

2018 Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO

(19-21 September 2018, Gyeongju, Republic of Korea)

Gyeongju Recommendation

Recognizing that:

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was adopted by the international community in 2015 and UNESCO has a clear mandate in achieving this ambitious yet necessary set of goals and targets in its fields of competence – education, science, culture, and communication & information;

Based on its multidisciplinary approach, UNESCO has a unique contribution to make to the multifaceted challenges of sustainable development;

As part of the UN Development Group, UNESCO is also required to align itself with the ongoing UN reform led by the UN Secretary-General;

UNESCO's role in building a lasting world peace has become more critical than ever, and the Organization needs to define its strategic positioning in the changing UN system; this has significant implications for the National Commissions, particularly in terms of their engagement in national decision-making processes for UN repositioning;

As constitutionally recognized entities, National Commissions for UNESCO are vital for the elaboration, execution and evaluation of the Organization's programmes;

Strong and effective National Commissions constitute an invaluable asset for UNESCO in fulfilling its mandate, particularly the context of work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their implementation at country level;

National Commissions have a critical role to play in this regard through mobilizing authorities, partners, experts and beneficiaries in their respective countries, and collaborating with other countries to address common challenges that go beyond the national borders;

Regional cooperation is more necessary than ever in order to tackle the challenges of the Agenda 2030 effectively in Asia-Pacific, a region rich in diversity in terms of culture, languages and religion;

Against this background, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU), the UNESCO Bangkok Office, and the City of Gyeongju jointly organized the 2018 Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea from 19 to 21 September 2018;

The aims of the meeting were to contribute to strengthening the capacities of, and cooperation among, National Commissions in the Asia and Pacific regions, and to continue the regional discussion on the agenda dealt with at the 5th Interregional Meeting of National Commissions for UNESCO held in Diani, Kenya in June 2018 and the final reports of the Training Workshops for National Commissions in the Asia-Pacific Region held in Bangkok, Thailand in 2016 and 2017;

Regional meetings of the National Commissions for UNESCO in Asia-Pacific are a useful mechanism, through which the National Commissions can not only share national experiences and good practices, but also address and discuss key progress made, remaining challenges, needs, priorities and collective actions:

We, the participants of the 2018 Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting, representing 30 National Commissions in Asia and the Pacific, the UNESCO Secretariat, and Category II Centres, adopt the following recommendations:

1. Partnership between National Commissions and UNESCO:

- a) Strong partnership between National Commissions and UNESCO is needed to ensure the collective action required to achieve the SDGs.
- b) UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO Jakarta should lead the production of a biennial regional report in collaboration with National Commissions, UNESCO Field Offices, and Category II Centres concerning the key achievements in relation to the Agenda 2030.
- c) A regional meeting of National Commissions in the Asia-Pacific region is highly encouraged to be held on a regular basis, biennially, to explore further opportunities for cooperation among National Commissions and with UNESCO. A sub-regional meeting between National Commissions and Field Offices is highly encouraged to be held on an annual basis. UNESCO Headquarters are requested to support this endeavour and Regional Offices are requested to play a coordination role for it.
- d) While recognizing the considerable funding support provided by UNESCO to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific, consideration should be given to the further support of those SIDS, to ensure their representation and involvement at regional and sub-regional level.

2. Cooperation among National Commissions:

- a) National Commissions should seek a wide range of modalities of cooperation with other National Commissions, including intersectoral projects, staff exchange programmes, revamping the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) at the sub-regional and regional levels, and working with UNESCO Field Offices (and Headquarters as appropriate) to develop a common communication platform (CCP) to enhance the visibility of UNESCO at the national and regional levels.
- b) More innovative and participatory interventions are needed. The use of art and social media should be encouraged, including through the new CCP, in creating a space for dialogue between countries and partners.
- c) Collaboration should be on an equal footing. Mutual learning among Member States in the region should be encouraged and supported.
- d) National Commissions and their respective governments are encouraged to learn from the best practices of other National Commissions in the region and beyond.
- e) Representation of a wide range of National Commissions and Member States at the governance level of UNESCO is encouraged, particularly from underrepresented sub-regions.

3. Guidelines for the Functioning of National Commissions:

- a) National Commissions should be proactive in consulting with their partners and principal stakeholders to define what they require at a minimum to function effectively in alignment with UNESCO'S goals and strategic direction.
 - b) UNESCO should, in consultation with Member States and National Commissions, update the guidelines for the functioning of National Commissions, to help ensure that all National Commissions function effectively in alignment with UNESCO's goals and strategic direction.
 - c) The government of each Member State should provide National Commissions with the necessary financial and human resources to enable the National Commissions to function effectively, while respecting their autonomy and independence, taking the function of UNESCO into consideration.
4. UNESCO Strategic Reform:
- a) National Commissions, in consultation with their strategic partners including Category II Centres, should contribute actively to the reform process that the Organization is undertaking to ensure that it can effectively tackle the challenges it faces in carrying out its mandate.
 - b) The UNESCO Secretariat should create further channels to enable National Commissions to contribute to this process.
5. Roles of the UNESCO Secretariat:
- a) A dedicated unit to champion, amplify, and support the work of National Commissions should be re-established within the UNESCO Secretariat.
 - b) The UNESCO Secretariat (at Headquarters and Field Offices) should support capacity-building of National Commissions, in particular in their thematic areas of interest, and methods of fundraising.
 - c) The UNESCO Secretariat (at Headquarters and Field Offices) should play a major role in coordinating the partnerships and communication between National Commissions and UNESCO and their collaboration with the UNESCO family network.
6. Cooperation with UNESCO Category II Centres:
- a) Category II Centres in Asia and the Pacific are encouraged to share information on their activities and achievements in relation to the C/4 (UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy) and C/5 (UNESCO Programme and Budget) through a coordinating mechanism between the UNESCO Secretariat, National Commissions and Category II Centres.
 - b) Category II Centres are invited to participate in the regional and sub-regional meetings of National Commissions to promote further collaboration.
 - c) National Commissions in the host countries of Category II Centres should be proactive and engaging in activities of the relevant Category II Centres.

We encourage the dissemination and serious consideration of these recommendations.

Drafted in the English language, on 21 September 2018, in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea.