The training workshop for new Secretaries-General of National Commissions aimed at strengthening the National Commissions’ capacities in implementing UNESCO’s programmes and activities at country level. It was structured so as to provide an intensive introductory experience to the newly appointed Secretaries-General on topics relating to status, structure and functions of National Commissions, their roles in cooperation with wider UNESCO family including NGOs, the Organization’s visibility at national level, the Anniversaries programme, structure of UNESCO’s field presence and the Participation Programme. All the presentations provoked great interest and questions from the audience. The capacity-building event took place at UNESCO Headquarters on 14 November 2019 and involved over 90 participants from 70 National Commissions as well as invited speakers from the Secretariat, Field Offices and some National Commissions.

Opening of the meeting
ADG/PAX Mr Firmin Edouard Matoko opened the Training Workshop by congratulating new Secretaries-General of National Commissions on their recent appointments to their respective posts. He briefly presented the structure of the PAX Sector and the team of the NAC Unit. After providing an overview of the programme of the Training Workshop, ADG/PAX highlighted the importance of National Commissions’ work for UNESCO and encouraged their active participation in upcoming events, trainings and calls for proposals, including the questionnaire on implementation of the Regulatory Framework for Associations and Clubs for UNESCO which would be launched soon.

Status, Structures and Functions of National Commissions: Fundamentals and Operational Capacities
DIR/DRX Mr Genc Seiti and Chief of Unit PAX/DRX/RMS/NAC a.i. Mr Fuad Pashayev gave a general overview of the historical and legal background of National Commissions’ functioning. While recalling the structural diversity amongst National Commissions, it was reaffirmed that to be active and operational a National Commission should have adequate resources, status and authority at government level as well as a Secretary-General and a Chairperson appointed for a sufficiently long period. Ideally, a secretariat of National Commission should employ at least one focal point for each field of UNESCO’s competence.

The Secretary-General of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU) Mr Kwangho Kim shared KNCU’s experience on the subject. The following points were brought up:

- KNCU’s functions are based on the 1954 Act for UNESCO Activities, which grants it an independent status. The National Commission has a multi-divisional structure, including 4 Bureaus comprising of 11 divisions specialized in different UNESCO-related programmes. KNCU’s General Assembly (60 members) meets once or twice a year mainly to approve annual work plan and follow up on projects and tasks.
- KNCU’s workforce includes 110 employees of which 70 regular, 30 contractual and 10 seconded staff. The secondment of public officials from local governments (for 1 to 2 years) is instrumental in encouraging participation of local government in UNESCO-related activities and building a good cooperation network at the community level.
National Commissions’ Roles in Cooperation with Wider UNESCO Family (NGOs, Clubs for UNESCO, National Committees for Intergovernmental Programmes, ASPnet Schools)

Chief of Section PAX/DRX/RMS gave a short presentation and two National Commissions shared their good practices on the topic.

The major points emphasized by Secretary-General of the Slovenian National Commission Ms Marjutka Hafner were:

- National Commission must work in a triangular synergy with UNESCO, national governments and stakeholders. Tripartite meetings can help achieve this synergy.
- National Commission must ensure that relevant stakeholders are duly engaged and have ownership over their UNESCO-related projects. This implies a degree of flexibility: National Commission can set up special platforms and bodies for this purpose.
- Funds should target both quality and quantity. National Commissions must be sufficiently endowed.

The Secretary-General of the Curaçao National Commission Ms Marva C.Browne raised the following questions:

- National Commission must serve as a bridge between UNESCO and the communities on the ground. Social media offer opportunities for public communication and awareness.
- National Commission can use SDGs to communicate with the population. Progress in terms of SDG can be reported, with data being aggregated accordingly.

**UNESCO Visibility at National Level: the Roles of National Commissions in Public Information including the Protection of UNESCO’s Name and Logo**

DIR/DPI a.i. Mr Matthieu Guevel delivered a presentation on UNESCO’s branding and logo policies. He underscored the importance of bringing UNESCO beneficiaries’ stories to light and acknowledged an important role that National Commissions could play in this regard.

PAX Communication Officer Ms Monica Crutescu presented on the criteria and procedure for the Anniversaries programme. Subsequently, National Commissions made specific proposals such as:

- The need for an Anniversaries calendar which would help National Commissions to communicate with the population about the programme.
- The need for a platform for sharing best practices linked to the Anniversaries programme.

**Structure of UNESCO’s Field Presence**

C/PAX/COR Ms Magdalena Landry and DIR/FU/MTD Ms Lidia Arthur Brito made a joint presentation on UNESCO Field Network. As it was stated, currently Africa has two-tier structure (multisectoral regional and national offices) while other regions use three-tier approach (cluster, national and thematic regional offices). According to 206EX/Decision 5.II.A, overall strategy for a UNESCO field presence should be submitted to 209th session of the Executive Board taking into account ongoing UN reform and as part of the Strategic Transformation process.

The Secretary-General of the Kenya National Commission Dr Evangeline W. Njoka described her Commission’s experience of engagement with UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa presenting both challenges and benefits of such collaboration. She underscored the importance of collaborative planning and implementation of programmes, co-hosting of meetings and
conferences as well as provision of mutual technical and budgetary support between National Commissions and Field Offices.

During the follow-up discussions, National Commissions raised the following points:
- The difference between Cluster, Multisectoral Regional and National Offices must be clarified. The criteria for the establishment of an office must be clearly spelled out.
- The linkages between Field Offices and National Commissions need to be revised and sustained.

**Participation Programme: Rules and Common Issue**

Chief of Section PAX/DRX/PPF Mr Stoyan Bantchev presented on the Participation Programme and National Commissions’ role in elaborating and submitting proposals as well as implementing and reporting on the projects funded. As it was stated, the deadline for submission of project proposals for the 2020-2021 biennium would be 28 February 2020 (for Africa, LDCs and SIDS) and 31 May 2020 (for the other eligible countries). Financial and evaluation reports should be submitted by the end of biennium. A 3-month delay can be granted to use the budget allocated if it has not been done by the end of the biennium. An emergency assistance capped at USD 50,000 can be granted in the event of insurmountable circumstances with catastrophic consequences in UNESCO’s fields of competence, usually within a month of its allocation.

At the close of the Training Workshop, President of the International Conference of NGOs Official Partners to UNESCO and President of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee Ms Marie-Claude Machon was given the opportunity to present on the role and presence of NGOs at UNESCO. In particular, she clarified that NGOs may have consultative or associative status with UNESCO. The latter implies closer relationship with UNESCO and can be granted by the Executive Board only to the NGOs that have had consultative status for two years.

National Commissions came out with concrete proposals including:
- The need for a portal that explains how to fill out the Participation Programme forms and displays model projects, which would help National Commissions to successfully apply for and implement the Programme.
- The criteria to become a partner NGO must be clarified.

The Secretariat concluded the Workshop by thanking all the attendees, moderators, speakers and trainers for their valuable contributions and active participation throughout the event.

All presentations and documents contributed to the Training are made available on the National Commissions Platform (https://unesco.sharepoint.com/sites/natcom/en-US/Pages/default.aspx).