Sir/Madam,

Your large participation in the First Interregional Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO successfully convened from 22 to 24 July 2014 in Astana, demonstrated your commitment to continue strengthening the interface and fruitful cooperation between the Secretariat and the National Commissions. The ensuing discussions amongst the five regional groups were excellent opportunities to share issues of relevance and interest from each region (see attached the report of the meeting).

Let me therefore express my personal satisfaction for the new dynamism of our joint activities and the Organization’s thanks for your commitment towards promoting UNESCO’s values and priorities. I also wish to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its generous contribution in the organization of this event.

15-31 October 2014 – Executive Board (195th session), UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

As recently communicated to you by e-mail, during the upcoming 195th session of the Executive Board, the traditional meeting of representatives of National Commissions will be held in two sessions each of one hour and a half (from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.) on 22 and 23 October 2014. The sessions will focus primarily on the following three topics:
• Guidelines for Interface and Cooperation between UNESCO Field Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO (distribution of the updated text of the Guidelines);
• 70th Anniversary of UNESCO (role of the National Commissions to mobilize NGOs, Clubs and the civil society for the celebration);
• International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), for which UNESCO has been designated as lead agency for the United Nations system (role of the National Commissions to mobilize various partners for the Decade).
I am looking forward to seeing many of you on 22-23 October during the meetings of the representatives of the National Commissions and I invite you to consult the dedicated section of our website for more information on the Executive Board in general: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/executive-board/.

Contact: Ms Emiko de Marmier-Murai (e.de-marmier@unesco.org)

31 October 2014 – Launch of the celebrations of UNESCO’s 70th anniversary, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

The Director-General will officially launch the celebrations of UNESCO’s 70th anniversary during an event paying tribute to Nelson Mandela at Headquarters on 31 October 2014.

The celebration of UNESCO's 70th anniversary in 2015 will offer a unique opportunity to revisit and rethink UNESCO's orientations and programmes for the next decade and beyond and to highlight the relevance of the Organization's mandate and priorities.

A proposed Action Plan on arrangements for the celebration of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO is available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002294/229453e.pdf and will be submitted for consideration at the forthcoming 195th session of the Executive Board.

I encourage all National Commissions to organize national events celebrating the 70th anniversary of UNESCO and to involve women and youth of your countries to take part in the initiatives. It would be highly appreciated if you could keep the Secretariat informed of the national anniversary events planned for 2015.

For the anniversary, a special website is under construction and a special logo will be designed. Once the website is operational, the National Commissions will be invited to consult and download all relevant information related to the 70th anniversary and the logo and instructions for its correct use.

Contact: Mr Marcello Scarone Azzi (m.scarone@unesco.org) (Calendar of Activities)
Ms Jinchau Clarke (j. clarke@unesco.org) (Logo and guidelines of use)

International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022)

Proclaimed by the UNESCO General Conference and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures – with UNESCO as the lead agency for the United Nations system - will seek to illustrate the benefits of jointly promoting respect for human rights and cultural diversity, while acknowledging the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue to fight against new forms of racism, discrimination, intolerance, extremism and radicalization, thus forging ties among peoples and nations.

.../.
The Action Plan for the decade adopted by UNESCO’s Executive Board underline the importance of Member States and their National Commissions in making the Decade a success. This implies the development of national action plans for activities and special initiatives within the frame of the four thematic areas: (i) Promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as well as supporting reconciliation efforts; (ii) Building a framework for commonly shared values which fosters social cohesion; (iii) Disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural dialogue through quality education and the media; and (iv) Fostering dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, social and cultural dimensions.

The Action Plan also proposes to use UNESCO’s Participation Programme to support the effective involvement of Member States in the Decade. We thus hope to see a growing number of Member States and their National Commissions engaging in this important endeavor, financially as well as through a number of targeted initiatives and actions. The Action Plan is available in the working languages at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002266/226664e.pdf

Contact: Ms Ane-Belinda Preis (ab.preis@unesco.org)

10 November 2014 – UNESCO World Science Day for Peace and Development

Established by UNESCO in 2001, this Day offers an opportunity to demonstrate to the wider public why science is relevant to their daily lives and to engage them in debates on related issues. The theme for the 2014 celebration is “Quality science education - securing a sustainable future for all”. This year’s celebration will therefore be an opportunity to highlight that quality science education can offer a rich context for developing many skills such as critical thinking and problem solving needed to address local and global challenges.

This year’s celebration will include the launch at Headquarters of the UNESCO World Library of Science (WLoS), a free online resource for science learning. Developed through the joint efforts of UNESCO, Nature Education and Roch, the World Library of Science contains hundreds of peer-reviewed articles that use text, pictures, illustrations, and videos to make scientific concepts easy to understand.

All activities organized worldwide to celebrate the Day will be announced on the UNESCO website devoted to the Day (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/wls), which will be available soon.

I call upon National Commissions to organize local and regional activities in keeping with this year’s theme in order to mobilize society and the scientific community.

Contact: Mrs Diana Malpede (d.malpede@unesco.org) and Ms Nicole Webley (n.webley@unesco.org) for World Science Day events, and Mr Julio Sa Rego (j.sa-rego@unesco.org) for the UNESCO World Library of Science.
10-12 November 2014 – UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Aichi-Nagoya, Japan

Organized by UNESCO in cooperation with the Government of Japan, this 2014 UNESCO World Conference will mark the conclusion of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and see the launch of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD.

Under the banner of “Learning Today for a Sustainable Future”, the Conference will celebrate the achievements of the Decade and identify lessons learnt while setting the stage for the future of ESD. It will also showcase initiatives, key players, networks and ideas that the Decade has stimulated. Such examples from all over the world will help to generate future action under the Global Action Programme.

Some 1,000 participants from all around the world are expected to attend. They will include representatives of Member States, UN agencies, NGOs, academia, the private sector, individual experts and youth. Participation in the Conference is by invitation only. UNESCO has invited Member States to nominate participants. I hope that there will be a large representation by the Member States in this Conference.

You will find more information on the Conference on the devoted site (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-world-conference-on-esd-2014/) and information on UNESCO’s action for ESD at the following address: http://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development or by writing to esddecade@unesco.org.

UNESCO Publications

➢ The publication Najaf: The Gate of Wisdom is an introduction to one of the world’s most sacred cities, illustrated with over 120 specially commissioned photographs and written by authors with first-hand experience of the city. This book traces the city’s history to the present day, provides insight into Shi’i rituals from pilgrimages to passion plays and funerals in the cemetery of Wadi al-Salam, and explains Najaf’s role as a centre of learning and religious authority. It is available in English at the following address: http://publishing.unesco.org/details.aspx?Code_Livre=5044.

➢ The regional synthesis report Learning to Live Together: Education Policies and Realities in the Asia-Pacific is the result of collaborative efforts in conducting a regional study on the concept of “Learning to Live Together” in ten countries of the Asia-Pacific Region. Through mapping practical examples, comparative analysis and suggesting new directions for education, this report sheds light on how ‘Learning to Live Together’ can be implemented and become a reality in the classroom. The report is available in English at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002272/227208e.pdf.

.../.
Inclusion from the Start — Guidelines on Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education for Roma Children is available in English under the following link (http://publishing.unesco.org/details.aspx?&Code_Livre=5041&change=E). Co-published by UNESCO and the Council of Europe, these guidelines provide guidance on key themes in early childhood care and education (ECCE); it is hoped that they will support the work of policy makers, early childhood educators and their trainers, Roma organisations, NGOs and international organisations and contribute to making a real change in the lives of young Roma children.

Appointment of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions (June-July-August-September 2014)

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

In Canada, Ms Christina Cameron has been appointed President, Ms Danika Billie Littlechild – Vice-President and Mrs Louise Filatratu – Secretary-General of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

In France, Mr Daniel Janicot has been appointed President and Mr David Fajolles – Secretary-General of the French National Commission for UNESCO.

In Gambia, Mrs Fatou L. Faye has been appointed Chairperson and Mr Momodou Sanneh – Secretary-General of the Gambia National Commission for UNESCO.

In Guatemala, Mrs Jannina Padilla Fuentes has been appointed Secretary-General of the Guatemalan National Commission for UNESCO.

In Guinea-Bissau, Mr Odete Semedo has been appointed President of the National Commission of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for UNESCO.

In Madagascar, Ms Andrianinaina Paul Rabary has been appointed President of the Malagasy National Commission for UNESCO.

In Malawi, Mr Emmanuel Fabiano has been appointed Chairperson of the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO.

In the Netherlands, Ms Andrée van Es has been appointed President of the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO.

In Nigeria, Mr Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau has been appointed Chairperson of the Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO.

In Tajikistan, Mr Shamsiddin Orumbekzoda has been appointed Chairperson and Mr Sarvar Bakhti – Secretary-General of the Tajikistan National Commission for UNESCO.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Fašt