

Guide for the organization of international Forums of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO

1. This document has been drafted in accordance with the 2011 Guidelines for UNESCO's Partnership with NGOs adopted by the 36th General Conference (36C / Resolution 108). They recall the importance of the formal partnership between UNESCO and NGOs for the development and implementation of UNESCO's programs. It provides a holistic and concrete vision of the different steps taken in the organization of Forums and it could have some pedagogical value and be useful for the teams who will be in charge of the Forums to come.

2. It offers guidelines for the choice of the Forums' themes, their preparation, their unfolding and their follow-up in order (1) to recall the role of each stakeholder while respecting the conclusions of the 2018's International Conference of NGO partners of UNESCO (2) to strengthen the cooperation between NGOs and UNESCO, (3) to strengthen the role of NGOs in the development and implementation of UNESCO programs (Directives, Preamble).

Objectives of the Forums

3. The Forums should aim, among other things, at bringing the voice of civil society associated with that of UNESCO in order to achieve their common mission within the framework of the programs of this institution.

4. They contribute to strengthening the NGO-UNESCO partnership and the visibility of UNESCO and the actions of NGOs.

5. In keeping with the intellectual nature of the NGO-UNESCO partnership, the Forums contribute to the thematic reflections on UNESCO's programs. They may also suggest proposals for new themes in line with the programs, based on concrete issues related to the field experiences of NGOs directly in contact with the population. The Forums also make it possible to strengthen UNESCO's action thanks to the collective efforts of the teams in charge of the Forums.

6. The Forums enable UNESCO's NGO partners, UNESCO and Member States to work in synergy, transparency and balanced collaboration for their preparation, development and monitoring.

The responsibilities of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee (LC), the Secretariat and the host country/Institution (as appropriate ¹)

7. The international Forums of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO are the fruit of a collective elaboration between the stakeholders concerned: the Liaison Committee including the President, NGOs, UNESCO Secretariat and Sectors, and the host country or Institution. They ought to be a source of mutual enrichment.

8. According to the Directives (36C/Resolution 108), the UNESCO-NGO Liaison Committee is required to organize *"twice a year, in consultation with the UNESCO Secretariat, an NGO Forum", which should focus on a priority theme of UNESCO's program.* The responsibility for the smooth running of a Forum and the preparation of its program lies with the LC, in agreement with the Secretariat (the Unit for partnerships with civil society - BSP / DPA / CSP).

9. Since the first edition of the forums in 2013, the Secretariat (Unit responsible for partnerships with civil society - BSP / DPA / CSP, the program sectors, and as appropriate the field offices) has been a stakeholder in the Forums in a collective approach. Among other things, the Secretariat helped obtain the logo, provided the necessary infrastructure during the Forums organized in Paris, helped with the fundraising, participated in the definition of the program and the concept note and undertook institutional relations with the authorities concerned.

10. To continue these good practices, it is desirable that the invitations continue being co-signed by the Chairperson of the LC and the UNESCO Secretariat.

Procedures for the choice of the forums' themes

11. In accordance with the programs defined in the current C / 5 and the UNESCO priorities recalled by the LC, all NGO partners can propose themes for the Forums by submitting a short preliminary note to the LC.

12. The LC, which represents the interest of NGO partners, then examines the legitimacy and coherence of the proposals in consultation with the Secretariat, in particular by avoiding the overlapping of several themes, and next approves the themes selected before the International Conference of NGOs.

13. Then the LC offers all the NGO partners a choice of several themes which will be submitted to the ICNGO. It will be up to the newly elected LC to definitively set the themes of the forthcoming forums from the list retained by CIONG and taking into account, if necessary, new UNESCO priorities.

Financing Forums

14. Although the modalities of funding the Forums are not clearly defined, the search for funding and contributions to the forums is the result of a collective effort, in particular by the Secretariat (BSP / DPA / CSP Unit) which has always strived to find funding from Member States or host governments and from partnering institutions and foundations.

¹ Forums can be organized at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

15. Particular attention to taking into account the values and principles of UNESCO for the funding, conduct and content of the Forums is desirable.

Preparation of Forums

16. In view of past experiences, attention is drawn to the fact that reducing the number of Forums over one mandate could allow more time to prepare the forums and facilitate the participation of key-note speakers.

17. The LC brings together a think tank, made up of volunteer NGOs from all regions, which will contribute to the preparation and running of each Forum. To this end, meetings are held at the headquarters with webcast. On the other hand, an online platform is set up by the LC to facilitate exchanges with NGOs from all regions as is now customary.

18. A steering committee for each Forum is set up to facilitate close collaboration between all stakeholders concerned at each stage, while respecting their respective priorities. It includes members of the LC including the President, the Vice President in charge of the forums and two leaders, 4 NGOs (including 2 from other regions) appointed by the NGOs of the think tank in agreement with the LC, representatives of the Secretariat (Unit BSP / DPA / CSP), one (or more) representative (s) of the sector (s) concerned and a representative of the host country / institution

19. The steering committee finalizes a concept note based on the preliminary note drawn up by NGOs. As far as possible, objectives, expected results as well as a possible follow-up are included in the concept note for each Forum.

20. The steering committee establishes the program of the Forum based on the concept note, taking into account the proposals of the NGOs' working group.

21 For the sake of transparency, it is recommended that the NGOs of the steering committee keep the NGO think tank informed of the various decisions adopted at all stages of the organization of the Forum.

22. Two NGOs from the steering committee, not members of the LC, could in particular participate, in agreement with the LC, in the agenda item concerning the Forums during LC meetings.

23. It would be important to promote the participation of local NGOs from the host country / institution in the preparation of the Forums by giving priority to their possible interventions as speakers.

Unfolding of Forums

24. The presence of stakeholders from civil society, and in particular representatives of NGO partners of UNESCO, is provided in all parts of the Forums' programs, including high-level panels. The stakeholders are thus chosen in a balanced way between the stakeholders.

25. NGOs partners encourage their young members to participate in each Forum.

26. Member States, National Commissions, Field Offices and UNESCO Chairs and ASPnet (Associated Schools Project Network) are invited well in advance to increase their participation as well as Academics, UNESCO Clubs and other civil society actors.

Forum recommendations

27. A draft of recommendations is prepared upstream by the steering committee. It will be enriched by taking into account the debates of the Forum, and finalized on site by members of the LC and the NGOs of the steering committee. The recommendations will be read to all forum participants. The final version will be sent to them so that they can make comments to the LC before their validation.

28. They will be published on all LC communication tools and transmitted to the Member States as well as to the Director General, the Secretariat and the Sectors concerned.

29. The LC is responsible for communicating them on behalf of NGO partners at international conferences or events addressing the topic of the Forum, and as widely as possible to all official NGO partners and other civil society networks.

Summaries and reports of the Forums

30. A report on each Forum is written and submitted by the NGOs' steering committee to the LC. It is sent to the Member States, the Director General, the Secretariat, the NGO partners and is shared as widely as possible.

31. The LC is invited to hold an evaluation session of the Forum based on the objectives and expected results in order to draw up an assessment.

32. The LC, together with the steering committee of the Forum, must plan some sort of communication automatically on each Forum to highlight the role of UNESCO's NGO partners and the partnership.

33. At the end of each Forum, it would be desirable for cooperation to be initiated between the Member States, the participating NGO partners and the UNESCO Secretariat for the implementation of the recommendations of the Forum.

Follow-up to the Forums

34. Depending on each type of Forums, the implementation of a follow-up of the Forum can be decided by NGOs of the preparation group. It does not take place under the aegis of the LC and can be considered from the initial design phase of the Forum.

35. The follow-up to the Forums aim to strengthen thje NGOs' contributions to UNESCO's implementation of its programs.

Guide adopted by the International Conference of NGOs Official Partners to UNESCO on December 16, 2020

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