

Recommendations of the International Conference of NGOs 2024 (ICNGO 2024)

The International Conference of NGOs met at UNESCO Headquarters from 17 to 19 December 2024 on the theme of “Building Capacity for Action”.

Gathered as a group with shared ideals, the International Conference of NGOs,

Recalling UNESCO's Constitution and mission as a specialised agency of the United Nations, UNESCO “contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information”; Ref. (41C/4);

Reaffirming the commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Recalling the UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41C/4);

Recalling the Recommendations on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development; International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development 2023; the Recommendation on Open Science 2021; and Recommendation on the Ethics of AI 2021.

Further reaffirming the essential role of NGOs, as actors of civil society, in the development and implementation of UNESCO's programmes in its five fields of competence (Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, Communication and Information) and in supporting individuals and communities at risk of marginalisation and ensuring the inclusion of diverse NGOs voices.

Recognising the historically unprecedented global context created by climate change, including disaster and forced migration, affecting all populations;

Expressing concern over continued and escalating wars, conflicts, and violence in many parts of the world, which threaten peace and sustainable development of all countries and peoples, and which exacerbate the existential threat to the world's most vulnerable;

Noting the rising political polarisation and the urgent need to act collectively in the face of worsening inequalities and poverty to build a more inclusive, equal, and informed global community;

Further noting the existential threat to humanity, biodiversity, and society caused by the climate crisis and unethical use of emerging technologies,

Thanking the outgoing members of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, under the Chairpersonship of Mr Nick Newland, for their tireless work and the success of a multitude of activities and initiatives;

Restating the high regard of all NGOs in official partnership for the Director-General, Mrs Audrey Azoulay, for her achievements and the continuous support of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee; and

Recognising that the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee plays a fostering role in the cooperation with UNESCO through the network of NGOs in Official Partnership and acts as a catalyst for collective cooperation;

Recommends to the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee:

To capitalise on the work undertaken by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee over the past two mandates aligning with UNESCO's programmatic priorities, and further develop a Programme of Work

which compliments the work of the Programme Sectors and embodies the intentions of the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations;

To continue broadening the participation of civil society in the International Decade for Indigenous Languages, the Ocean Decade, and International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development;

To build on the Regional Seminar on Greening Education held in November 2024, and develop additional activities supporting the Greening Education Partnership;

To further strengthen the meaningful engagement of youth representation from NGOs in the activities led by the Liaison Committee, continuing the established Youth Working Group, led by a young member of the Liaison Committee or appropriate Youth Liaison;

To consider preparation for a mid-term online meeting, with the Liaison Committee providing updates on its programme of work.

To consider the following themes (in alphabetical order), as well as programmatic priorities of UNESCO, when organising International Forums as mandated by the Directives:

- Climate, including biodiversity and its impact on communities globally
- International Decades facilitated by UNESCO (Indigenous Languages; Ocean Decade; People of African Descent; Sciences for Sustainable Development)
- Education (including relating to: Sustainable Development, Protection, Early Childhood, Informal Education, Lifelong Learning, and the Right to Education)
- Gender equality and Peace Building
- Information Literacy and Freedom of Expression
- Education for peace, social justice, religion and interfaith dialogue
- Artificial Intelligence's impact on culture and sustainable development

To consider making available to NGOs relevant information concerning the functioning of UNESCO and the Liaison Committee, strengthening what currently exists on the Committee's website;

To support, where appropriate, projects for the celebration of international days prepared and implemented by NGO groups (including, for example, the International Day of the Girl Child, the International Day of Peace, the International Day of Education, the International Day of Human Fraternity, the International Day of Non-Violence, the International Day of Parents, International Day of Sport for Development and Peace etc.), while ensuring pluralism of engagement and participation;

To consider further developing the Thematic Mapping of NGOs in official partnership, in consultation and cooperation with the Secretariat, including encouraging additional NGOs to participate;

Recognising the revitalised and strengthened relationships fostered by the Liaison Committee with Member States, National Commissions, and Intergovernmental Organisations through informal dialogues and information sessions, to consider additional events and collaborations;

Celebrating the successful cooperation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in the 2022-2024 mandate, consider continued and expanded activities, for example:

- NGO Task Group for the Ocean Decade
- NGO Task Group for the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development
- Strengthen connections with other thematic networks of NGOs within UNESCO's ecosystem such as the Culture Conventions, etc.
- Promote discourse amongst NGOs on the importance of education, and encourage interested NGOs to join the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (in accordance with section XI.3 of the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organisations).

With regards to further developing the functioning of the Committee, the International Conference recommends:

Recognising the expanded programme of work delivered and successful fundraising during the 2022-2024 mandate, the Liaison Committee consider further opportunities for securing external funding;

Acknowledging the voluntary nature of service on the Liaison Committee, consider methods for more regular communication with NGOs in official partnership;

To consider the appointment of specific focal points for each of the Programme Sectors from within the Liaison Committee, similar to relations with CCNGO/ED2030 and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission; and

Recalling that the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee does not replace the advocacy and actions of NGOs, but offers a space for synergy and can act as a spokesperson for collective action, the International Conference of NGOs calls on NGOs in Official Partnership:

- To ensure a voluntary financial contribution is made per the requests of the Liaison Committee, to ensure the ability to carry out its work programme;
- To consider presenting of youth representatives as candidates for election to future Committees; and
- To undertake, in the case of the establishment of a communication mechanism such as a newsletter or blog, to supply the content in terms of information on their NGO's activities, actions, and projects

With regards to the facilitation of NGOs in Official Partnership by UNESCO's Secretariat, the International Conference recommends:

- To request direct support from UNESCO for NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee activities, as indicated by the Directives, with a specific focus on strengthening participation of NGOs in those regions, countries and communities most at risk of being left behind;
- To consider improved methods of communication between Programme Sectors and the NGO partners, with emphasis on broader circulation of calls to action;
- To support research activities delivered in partnership with NGOs in the relevant fields of competence, with particular emphasis on the participation of field and regional offices with local NGO partners;
- To continue fostering NGO engagement in relevant United Nations meetings, conferences, and events, through support for the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee participation alongside UNESCO Secretariat, as appropriate;
- Recalling input from NGOs and Member States at the 2024 meeting of the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners and other calls for diversification of representation, increase direct support for the facilitation of meetings in multiple languages.

Adopted by unanimous consent of the NGOs in attendance at the 2024 International Conference of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, and respectfully submitted by

Nick Newland

Outgoing Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs
in official partnership with UNESCO (2022-2024)