed to address hate speech online, and their repercussions for freedom of expression, it places particular emphasis on social and non-regulatory mechanisms that can help to counter the production, dissemination and impact of hateful messages online. You can have access to the full text under this link.
Appointments of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (May-June 2015):

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

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr Sadollah Nasiri Gheydari has been appointed acting Secretary-General.

In Grenada, Ms Kisha Gellineau has been appointed acting Secretary-General.

In Guyana, Mr Rupert Roopnaraine has been appointed Chairperson, succeeding Ms Priya Devi Manickchand.

In Rwanda, Mr MUSAFIRI Papias Malimba has been appointed Chairperson.

In Vanuatu, Mr Alfred Carlot has been appointed Chairperson, succeeding Mr Bob Loughman.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Falt