Sir/Madam,

As the New Year 2019 is approaching, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere wishes to all of you for a great year and a wonderful time ahead.

As announced earlier, allow me to reiterate my call for your contributions for the 2018 Annual Report of National Commissions (6th edition). With a view to promoting a more proactive and coherent approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this edition will focus on your actions undertaken to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the progress made in your respective countries.

We would be grateful if you could send your contributions to the coordination team of National Commissions (natcom@unesco.org) no later than 30 January 2019.

Celebration of anniversaries with which UNESCO could be associated in 2020-2021

I would like to remind you that the call for Proposals by Member States concerning the celebration of anniversaries with which UNESCO could be associated in 2020-2021 was released in September 2018, with a deadline set to 15 January 2019.

Each Member State may submit two requests for the celebration of anniversaries in association with UNESCO and preferably, one of these would relate to gender equality.

The Member States having anniversaries approved by the 39th session of the General Conference (check here the List of anniversaries to be celebrated in 2018-2019 in association with UNESCO) are kindly reminded that they are responsible for the implementation of the activities relating to the celebration of anniversaries and must submit, on completion of the project, a detailed activity report on the results achieved and their usefulness to the Member State(s) and UNESCO. This requirement is necessary for the approval of the new anniversary proposals.

The on-line forms for the submission by the Member States of new proposals and for the submission of reports are available on the dedicated website.
Further information can be obtained on UNESCO’s website at http://en.unesco.org/celebrations/anniversaries and on the Member States’ website http://www.unesco.int/.

Contact: Ms Monica Crutescu (mo.crutescu@unesco.org)

National Commissions database

As a follow-up to the discussion at the recent regional meeting of Latin America and Caribbean, the Secretariat envisages to update the database of all National Commissions, to which you will be able to have access directly soon. In the meantime, please let us know all relevant information regarding the changes intervened in your National Commissions. I am also pleased to inform you that we are updating the dedicated webpage for National Commissions as well, which will become available in January next and will contain the following links to the basic texts on National Commissions.

- Legal Texts on National Commissions for UNESCO
- Architecture of National Commissions for UNESCO
- Report of the Review of the Cooperation of UNESCO's Secretariat with the National Commissions for UNESCO
- Report of the Open-ended tripartite working group and the Action Plan for Enhancing the Cooperation of the UNESCO Secretariat with National Commissions for UNESCO
- Guideline for Interface and Cooperation between UNESCO Field Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO (196 EX/5 Part III Annex)
- Regulatory Framework regarding Associations and Clubs for UNESCO

News on Strategic Transformation

The second issue of the newsletter on UNESCO’s Strategic Transformation has just been launched. This issue is dedicated to UNESCO’s communication, a key objective of the Strategic Transformation, namely “repositioning UNESCO to effectively communicate with one voice and in an efficient manner”. The bulletin is available in English and in French.

UNESCO Education Sector Monthly Digest – December 2018

I am pleased to share with you UNESCO’s Education Monthly Digest of December, under this link, in which you can find out some interesting stories on how UNESCO defends the right to education as well as the interviews with three UNESCO Chairs on the right to education. The Digest is also available in French and Spanish.

Contact: edknowledge@unesco.org

10 December 2018 – Celebration of the Human Rights Day

This year, Human Rights Day will mark the end of a year-long campaign celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being -- regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

A number of events organized to pave the way for the commemoration of Human Rights Day 2018, include an artistic performance entitled “La veillée de
l’humanité”, on 10 December Human Rights Day, at the Théâtre national de Chaillot, where UDHR was adopted under the auspices of UNESCO. On 11 December UNESCO will host at its Headquarters the “Art Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue”, consisting of a series of exchanges with artists aimed at illustrating the contribution of art to the struggle for human rights. On 13-14 December, UNESCO joins forces with the City of Barcelona and the Government of Catalonia to organize in Barcelona an international experts’ Meeting on Public policies Supporting the Right to Education of Refugees. The week of commemorative events will be concluded with the screening on 15 December at UNESCO Headquarters and in French Premiere of the movie “The Forgiven”. The film focuses on an intense episode of the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, played by the renowned actor and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Forest Whitaker. Followed by a panel discussion featuring the actor and the film director Roland Joffe, the event will mark the finale of UNESCO’s commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the UDHR.

I invite the National Commissions to join forces in the global campaign. You are also encouraged to find out more information via the dedicated website.

Contact: Mr Konstantinos Tararas (k.tararas@unesco.org)

12 - 13 December 2018 – Forum on artificial intelligence in Africa, Ben Guérir, Morocco

For the first time, UNESCO is organizing a High-Level Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Africa. More than ever before, Artificial Intelligence is at the heart of debates around the world, and Africa is no exception.

As the development of AI is unparalleled on the continent, this Forum will encourage a reflection on AI with and by African actors. The Forum will focus on the issues and challenges of artificial intelligence in Africa. The sub-themes of the Forum should direct reflection on different dimensions of AI in the African context. Such discussion would reveal the interest of AI as a lever for development and would highlight in particular the importance of public policies in the ethical development of new technology.

This Forum will gather some 150 participants, including UNESCO’s multidisciplinary expertise, and that of its Member States and high level guests from both the public and private sector in Africa and elsewhere, to address the issues.

The Forum will consist of plenary sessions and thematic workshops over 2 days. Side-events will be organized in the form of round tables.

Contact: Mr Abdoulaye Ibrahim (a.ibrahim@unesco.org)

17 - 19 December 2018 – The 2018 International Conference of NGOs, UNESCO HQs, Paris

The 2018 edition of the International Conference of NGOs will focus on the theme “Enhancing and promoting the commitment and contribution of UNESCO’s NGO partners” and will be organized around two subthemes: “Acting together: The collective strength of NGOs” and “Communication, information, dialogue”.

The Conference is a key forum in which UNESCO’s official NGO partners meet to review the state of cooperation with UNESCO. This year’s Conference will provide a welcome opportunity to examine collective NGO action carried out in
2017 and 2018, and consider the main lines of collective cooperation for 2019-2020.

The International Conference of NGOs gathers every two years NGOs in official partnership with the Organization. Representatives of Member States, foundations in official relations with UNESCO, other NGOs and/or other interested organizations may attend the Conference as observers.

The provisional agenda and the information leaflet are now available. Additional information and working documents will become available soon on this site and the one of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee (www.ong-unesco.org).

Contact: ngo@unesco.org

28 January 2019 – Official launch event of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, UNESCO HQs, Paris

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages in order to raise global attention on the critical risks confronting indigenous languages and its significance for sustainable development, reconciliation, good governance and peace building. The celebration in 2019 will contribute to the access to, and promotion of, indigenous languages and to a concrete improvement in the lives of indigenous peoples by strengthening the capacities of indigenous language speakers and relevant indigenous peoples' organizations.

This official launch event is co-organized by UNESCO, UNDESA, and the members of the Steering Committee for organization of the International Year, with the participation of other relevant stakeholders. To be held under the theme “Indigenous languages matter for sustainable development, peace building and reconciliation”, the event will gather high-level governmental representatives, indigenous peoples, civil society, academia, media, information and memory organizations, United Nations agencies, public language harmonization and documentation institutions and private sector. The major objective of the official launch event is to provide a global forum for a constructive debate in which high-level speakers address new paradigms for safeguarding, promoting and providing access to knowledge and information for the indigenous languages’ users.

National Commissions are invited to join force to contribute to the success of the International Year. You are encouraged to find out more information via the homepage of the International Year: https://en.iyil2019.org/.

National Commissions’ Community Board – sharing initiatives

- The Cuban National Commission for UNESCO (CNCU) and the Office of the Jose Marti Program are organizing the Interregional Workshop on exchange and cooperation for sustainable development between UNESCO and Jose Marti Chairs, in the context of the 4th Interregional Conference for World Balance, from 28 to 31 January 2019, at the Havana Convention Center.

The purpose of this initiative is to join efforts of both Chairs’ networks in favor of UNESCO’s purposes and goals, as well as of actions to address the global challenges that adversely affect humankind. The main topics to be discussed during this Interregional Workshop will be: sustainable development; environmental problems of the 21st century; identity, diversity, pluralism and intercultural dialogue; education for global citizenship and development; gender equality and the social emancipation.
of women; working experiences of the Jose Martí Chairs and the UNESCO Chairs, as well as promotion of cooperation between their respective networks.

Those interested in participating in the Interregional Workshop are invited to visit the official website http://www.porelequilibriodelmundocuba.com or contact Mr Alexis Julio Soto Aruca (alexis@cncu.minrex.gob.cu) and Mr Yoandry Carlos Oduardo Torres (yoandryot@cncu.minrex.gob.cu) for more information.

UNESCO Publications

- UNESCO’s 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, Migration, displacement and education, is the first of its kind to explore the issues of migration, displacement and education in-depth across all part of the world. It presents evidence on the implications of different types of migration and displacement for education systems but also the impact that reforming education curricula and approaches to pedagogy and teacher preparation can have on addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by migration and displacement. It gives voice to experiences in host and home communities. The full report in English is available under this link. You may find out more materials about this report under this link.

- Published by UNESCO and the World Bank, the position paper Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery serves as a guide for development practitioners, particularly the World Bank and UNESCO teams operating on the ground, as well as national and local authorities, planners, and international organizations to integrate culture, both as an asset and as a tool, in all phases of city reconstruction and recovery. The Paper consists of three parts that analyze the evolution of reconstruction and recovery frameworks in recent decades, introduce in detail a dedicated framework for Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery, together with key guiding principles, and provide operational guidance for their implementation. This Position Paper is available both in English and in French.

- In the No. 89 issue of the World Heritage on “World Heritage and Wetlands”, UNESCO put its focus on wetlands, which are an essential but often overlooked aspect of the natural environment. In this issue, you may find interviews and articles concerning the conservation of wetlands, as well as the information on the newly inscribed World Heritage sites. The full e-version of the issue is now available in English, French and Spanish.

Appointments of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (November / December 2018)

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

In Czech Republic, Mr René Zelený has been appointed Secretary-General (since October 2018), succeeding Ms Radka Bordes.

In Ecuador, Ms Consuelo Beatriz Barrera Nieto has been appointed Secretary-General, succeeding Ms María Carola Iñiguez.

In Fiji, Ms Rosy Sofia Akbar has been appointed Chair, succeeding Mr Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum.

In Japan, Ms Mami Oyama has been appointed Secretary-General (since October 2018), succeeding Mr Kazuaki Kawabata.

In Suriname, Mr Roy Smits has been appointed Secretary-General, succeeding Ms Anuradha Kamtasing.
In the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr Hamisi M. Malebo has been appointed Executive Secretary (since October 2018), succeeding Mr Moshi M. Kimizi.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Firmin Edouard Matoko