The Assistant Director-General
for External Relations and Public Information

To Secretaries-General
of National Commissions for UNESCO

Ref. : ERI/NCS/NAC/14.8

24 January 2014

Sir/Madam,

At the start of the New Year, I would like to extend my best wishes for health, success and happiness to you and your family.

2014 will be marked by two major celebrations at UNESCO: the International Year of Crystallography and the International Year for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In this regard, I am pleased to announce that there are several activities planned throughout the year for these celebrations and you are invited to consult the related websites with a view to contributing to these celebrations in your respective countries.

For our part, we will ensure the follow-up to the recommendations for enhancing the cooperation of the Secretariat with National Commissions (doc. 37 C/50). To this end, we have already begun preparation of the first edition of the Annual Report of National Commissions with 125 contributions received to date. Furthermore, new arrangements for meetings of National Commissions will be implemented shortly within the framework of the Action Plan. We will submit a progress report on the implementation of all these recommendations to the Executive Board at its 196th Session (Spring 2015), including the review of the “Guidelines for Interface and Cooperation between UNESCO Field Offices and National Commissions for UNESCO” (recommendation 9).

Participation Programme for 2014-2015

As mentioned in the Circular Letter of the Director-General (CL/4040), the deadline for submitting your requests is 28 February 2014 for African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and 31 August 2014 for all other eligible countries and non-governmental organizations in official partnership with UNESCO.

Projects approved in the form of financial contributions for 2014-2015 must be implemented by 31 December 2015, and the financial reports submitted by 30 March 2016 at the latest.

In December’s Monthly Letter, I mentioned that new electronic forms have been created for the submission of requests for the Participation Programme. Many of you took the time to send us the name and email of the Secretary-General or, failing that, another person from the National Commission authorized to fill in the form and submit their requests online. Upon receipt of this information, the designated person would have received a username and password to connect to the online form (http://www.unesco.org/pp/submissions37c5/). If you still have not responded to that request, I invite you to send the name and email of the person with the authority to submit your requests online to the Participation Programme Section (e-mail: ppe@unesco.org).
21 February – International Mother Language Day (IMLD)
(Contact: Ms Noro Andriamiseza: n.andriamiseza@unesco.org)

The 2014 International Mother Language Day will be celebrated under the theme “Local languages for global citizenship: spotlight on science”. UNESCO further engaged in multilingual education in order to promote global citizenship. Education for citizenship aims to enable learners to play an active role at both local and global levels to address global challenges and, ultimately, contribute proactively to creating a more equitable future.

In this connection, multilingual education has a role to play. In the fields of education and science, much still remains to be done with regard to the development and use of a mother tongue, which is in most cases a local language. In fact, grasping global challenges has been done in the most cases in the widely used international languages.

The Mother Language Day in 2014 is an opportunity to examine issues related to local languages and science. Experts will discuss the role of local languages in the promotion of traditional and indigenous knowledge and its contribution to addressing major issues related to global citizenship.

19 March – L'Oreal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science
(Contact: Ms Sonia Bahri: s.bahri@unesco.org)

I have the pleasure to inform you that the 16th Annual Ceremony for the L'Oreal-UNESCO for Women in Science Awards will take place on 19 March 2014, at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Five women scientists will be honoured for their exceptional groundbreaking research in the physical sciences advancing research on scientific knowledge in the areas of life sciences and addressing global challenges such as control diseases or food security.

Furthermore, 15 talented young women scientists, from all over the world, pursuing research at the doctoral or post-doctoral level will receive the UNESCO L'OREAL International Fellowship, and will present their research at a ceremony to be held on 18 March 2014 at UNESCO Headquarters.

Forthcoming UNESCO publications

- International Status of Education on the Holocaust: A Global Mapping of Textbooks and Curricula will be published in English by UNESCO’s Education sector.

Holocaust education has been developing around the world for the past two decades, with a growing professionalization and institutionalization in the field, as well as an increase of related educational research in Europe and North America. Educational practices around the Holocaust are very diverse in terms of the objectives, content and quality, especially as more and more countries with no direct connection to the history of the Holocaust are teaching about it.

This publication will be the outcome of the first-ever study on the status of education about the Holocaust worldwide that was launched jointly by UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute in August 2012. This study comprises a global mapping of the status of curricula and the various representations of the Holocaust in textbooks, in a selection of twenty countries since the year 2000. It will be published in print and electronic form in March for the Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, to be held in Toronto, Canada.
- HEADS 4: Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in Eurasia will be published in English, and subsequently in French, by UNESCO’s Culture sector.

Human evolution and the study of the processes of adaptation, migration and social development are part of our universal human heritage. As a region, Eurasia has long stood at the crossroads in human evolution studies and is the subject of current cutting-edge research.

Launched in the context of the Global Strategy to broaden the definition of World Heritage, this publication gathers some of today’s most eminent scholars and researchers to present a study of human-evolution related sites as a key area for the future of the Convention.

Appointment of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions for UNESCO (Mid-December 2011 / Mid-January 2012)

In Chile, Mr José Patricio Brickle Cuevas was appointed Secretary-General, succeeding Ms Myriam Duchens Bobadilla.

In Saudi Arabia, Prince Khaled Al Faysal bin Abdulazid Al-Saud was appointed President, succeeding Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed.

Please accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Eric Fall