

**Working group "Strengthening the partnership between NGOs and UNESCO"
under the aegis of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee**

**Theme 1 Strengthening the Dialogue
between NGOs and UNESCO Member States**

Non-state actors, UNESCO's official NGO partners act through their networks on all continents, in accordance with UNESCO's values and priorities, as close as possible to the populations for whom they are often the spokespersons.

The context of the global health crisis has highlighted the important role of civil society organizations in the fight against COVID-19.

NGOs combine altruism and the skills of volunteers and employees and form efficient and innovative structures to carry out their missions. Their on the ground actions and their technical skills in highly specialized fields, enable them to define priorities and propose solutions to specific problems, becoming true resource providers to States and International Organizations.

In order to consolidate the foundations of equitable and sustainable peace and development, NGOs wish to strengthen the dialogue with Member States within UNESCO, thanks to strengthened working relations between NGOs and the Secretariat. They wish to participate more effectively in the elaboration and implementation of UNESCO's programmes in the framework of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs), in compliance with the rules in force and within the means available.

INTRODUCTION

- 1.** The International Conference of NGOs in partnership with UNESCO (ICNGO), during its December 2018 session, expressed in its final recommendations the desire to intensify the international cooperation of NGOs by strengthening their partnership with UNESCO in order to act jointly in the fields of education, science, culture, communication and information.
- 2.** This document, drafted by an open group of NGOs under the aegis of the Liaison Committee, is of a strategic nature and is in line with the debate on improving dialogue

between Member States and NGOs conducted by the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP) of the Executive Board since the 200th session, and developed in its 202nd, 204th and 207th sessions. It also builds on the work of the 40th General Conference and respects the 2011 Directives governing the NGO-UNESCO partnership.

3. Taking into account the new Comprehensive Partnership Strategy (document 207EX/11), which recalls that "*non-governmental organizations remain partners of crucial importance to UNESCO*", the objectives of this document are to improve the information and visibility of the work of NGOs, to strengthen working relations between NGO and the Secretariat, and to reinforce dialogue with Member States.

BETTER INFORMATION AND IMPROVED VISIBILITY OF THE WORK OF THE NGOS

4. For more visibility of the ICNGO, the Liaison Committee (LC) and the collective actions of NGOs, it would be desirable to optimize the diffusion of information on the work of NGOs to the Sectors, Field Offices and to the Member States and National Commissions. A reflection on the implementation of practical modalities could be envisaged with the Unit in charge of partnerships with Civil Society (institutional focal point) within the framework of the Program and Budget of the Organization approved by the Member States.

5. These practical modalities could be, in particular:

- provision of an updated list of NGOs with their respective fields of action and contact details to the LC, Sectors and Member States,
- update of the actions of NGOs on the UNESCO sites <https://fr.unesco.org/partenariats/ongs> and <http://www.unesco.int/>
- publication on the ground actions of NGOs in the framework of the implementation of UNESCO's programmes to be sent to the Sectors, Field offices and Member States.
- diffusion to the Sectors and Member States of the work of NGOs planned according to the recommendations of the ICNGO at the beginning of the Liaison Committee's mandate.
- diffusion of the recommendations and conclusions of the forums to the Member States and Sectors concerned by the forum themes.

STRENGTHENING OF THE WORKING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NGO PARTNERS AND THE SECRETARIAT.

6. In order to strengthen the impact of the NGO-UNESCO partnership within UNESCO itself, it would be advisable to consider, with the Unit in charge of partnerships with Civil Society and with the Sectors, proposals for a more effective and active participation of NGOs in the development and implementation of UNESCO's programmes. To the extent that resources are available, these proposals could include, inter alia, the following:

- In cooperation with the Unit in charge of partnerships with Civil Society:
 - the resumption of the monthly newsletter distribution to non-governmental partners,

- the diffusion of information to NGOs on the actions carried out by UNESCO Field Offices.
- In cooperation with the programme sectors:
 - making available to NGOs the list of focal points for the sectors and, for the sectors, making available the list of expert NGOs in their field,
 - the transmission to NGOs of information on the implementation of UNESCO's programmes by sector with the list of UNESCO field offices concerned so that they can participate more actively in the implementation of programmes in the field and provide feedback to the sectors,
 - the creation of further collective consultations to strengthen partnership and multilateral cooperation as mechanisms enabling sectors and Member States to benefit from the expertise and mobilizing capacity of NGOs around a UNESCO priority programme.

STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND NGO PARTNERS

7. NGOs encourage the Secretariat to create "*specific spaces and opportunities*" for enhanced dialogue between NGOs and the Member States as recommended in the decisions of the 207th Executive Council.

8. A strengthening of the dialogue between Member States as constituted bodies and NGOs could be envisaged during the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP Committee), in accordance with the decision of the 207th session of the Executive Council which invites to consider "the organization of relevant thematic debates" during the next sessions. A reflection in this sense could take place between the Chairperson and members of the NGP Committee, the Chairperson of the ICNGO and LC and members of the LC, and the Unit in charge of partnerships with Civil Society in preparation for the next NGP Committee. Hearings of NGOs could be proposed during the consideration of certain items on the agenda of the NGP Committee session in order to allow NGOs to contribute to the study of these items and thus enrich the reflection and debates of the Executive Council.

9. A strengthening of the dialogue between Member States and NGOs could also be envisaged within existing mechanisms of interaction between NGOs and Member States such as the International Conference of NGOs, International NGO forums, and the NGO space of the General Conference.

10. The preparation of the ICNGO and the choice of its theme could lead to greater interaction between NGOs and interested Member States, which would encourage their presence at the round tables or discussion panels. This would strengthen the NGO/Member State dialogue.

11. With regard to international NGO forums, an open-ended NGO group, in the framework of the Working Group on Strengthening Partnership, has been reflecting on the preparation, financing, conduct and follow-up of the forums by promoting cooperation with Member States. This reflection includes proposals on the participation of Member States in the Forums and on NGO/Member States communication relating to the Forums. It is also proposed that

the evaluation and follow-up of the Forums be carried out in collaboration with the Member States concerned.

12. The informal mechanism represented by the NGO space within the framework of the General Conference is conducive to strengthening the dialogue with Member States. Dialogue sessions planned in this space address themes that could be chosen in consultation with the Member States and thus allow for greater attendance of this space by representatives of Member States and National Commissions.

13. Meetings between NGOs and representatives of National Commissions, particularly during the General Conference, could help strengthen the implementation of UNESCO's programmes by NGOs on the ground and the actions of National Commissions with civil society in their countries. The possibility for the LC to participate in certain meetings of the National Commissions could be proposed in order to better understand their objectives and activities and to make them better known to national Civil Society organizations that are members of NGOs partners of UNESCO.

CONCLUSION

Within the framework of their reflection on the strengthening of the NGOs-Member States dialogue, the NGOs as official partners of UNESCO thank the Member States for the constructive proposals concerning "Relations with non-governmental partners", as stipulated in documents 207 EX/Dec/33 and 40 C/42, and present the following conclusions which are in the spirit of the in force official texts :

1. They propose to the Unit in charge of partnerships with Civil Society to study practical modalities for a better visibility of their actions, skills and expertise, and their reflections within the framework of the Programme and Budget of the Organization approved by the Member States.
2. NGOs would like their concrete proposals to the Unit in charge of partnerships with civil society and the sectors to be studied and then implemented within the limits of the available means.
3. They support a strengthening of the dialogue between UNESCO's NGO partners and Member States through the organization of "relevant thematic debates" in the framework of the NGP Committee and the search for "the creation of specific spaces and opportunities for such dialogue" as recommended by the 207th Executive Board.
4. They wish to involve Member States more closely in the preparation and conduct of the International Conference of NGOs by encouraging their presence and participation in the reflection and thematic debate.

5. The forums should be an opportunity for a real interactive dialogue with the Member States during their preparation, during their proceedings, and also during their evaluation and follow-up, taking into account the contributions of NGOs to the thematic discussions.

6. NGOs stress the importance of dialogue between NGOs and National Commissions in order to promote the exchange of information and the implementation of UNESCO's programmes in liaison with the Field Offices.

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