To the Secretaries-General
of the National Commissions for UNESCO

Ref.: ERI/MSP/15/5
-1 APR 2015

Sir/Madam,

To begin this monthly letter, I would like to invite all of you to join the UNESCO #UNITE4Heritage campaign, launched by the Director-General in Baghdad, on 28 March last.

#Unite4Heritage aims at building support for the protection of heritage where it is threatened by extreme violence. It will use the power of social media networks to create a global movement with young people in Iraq and elsewhere, providing a counter-narrative to sectarian propaganda.

The campaign website will be used to collect stories of UNESCO’s work in protecting heritage, such as rebuilding holy places in Timbuktu. These stories will be used to start a “photo wall” on the campaign website to which everyone can contribute.

I call upon the National Commissions to “unite” and take part in further promoting and advocating this international campaign.

Separately, you know that the 196th session of the Executive Board (8-23 April 2015) is fast approaching and I look forward to meeting those of you who will be present at this session. As already announced, I am pleased to confirm that the traditional morning meeting of the representatives of the National Commissions for UNESCO, will be convened on 15 and 16 April (8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. in Room IV preceded by a coffee/tea service starting at 8 a.m.).

The provisional agenda has been sent to you. You are kindly requested to confirm at your earliest convenience your presence by sending an email to the Network of National Commissions: natcom@unesco.org.

Anniversaries 2016-2017

As you may recall, in conformity with the 195 EX/Decision 25 of the Executive Board, the proposals made by Member States concerning the celebration of anniversaries with which UNESCO could be associated in 2016-2017 have been examined in line with the statutory procedure for the selection of anniversaries and will be submitted to the Executive Board at its forthcoming 196th session (ref. document 196EX/25).

Following the statutory procedure for the selection of these proposals, Member States can submit again, within two months from the 196th session of the Executive
Board, and if appropriate, requests related to anniversaries which had been submitted by 15 January 2015 but were not selected.

In addition, the new procedure foresees the possibility offered to Member States from unrepresented or under-represented regions to submit new requests during the appeal period. For the current exercise, all the regions with the exception of the Europe and North America region are under-represented. I therefore strongly urge Member States from the Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions to present new proposals. To this effect, an official letter will be addressed to Member States of these regions in due course.

Please note that consequently, the appeals, as well as any new proposals, submitted by 23 June 2015 at the latest, will be re-examined and the revised proposals will then be submitted to the Executive Board at its 197th session if they meet the required criteria.

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


The 2015 Report Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) - entitled “Education for All 2000-2015: achievements and challenges" - will be officially launched on line and on the occasion of three international events - in New Delhi, Paris and New York on 9 April. As every year, the international launch will be followed by a series of regional and launch events, on 9 April and during the weeks that follow.

The 2015 GMR - the 12th and final report of the current series - will take stock of progress made since world leaders agreed on six Education for All goals at the World Education Forum in Dakar 15 years ago. It will also look at the emerging sustainable development agenda, providing recommendations on the definition, monitoring and funding of new education targets. This assessment will allow drawing conclusions that will guide the development of the post-2015 education goals and targets.

The GMR launch events will be an opportunity for government leaders to reflect on progress made and future priorities for education in their countries. We would therefore be delighted to collaborate with National Commissions on these launch events. Your guidance and support will help ensure that presentations and debates directly address local priorities. Please contact Mr Felix Zimmermann (f.zimmermann@unesco.org), if your National Commission wishes to help organize events. You will find comprehensive information on the report, the launch events and presentations around the world under this link.

Contact: (GMRevents@unesco.org)

UNESCO’s 70th anniversary – Updates

Coinciding with the meeting of the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) that will be hosted by UNESCO on 28 April, a major event will be organized at Paris Headquarters to celebrate the Organization’s 70th Anniversary in the presence of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the chiefs of all UN agencies. More information on this event will be provided in the upcoming weeks.

I would like to reiterate my invitation to frequently consult the special Anniversary website for continual updates and to share information of events organized by Member States (as most recently done by the Dominican Republic, Bangladesh and Cuba) at: http://en.unesco.org/70years. Please also keep the Secretariat...
informed about any planned anniversary events by entering it in our dedicated website, under the “Participate” section - “tell us about your event”. In this connection, I wish to recall that Member States are encouraged to use the 70th anniversary logo during the celebration year to promote the Organization’s visibility and outreach. To this effect, the downloadable guidelines are available under this link.


UNESCO and the Government of Latvia will co-host the World Press Freedom Day’s main event and the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Ceremony in 2015 which will take place in Riga, Latvia from 2-4 May. The 2015 celebration’s theme is “Let Journalism Thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality, and Safety in the Digital Age”.

Every year, this Day celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. In dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered.

On this occasion, you are encouraged to develop initiatives in favour of press freedom or to assess the state of press freedom worldwide, and inform us. Please consult our site to get more information on this Day.

Contact: Mr Ming-Kuok Lim (mk.lim@unesco.org and pressfreedom@unesco.org)

18-19 May 2015 - World Education Forum 2015 - Incheon, Republic of Korea

Nearly a quarter century after the birth of the Education for All (EFA) movement in Jomtien, Thailand, and fifteen years after the World Education Forum of Dakar in 2000, the world education community will come together to agree on a joint position for finalizing the education goals and targets in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

Jointly organized by UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, UN-Women and the World Bank, the World Forum will review how countries have met their commitments towards EFA, will reach agreement on a new education agenda and will adopt a global framework for action for the years to come.

The outcomes of the Forum will be promoted by all stakeholders as an agreed position on education and as part of the global development agenda post-2015 to be adopted at the United Nations Summit meeting in September 2015. I wish to strongly encourage the National Commissions to actively participate in WEF 2015.


Contact: Ms Sang Eun Jung (se.jung@unesco.org)


The overall theme of the Forum –hosted by ITU and jointly organized by UNESCO, ITU, UNCTAD and UNDP – is “Innovating Together: Enabling ICTs for Sustainable Development”.

The Forum will build upon two tracks: the “High-Level” track, consisting of policy statements, WSIS prize ceremony and the ministerial round table; and the “Forum” track that will offer participants a series of dialogues, action line facilitation meetings, country workshops, thematic workshops and knowledge exchanges, as well as an exhibition addressing issues that are critical to WSIS implementation and follow-up.

Those who wish to attend the Forum are invited to register following the procedure available online on the devoted website: http://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2015/

Contact: Mr Cédric Wachholz (c.wachholz@unesco.org)

8 June 2015 -World Oceans Day 2015, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

This year, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO) will organize, together with partners, a full day dedicated to the ocean’s crucial role in the climate system, leading up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21).

The programme includes scientific workshops, round tables, exhibitions and a UNESCO Open Campus for youth. The objective is to bring together scientists, political decision-makers, civil society and youth to define ocean sensitive recommendations to mitigate climate change and its socioeconomic impacts. These recommendations will be presented to heads of states, members of government, UN representatives and decisions makers attending the closing ceremony.

I encourage you to join in the events that will be organized within the framework of this Day or to develop initiatives for the promotion of this Day in your respective countries. Relevant information on the celebration of the Day is available with this link.

Contact: Ms Réjane Hervé-Smadja (r.herve@unesco.org)

UNESCO Publications

- The United Nations World Water Development Report 2015, entitled Water for a sustainable world was presented on 20 March on the occasion of the World Water Day. This report stresses the need to devote a Millennium objective for sustainable development of water. It also calls for the focus to be on the overall management of the water cycle whereas the Millennium Development Goals focused on access to water and sanitation. The report is currently available in English under this link.

- The book Global Bioethics: What for? is just one of the ways in which the UNESCO’s Bioethics Programme is celebrating its twenty years of existence. Through the experiences of each of the authors, specialists from all over the world, men and women who have contributed to the Programme, here are thirty articles of four pages each providing us with many accessible definitions of bioethics and its use. The book is available in English under this link.

- The 16th issue of the Series Savoirs communs has been published in English and French. Digital Services for Education in Africa, this publication is based on the conclusions of a study group on the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) for improving the quality of basic education in Africa. It can be downloaded here.
Appointments of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (February 2015):

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

In Georgia, Mrs Tamar Beruchashvili has been appointed President succeeding Ms Maia Panjikidze.

In Mali, Ms Sangare Coumba Toure has been appointed Secretary-General.

In Pakistan, Mr Hafiz Sher Ali has been appointed Secretary-General succeeding Mr. Muhammad Taimur Khan (since December 2014).

In Viet Nam, Mr Pham Sanh Chau has been appointed Secretary-General, succeeding Mr Pham Cao Phong (since January 2015).

Yours sincerely,

Eric Falt