The Assistant Director-General
For External Relations and Public Information

To Secretaries-General
of National Commissions for UNESCO

Ref.: ERI/NCS/NAC/14.29
19 March 2014

Sir/Madam,

I am genuinely looking forward to meeting those of you who will be present at the 194th session of the Executive Board in Paris from 2 to 15 April 2014.

The customary meeting of representatives of National Commissions for UNESCO, to be held on Wednesday 9 April 2014 in Room IV, will be an opportunity to discuss the topic that you have chosen: Greater synergy and interaction between UNESCO field offices and National Commissions. Owing to the limited time available, (from 8.30 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.), the meeting will focus on this topic alone.

Given the importance that UNESCO attaches to its cooperation with the National Commissions, the meeting will be opened by the Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova. I invite you to confirm as soon as possible the name and title of your National Commission’s participant at the meeting.

I also invite you to consult the provisional agenda of the 194th session and all the information relating to the session on the Executive Board’s website.

Let me also take the opportunity to announce some of the Organization’s other upcoming events, that will be of interest to you.

6 April – International Day of Sport for Development and Peace
(Contact: p.muller-wirth@unesco.org – reference website: http://www.april6.org/fr)

As you know, in 2013, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace to celebrate the contribution of sport and physical activity to education, human development, healthy lifestyles and a peaceful world.

The choice of the date of 6 April is justified by the fact that, in 2002, at its 55th session, the Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO), in its resolution WHA 55.23, urged Member States to celebrate a “Move for Health Day” each year to promote physical activity as essential for health and well-being.

In this context, we strongly urge you to mobilize to celebrate the first International Day of Sport for Development and Peace by organizing your own initiatives. In that regard, we invite you to visit the reference website to find ideas for activities and a list of initiatives that have already been planned.

23 April – World Book and Copyright Day
(Contact: i.denisson@unesco.org and c.bordoni@unesco.org – reference website: www.unesco.org/new/wbdcf)

Celebrated by UNESCO for the past 19 years, World Book and Copyright Day aims to reflect on ways of supporting careers in publishing, bookshops, libraries and schools and better disseminating the culture of the written word in order to allow all individuals to access it through literacy programmes and open educational resources.

In the context of this World Day on 23 April, I am very pleased to announce the launch of the 2014 international drawing competition for children, which needs your support to ensure its success.
The competition aims to inspire children to participate actively in the promotion of books and reading. Children are invited to express by drawing a picture that would be selected to be used on the cover of book and to submit it to UNESCO.

Submissions to the international competition should be based on the theme “Respecting Differences”. The best drawings will be chosen by an international jury and exhibited at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

To carry out this project, I am confident that I can count on you to encourage education institutions and youth organizations to participate in the competition. On the reference website you will find the competition rules, information on the theme and a blank book cover for the submission of drawings.

30 April – International Jazz Day

The third International Jazz Day will be celebrated under the leadership of Herbie Hancock, a jazz legend and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. It will enable us to explore together the history, meaning, impact and legacy of jazz across the world.

The start of the celebrations will take place on 30 April in Osaka, Japan, in the form of events focusing on jazz (educational programmes, concerts and outreach to communities). A concert featuring jazz legends will also be held in Osaka. Programmes have already been confirmed in more than 140 countries and on every continent.

The United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) will be issuing stamps and a souvenir card to commemorate International Jazz Day on this date. For more information, visit http://unstamps.un.org.

For the many active jazz aficionados within the National Commissions for UNESCO this Day can be an opportunity to organize events, big or small, and we invite you to join us in whatever way you may deem the most appropriate. For more information, please visit our reference website.

3 May – World Press Freedom Day
(Contact: s.coudray@unesco.org – reference website: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-press-freedom-day/homepage/)

The celebration of this global event is primarily a day of support for the media that are subject to restrictions and a day to honour journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty. World Press Freedom Day 2014 has three interrelated themes: the importance of media in development; the safety of journalists and the rule of law; and the sustainability and integrity of journalism.

On the occasion of this World Press Freedom Day, UNESCO will announce the winner of the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. Established in 1997, the Prize is intended to honour a person, organization or institution that has made a notable contribution to the defence and/or promotion of press freedom. As you know, the Prize is awarded on the recommendation of an independent jury of 12 professional journalists.

In this connection, it is worth noting that World Press Freedom Day 2014 is regarded as a fresh contribution to the current debate on post-2015 development, as the Millennium Development Goals are drawing to an end and they will probably be replaced by a new series of goals that are currently being discussed internationally under the label “post-2015 development agenda”.

I am sure that many of you will celebrate this Day and I invite you to let us know about the events that you are organizing by email at the following address: natcom@unesco.org, so we can post them on our unesco.int website.
4-10 May 2014 – Global Action Week on Education for All
(Contact: s.detzel@unesco.org – reference website: http://www.campaignforeducation.org/fr)

Global Action Week on Education for All (EFA) is an annual worldwide advocacy campaign organized by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). UNESCO supports Global Action Week every year by disseminating information and resources within its network and organizing activities with NGOs, GCE members and other EFA partners.

This year’s Global Action Week will focus on the theme “Education and Disability”, with the slogan “Equal Right, Equal Opportunity”. The event will highlight the major challenges facing people with disabilities in exercising their right to education.

I strongly urge you to take part in this global EFA movement. All information required is available on the reference website.

Upcoming UNESCO publications

▪ World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development

This publication offers an innovative view of recent developments in media freedom, independence, pluralism and the safety of journalists.

World trends on freedom of expression and media development are a key resource for governments, media, academia, the private sector and civil society and for those interested in the current media environment. The publication will be launched on 25 March 2014, in Stockholm, Sweden.

▪ Gender Summary – Education for All Global Monitoring Report
  (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002286/228662E.pdf)

The Gender Summary, which analyses data from the most recent edition of UNESCO’s Education for All Global Monitoring Report, was presented at a side event at the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on 11 March 2014 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. On that occasion the Director-General reminded the audience that ensuring the right to education for all girls, particularly those who are in the hardest-to-reach populations, requires commitment and appropriate measures at all levels. This eleventh edition of the Global Monitoring Report reaffirms that women’s empowerment and gender equality are essential prerequisites for peace and sustainable development.

Appointment of Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Commissions
(mid-February – mid-March 2014)

In Bangladesh, Dr Muhammed Sadique has been appointed as Secretary-General, succeeding Mr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury.

In Chile, Mr Nicolas Eyzaguirre Guzman, Minister of Education, has been appointed as President, succeeding Ms Carolina Schmidt Zaldívar.

In Egypt, Prof. Wael El-Degwry, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, has been appointed as President, succeeding Dr Hossam Issa.

In Nepal, Ms Chitra Lekha Yadav, Minister for Education, has been appointed as Chairperson, succeeding Mr Madhav Prasad Paudel.

In Papua New Guinea, Mr Nick Kuman, Minister for Education, has been appointed as Chairperson, succeeding Hon. James Marape.

Yours Sincerely,

Eric Falt