

## Activity Report of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee 2022-2024

The 2022 International Conference of NGOs elected an NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee which, for the first time, represented all the Regions of UNESCO's membership, and which held at its core a belief that our mission must be to strengthen, broaden, and make more diverse the representation of civil society to and at UNESCO. Aligning the Liaison Committee's plan of work with UNESCO's Programme and Budget (42 C/5) and the activities of the Programme Sectors, and drawing inspiration from the recommendations of the 2022 International Conference of NGOs, we have delivered on the vast majority of the intended targets and activities, and made significant progress in many other areas.

Elected by the body of NGOs in official partnership, all members of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, including the Chairperson, are volunteers. This can present a challenge in capacity, which is exacerbated by a lack of operational funds. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee relies on voluntary contributions from NGOs and, with only around 10% of NGOs in official partnership making such contributions, our budget for activity remained restricted throughout our mandate.

Three factors have, however, contributed to the success of the Committee's mandate. The first is the stalwart efforts of its members, who have balanced their own lives and demanding occupations with a commitment to the collective mission of the Committee and UNESCO's community of NGOs. The second is the Unit for Civil Society Partnerships in UNESCO's Secretariat who have, despite their own limited human and financial resources, worked tirelessly to promote, safeguard, and strengthen civil society space within and outside of UNESCO. Finally, so many of the family of NGOs in official partnership – large and small, near and far – have contributed to our collective work. Through participation in Steering Committees for the Forums, by making inputs into the many consultations we have hosted, by contributing financially, and by engaging with UNESCO's mechanisms for civil society participation, these NGOs have made our collective journey more successful.

### Section 1: Recommendations of the 2022 International Conference of NGOs

Taking into consideration the Recommendations made by NGOs and adopted by the International Conference of NGOs, we would like to offer a brief overview of activities in direct response to the calls for action. (note: in this section the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee is shortened to "LC").

Recommendation	Action in the 2022-2024 Mandate
To continue work on the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and Ocean Decade.	Co-convened the Ocean Decade NGO Task Group with IOC/UNESCO, resulting in the creation and launch of the "Ocean Decade Manual for NGOs".
To establish more effective youth representation of NGOs and foster youth-led participation.	Created the role of Youth Liaison to the LC; formally established a Youth Working Group with Terms of Reference; dedicated Youth Panels in each Forum held; Youth Working Group Strategic Dialogue during 2024 International Conference to ensure youth voice reflected in the 2024 Recommendations and Collective Contribution to the 43 C/5.

Maintain relationship with CCNGO Education 2030.	Continued the use of the <i>ex officio</i> seat on the Coordination Committee by LC Vice-President; activity limited by minimal action within the CCNGO/ED2030 mechanism.
Consider suggested themes and programmatic priorities for International Forums of NGOs.	Four International Forums held for the first time since 2012: Artificial Intelligence and Youth (Dec. 2023) Transforming Mentalities (Jan. 2024) Sustainable Cultures (April 2024) African Leadership, Experience and Expertise for the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (Dec. 2024).
Define clear and timely opportunities for engagement.	Open meetings held and Steering Committees established for each Forum; Youth Working Group established with formal Terms of Reference for the first time; open consultations held on the Summit of the Future, Recommendations of the International Conference, Draft Programme and Budget (43 C/5), dialogues held with Programme Sectors during 2024 International Conference.
Reflect on Rules of Procedure; online platform for elections; increase diversity of candidates standing for election.	Online platform to be used again for 2024 International Conference election; regional consultation held in East Africa (Nairobi, Kenya, April 2024); activities intended to increase diversity of representation have resulted in all but 1 region having 2 or more candidates standing for 2024 election. Further revision of the Rules of Procedure would be beneficial.
Implement a financial strategy to strengthen the Committee.	Repeated calls for voluntary contributions from NGOs met with poor response; contribution from UNESCO Secretariat in the form of facilitating funding for attendance at events, LC participation in UN Civil Society Conference 2024, support for International Conference, and bursaries for NGOs to attend received, with significant Extra Budgetary funding agreed by the Director-General in support of the 16 <sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Funding for 17 <sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs secured from Natural Sciences Sector; Financial support for the LC's programme of work secured from H&M Foundation.
Improve communications, particularly for events and NGO participation.	LC Newsletter established on website, after initial very low response rate from NGO partners when emailed; Updates published on website, but limited capacity did limit how

	effective this was; regular letters sent to NGOs from the LC regarding events, consultations, and opportunities. Would benefit from additional capacity and technical skills within the incoming LC; NGO event promotion page on the LC website, though limited capacity has sometimes meant slow posting of events.
Encourage participation of Member States and National Commission in LC activities.	Representatives of Member States have participated at Ambassador / Permanent Representative level in all four International Forums; Dialogue with National Commission held during 42 <sup>nd</sup> General Conference; National Commission panel held during 17 <sup>th</sup> International Forum; Online Dialogue hosted by LC with Permanent Representative of the European Union to UNESCO (Dec. 2024); Member State delegations and National Commission participating in 2024 International Conference.
Consider a thematic mapping of NGOs.	Thematic Mapping of NGOs conducted by the LC in partnership with the Secretariat, and supported by LC member IAESTE. 100 NGOs responded, despite repeated calls and invitations; results published initially during the Committee on Non-Governmental Partnerships (NGP) of the Executive Board, with further detail in this report. This should be expanded, but requires active engagement by NGO partners.
Make available information regarding the function of UNESCO and the Liaison Committee, strengthening what is currently on the LC website.	More detail and granularity added to information pages on the LC website; open briefings organised by the LC and Secretariat on opportunities to engage with UNESCO; consultations and information sessions held online.
Facilitate access to a meeting room in Paris to allow, where appropriate, group meetings of NGOs.	Secured support from UNESCO to modify LC office spaces on the Miollis site, creating a small meeting room by removing the separate office of the Chairperson; furniture donated by LC members; room has been used during the current mandate by NGOs who requested, but capacity limited by security processes at UNESCO and issues of access, as it requires an LC volunteer to be available with the key.
Support, as appropriate, projects for the celebration of International Days prepared and implemented by groups of NGOs.	LC facilitated four meetings of such groups in the Partnership Hub during the 42 <sup>nd</sup> General Conference; occasional use of the meeting space has been provided when possible; letters and video messages of support

	provided upon request; participation of LC members when requested; space on the LC website for promotion of events.
Consider proposal for an event on the subject of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.	This proposal was received and support agreed, but the event was cancelled due to increased conflict in the host region.
Consider action related to the Science, Technology, and Innovation webinar held in 2022.	17 <sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs on the theme of African Leadership, Experience, and Expertise for the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development held online in December 2024.
Call from the International Conference of NGOs to ensure voluntary contribution from NGOs to support the work of the LC.	54 NGOs made a contribution in 2023, and 57 in 2024; totalling €28,843.
Call from the International Conference of NGOs to supply content on NGO activities, actions, and projects for communications.	26 events submitted by NGOs on the LC website for promotion; 5 articles/contributions submitted for the website newsletter.

## Section 2: Dialogue with NGOs

The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee is elected to represent NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, and is given a mandate for action by the International Conference of NGOs. Whilst it is not possible, necessary, or appropriate to consult on every issue, it is important to ensure a strong, two-way flow of information between NGOs and UNESCO. Accordingly, the Liaison Committee hosted open meetings and consultations throughout the 2022-2024 Mandate in English and French, including:

- **Presentation and consultation on the Programme of Work (5 April 2023):** More than 100 NGO representatives attended online, with a Q&A, and input from participants on refining the programme.
- **Open Meetings for the International Forums of NGOs (2023/2024):** Ahead of each of the four International Forums held in the 2022-2024 mandate the Liaison Committee hosted an open meeting online, gathering inputs and feedback on the draft concept notes, exploring themes for panels and content, and opening a call for volunteers for the Steering Committees.
- **Consultations during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Conference (November 2023):** Six members of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee were present during the General Conference at Headquarters in Paris, engaging with NGO representatives across the three weeks, and hosting five events on various themes in the Partnership Hub; one with National Commissions, and four with coalitions of NGO partners.
- **First Briefing and Consultation on the Draft Programme and Budget 43 C/5 (15 May 2024):** Initial introduction to the process of multi-stakeholder consultation for the preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2026-2029 (43 C/5), and launching the call for inputs from NGOs. Attended by 77 NGOs online.
- **Second Briefing and Consultation on the Draft Programme and Budget 43 C/5 (5/6 November 2024):** 93 NGO representatives attended a briefing and consultation

presented by the Liaison Committee, which included presentations by Julien Pellaux (Director of the Division of Partnerships, UNESCO) and Paola Pagliani (Director of the Division for Planning and Programming, UNESCO). This briefing called for further written submissions from NGOs.

- **Briefing on the Summit of the Future and UN Civil Society Conference (14 March 2024):** 187 participants attended a detailed briefing on the preparations for the United Nations Summit of the Future and the Civil Society Conference, co-hosted by the Liaison Committee and the Division of Partnerships at UNESCO, with presentations by Maher Nasser (Director of the Outreach Division, Department of Global Communications, United Nations) and Bobir Tukhtabayev, (Chief of the Relations with the United Nations and Intergovernmental Organizations Section, Priority Africa and External Relations Sector, UNESCO).
- **Uniting for Impact: A Dialogue Between UNESCO and Partner NGOs (8 May 2024):** Co-organised with the Section for NGO Partnership and the UNESCO Regional Office for East Africa, this one-day event was held in Nairobi, Kenya, with 74 in-person attendees from NGOs in official partnership and NGOs working collaboratively in East Africa with UNESCO but outside of official partnership status.
- **Open Consultation on the Draft Recommendations of the 2024 International Conference (12 November 2024):** 63 NGOs participated in a workshop gathering inputs for the Zero Draft of the Recommendations, in 3 languages (English, French, Spanish). This session was kindly facilitated by Institute of Cultural Affairs International, an NGO in official partnership.
- **Dialogue with the Ambassador of the European Union to UNESCO (13 November 2024):** The Liaison Committee hosted H.E. Ambassador Christina Kokkinakis, Permanent Representative of the European Union to the OECD and UNESCO for an online dialogue with NGOs, including a 45 minute open Q&A and discussion on priorities by the 99 NGO representatives present.

### **Section 3: Intellectual Cooperation with UNESCO**

Seeking to build on progress during the 2020-2022 mandate the Liaison Committee has actively engaged with the Programme Sectors, resulting in the delivery of significant activities and positive results across the two years. UNESCO's Programme Sectors have also been heavily involved with the preparation and delivery of the International Forums of NGOs, and this is reflected in the appropriate section below.

In preparation for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Conference, the Liaison Committee and Division of Partnership agreed that the Committee should have a prominent and permanent space within the Partnerships Hub event space. This gave the network of NGOs greater prominence than in recent years, and was further enriched as the Liaison Committee facilitated six events in the Partnership Hub at key points during the General Conference. These included one focusing on cooperation with the National Commissions, and five highlighting formal or informal coalitions of NGOs working on specific topics. These were; "Enhancing Education for Vulnerable children including in Emergencies" with YOU Foundation and HOPE 87; "Coalitions in Action: International Day of the Girl Child" with the group for the International Day of the Girl Child; "Achieving our Goal: Realising an Explicit Culture Goal in the post-2030 Development Framework" with the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign and UNESCO's Culture Sector; "Access to

Water for All in Africa” hosted by a coalition of the same name; and “Celebration of Peace” hosted by a collection of NGOs for peace.

During the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Conference, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs met with the Director-General of UNESCO to discuss the Liaison Committee’s programme of work, alignment with UNESCO’s programmatic priorities, broadening the diversity of NGO representation, and increased extra-budgetary support for the activities organised by the Committee. The Director-General was clear in her support for the wider engagement of civil society at UNESCO, and specifically the importance of the network of NGOs in official partnership. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee would like to acknowledge, with appreciation, the allocation of extra-budgetary funding from UNESCO to support the organisation, and participation in, the 16<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs held on the theme of Sustainable Cultures in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in April 2024.

The General Conference also offered the opportunity for the Executive Secretary of the Liaison Committee to address the APX Commission during its consideration of agenda item 8.1, “Quadrennial report on the contribution made to UNESCO’s activities by non-governmental organizations (work document 42 C/41)”. Bilateral meetings were held with the National Commissions of Austria, Canada, Côte d’Ivoire, France, Kenya, Moldova, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Ahead of the General Policy Debate, the Chairperson met with the President of the General Conference, H.E. Ambassador Simona-Mirela Miculescu, and received her warm assurances of interest in the 32 NGO interventions scheduled during the Debate. All NGO interventions in the General Policy Debate are available to view on the Liaison Committee website<sup>1</sup>.

On 11 December 2023, UNESCO celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Headquarters in Paris. Panellists for the event included the Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; the President of the General Conference of UNESCO; the Permanent Representative of the European Union to UNESCO, and the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs. This event was well attended by a large number of NGO representatives, and recalled UNESCO’s strong and collective commitment to human rights and peace.

Acknowledging the importance of NGO participation and the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee’s specific actions on improving diversity and representation, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs was invited to attend the 2023 UNESCO Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination held in São Paulo, Brazil from 29 November to 1 December 2023. During the Forum the Chairperson participated as a panellist discussing the role of civil society, and moderated a panel on LGBTQI+ advocacy and representation in civil society. The Chairperson was also invited to participate in the 2024 edition of the Global Forum, held in Barcelona, Spain from 10 to 11 December 2024. This involved appearing as panellist in the second plenary on “Intersectionality: building new frameworks to address discrimination in all its forms”, and moderating a panel on “Civil Society in Action” with participants from Catalonia, Gabon, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and South Africa.

### **Committee on Non-Governmental Partners**

The 2023 meeting of the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners took place on 6 October, during the 217<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board. This meeting gave the Liaison Committee the opportunity to update Member States on its work programme for 2022-2024, and highlight the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ngo-unesco.net/42nd-general-conference>



priorities expressed by NGOs around youth engagement, broadening diversity, the initiation and early results of the Thematic Mapping of NGOs in official partnership, and state the commitment of NGOs to the ideals and priorities of UNESCO.

On 10 October 2024, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs met with the Chairperson of the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners and discussed the preparations for the upcoming meeting. This included sharing priorities and matters raised by NGOs in advance of the meeting, and offering the Chairperson the support of the Liaison Committee and indeed the wider community of NGO partners for a positive and productive meeting the next day.

The 2024 meeting took place on 11 October, and recommended the admission of one NGO partner to Associate Status, and took note of the Director-General's decision to admit 7 new NGO partners to Consultative Status. During the session the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs took the floor to update the Committee on the activities of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, and reiterate the collective commitment of NGO partners to working with UNESCO more closely. The Chairperson welcomed interventions from Member States which questioned why participation in the questionnaire issued by the Secretariat for the preparation of the 43 C/5 was so low (with only 70 NGOs responding). Building an understanding of the importance of involvement in UNESCO's planning and programming process is crucial to the success of civil society advocacy at UNESCO, and this is one of the reasons the Liaison Committee has prepared repeated briefings on the 43 C/5 and will focus two sessions of the 2024 International Conference on building collective input. Further, support for multilingual communication beyond French and English would greatly enhance responses from NGOs.

### **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC/UNESCO) and the Ocean Decade**

The collaboration with IOC/UNESCO and the Ocean Decade began with the NGO Liaison Committee's organization of the 13th International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO, held in Ottawa, Canada, in November 2022. This Forum convened NGOs, experts, government officials, and civil society representatives to mobilize action for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the Ocean Decade. With a focus on cross-disciplinary collaboration, the event provided practical tools for NGOs to effectively engage in these initiatives. It also laid the foundation for the creation of the Ocean Decade NGO Task Group and the development of the Ocean Decade NGO Manual.

Following the Forum, Teresa Kennedy, Vice-President of the Liaison Committee, was appointed as focal point for IOC/UNESCO to further collaborations. Terms of Reference (ToR) were established between IOC/UNESCO and the Liaison Committee as co-convenors of the Task Group, with 18 NGOs from 14 countries across five regions volunteering to participate. The Task Group was co-chaired by Alison Clausen (Deputy Global Coordinator of the Ocean Decade, IOC/UNESCO), and Teresa Kennedy on behalf of the Liaison Committee. The group worked to map NGO engagement, address key challenges, and develop strategies to increase global participation in the Ocean Decade.

In 2023, the Task Group began a collaborative process to develop a roadmap-style manual. Monthly meetings from September 2023 to March 2024 focused on aligning actionable steps with NGO needs, emphasizing opportunities for engagement, promoting citizen science initiatives, and identifying five case studies to showcase impactful NGO programmes. A draft of

the Manual was presented during the NGO side event at the Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona in April 2024 to gather feedback and suggestions for revision.

The finalized Manual offers comprehensive guidance on the Ocean Decade’s 10 Priority Challenges, engagement pathways, and strategies for future collaboration. It empowers NGOs to play a transformative role in the Ocean Decade and provides a model for mobilizing NGO participation in other Decades. The Ocean Decade Manual for NGOs will be formally launched at the 2024 International Conference of NGOs.

#### **Section 4: Representation in other United Nations processes**

Recognising UNESCO’s unique approach to engagement of civil society organisations, and in particular its network of NGOs in official partnership, there were several opportunities for the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee to highlight the collective work of NGOs working with UNESCO in other spaces during this mandate.

Under the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms. Farida Shaheed, visited UNESCO from 16 to 20 January 2023. Ms Shaheed held discussions on present and future challenges for the right to education across UNESCO, as well as other stakeholders during the visit. This included discussion with the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs in a closed meeting, separate from engagement with UNESCO personnel. The Special Rapporteur’s report can be found under [A/HRC/53/27/Add.1](#).

The 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women was held 6-17 March 2023, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Vice-President Teresa Kennedy self-funded attendance, and hosted an online Parallel Event outlining the Liaison Committee’s collaboration with IOC/UNESCO and the importance of connection between the Ocean Decade and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

The 2024 United Nations Civil Society Conference was held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya from 9-10 May 2024. This Conference was facilitated by the United Nations Department of Global Communications, and was carefully aligned to preparations for the 2024 Summit of the Future and its outcome document, the Pact for the Future. Speaking opportunities for NGO participants from the floor were very limited, and there was significant debate over the utility and function of the Conference. However, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs was invited to make an intervention on the subject of the Global Digital Compact; this intervention was prepared on the basis of inputs by NGOs during the 14th International Forum of NGOs on Artificial Intelligence and Youth, interventions by NGOs during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Conference, and briefings from several of the Programme Sectors at UNESCO.

#### **Section 5: Regional Activities**

As noted above, the Liaison Committee collaborated with the Section for NGO Partnership and the UNESCO Regional Office for East Africa to host a one-day seminar in Nairobi, Kenya, on 8 May 2024 titled “Uniting for Impact: A Dialogue Between UNESCO and Partner NGOs”.

The seminar brought together local, national, and regional NGOs working in East Africa with representatives of the Education Sector at the Regional Office, the Chief of the Section for Civil Society Partnership in the Division of Partnership, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs, and the Liaison Committee representative from Latin America and the Caribbean. 74 representatives attended, discussing how to engage with UNESCO, how to



strengthen collective cooperation, and apply for official partnership status, as well as highlighting priorities and concerns which were considered during the preparation of the draft Recommendations of the 2024 International Conference transmitted to NGO partners in December 2024.

On 1 November 2024, the Liaison Committee participated in the regional Seminar on Greening Education and Sustainable Development organised by Liaison Committee member China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE). This hybrid event was hosted at the China National Convention Centre, Beijing, China, and included participation of representatives of the UNESCO Office in Beijing. This one-day seminar was a useful extension of initial discussions between the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and UNESCO's Greening Education Partnership, with initial planning already commenced for an International Forum on the theme of Greening Education in the 2024-2026 mandate.

## **Section 6: International Forums of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO**

The Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organisations requires the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee to organise, in consultation with the UNESCO Secretariat, a twice-yearly NGO Forum on a UNESCO priority issue. Recognising the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020-2022 Liaison Committee, the 2022-2024 Liaison Committee believed it crucial to deliver the four Forums mandated during its two-year tenure. Due to budgetary considerations, only one Forum was held in 2023, but three were organised in 2024, meaning that for the first time since 2012, the mandate was fully delivered.

Noting the cooperation with the Education Sector for 2021's 12<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs, "Achieving Global Citizenship", and with IOC/UNESCO and the Communications and Information Sector for 2022's 13<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs, "Mobilising NGOs for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and the Ocean Decade", the Liaison Committee felt it important to engage with the other Programme Sectors during this mandate, ensuring representation of the organisation's global priorities.

### **14<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs, "Artificial Intelligence and Youth", held online, 13-14 December 2023**

The first Forum of the 2022-2024 mandate was organised in close cooperation with the Social and Human Sciences Sector of UNESCO, and was co-chaired by Teresa Kennedy (Vice-President of the Liaison Committee, and representative of International Council of Associations for Science Education) and Patricia Gainza (Liaison Committee member, and representative of Compañía Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación).

The programme spanned two days, with day one focused on the current reality of Artificial Intelligence, with a presentation on "Understanding Today" delivered by UNESCO, followed by a multi-stakeholder panel on "AI for an Inclusive Future". The third panel considered "AI in a Changing World" and the risks of technological development combined with polarised politics, and the day concluded with an expert panel on "AI in Education". Day two introduced the "UNESCO Global NGO Repository on AI Ethics", followed by a panel considering how to "Empower Youth to Drive Policy". "The Only Way is Ethics" considered the opportunities presented by the ethical use of AI, and risks of other pathways, and the final panel considered diversity and inclusion with "The Many Faces of Artificial Intelligence".

The Steering Committee for the Forum included: Prisca Koffi, International Young Catholic Students (IYCS/JECI), Kenya; Fasika Lachore Laba, International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS/MIEC) Pax Romana Ethiopia; Rémi Loison, Federation for European Education

(FEDE); Marc Neesam, International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO); Israel Coelho Quirino, Compañía Latinoamericana por el Derecho de la Educación (CLADE); Goran Zelic, Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA) International.

The Forum was opened by Gabriela Ramos, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, and included 50 speakers and panellists from 26 Member States. 65% of speakers and panellists were women, and audience of more than 250 attended online across the two days, joining from nearly 70 countries.

**15<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs, “Transforming Mentalities”, held at UNESCO, Paris, France, 24-25 January 2024**

This Forum sought to identify not only obstacles, but pathways to overcoming obstacles in tackling discrimination and inequalities. The Social and Human Sciences sector was again closely involved in the development of the programme, and the first session included an overview of the global challenges by seven members of the Section for Inclusion, Rights, and Intercultural Dialogue. This was followed by a multi-stakeholder panel on “Approaches to Change”, and then a panel on action-based approaches and programmes including Indigenous knowledge systems and parental involvement in childhood, titled “Building Change”.

For the first time, and recalling the recommendation of the 2022 International Conference to strengthen relations with Member States, the Forum held a Member State panel, with the Permanent Representative of Brazil and the Representative of the Government of Quebec in the Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO. The final session of the first day considered “Practical Approaches to Internal Change”, building capacity for positive action within NGOs. The second day opened with a youth panel on “Building a More Positive Future”, followed by a panel on “Approaches to Women’s Empowerment”. Sessions on “Innovation for Change” and a “Participatory Workshop on Designing Local Change” were followed by a discussion on transformative action with Professor Keith McGee, Senior Fellow in Culture and Justice at University College London and Chair of the Guardian Foundation. The final session of the Forum sought to mobilise NGOs with pledges of action and targets for transformative change from each of the panel moderators.

The Steering Committee for the Forum included Janani Ramanathan, World Academy of Art & Science; Gilles Pétreault, Organisation Mondiale pour L’Éducation Préscolaire (OMEP); and Caroline de Senneville, Make Mothers Matter. It was co-chaired by Claire Boursier, NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, and the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs.

The Forum was again opened by Gabriela Ramos, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, and included 48 speakers and panellists from 21 Member States. 54% of speakers and panellists were women, and 180 NGO representatives attended in person, with more than 200 registered online. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee expresses its thanks to the Social and Human Sciences Sector for its financial contribution to the delivery of the Forum, alongside support from the Division of Partnerships.

**16<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs, “Sustainable Cultures”, held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, 12-17 April 2024**

Continuing the collective advocacy for a standalone development goal for Culture, this forum was held in conjunction with the famous MASA Festival in Abidjan, and organised in partnership with the Culture Sector. The programme opened with a panel on using a “Holistic Approach to Cultural Policy”, and was followed by an examination of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the 2003 Convention for the

Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, undertaken with input from NGO parties to the Conventions which sit outside of the official network of UNESCO partnership. Day one ended with a session building alignment in global advocacy for the goal, followed by a night of wonderful music and celebration at the MASA Festival. Day two of the Forum included the keynote address from the Director for Cultural Policies and Development in the Culture Sector at UNESCO, with panels on “Culture in the post-2030 Agenda” and “Structural, Economic, and Regional Issues of Culture in Africa”, and an interactive workshop on empowering NGO capacity for action.

This was only the second “in-person” Forum to be held outside of Headquarters since 2018, and saw more than 100 attendees gather in Abidjan, joined by more than 400 online. As noted above, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee gratefully acknowledges the approval of extra-budgetary funds by the Director-General of UNESCO to facilitate broader participation. In-person attendees came from 22 countries, including 12 African nations.

This Forum used a more interactive model of panel discussions, so 18 specific speakers were featured across the event, 66% of whom were women. The Forum was opened by Ernesto Ottone, Assistant Director-General for Culture via video link. The Steering Committee consisted of Maria Manjate, Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa; Susana Sardo of International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance; Silja Fischer of the International Music Council and Alassane Babylas Ndiaye of Arterial Network. The Forum was co-chaired by Davide Grosso and Monza Limame Kane from the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

### **17<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs, “African Leadership, Experience, and Expertise in the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development”, held online, 10-11 December 2024**

This Forum sought to celebrate the December 2024 launch of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD), but also focus attention on the strength of African science, scientists, and the challenges to be addressed in ensuring equality in representation for the Decade. The Forum was successfully planned and delivered in partnership with the Natural Sciences Sector, the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, Ghana Commission for UNESCO, South African National Commission for UNESCO and Uganda National Commission for UNESCO. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee also acknowledges with gratitude the support of the Natural Sciences Sector for the costs of interpretation for this Forum.

The programme opened with a presentation on the IDSSD by the Director of Science Policy and Open Sciences, Natural Sciences Sector, UNESCO, and this was followed by a panel on “African Cooperation for Scientific Literacy” with representatives of the four National Commissions participating. A panel on “Quantum Science and Technology” led to a session considering “Strengthening Human and Scientific Capacity for Hydrology” which ended the day. The second day of the programme opened with a panel on “Accelerating Gender Equality through the Decade”, with a keynote from Hon. Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, Deputy Minister of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities in the Government of South Africa. The youth panel on “Driving Sciences for Sustainable Development” led to a consideration of how to “Build a Roadmap for Success”, modelled on the Liaison Committee’s experience with the Ocean Decade. Connecting the first Forum of the mandate with the last, the final panel discussed “New Technology, Neurosciences, and the need for Ethical Approaches to Innovation”.

The Forum was co-chaired by Dr Peggy Oti-Boateng, Executive Director of the African Academy of Sciences and Abel Basset Ben Hassen, Vice-President of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and Director of the Arab Institute of Human Rights. The Steering Committee included Ramneek Ahluwalia, Higher Health; Sama Ghozlan, International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation; Samira Yassni, L'Observatoire Marocaine des Droits des Femmes (Association Marocaine affiliée à L'Alliance Internationale des Femmes); Svetlomira Stoyanova, UNIMA International; and Olga Legacka, Executive Secretary of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and Head of Operations at the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE).

The Forum was opened by Lidia Arthur Brito, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO, and H.E. Ambassador Peter K. Ngunjiri, Permanent Representative of Kenya to UNESCO. More than 210 people attended online, of whom 70% were viewing from Africa. Of the 52 speakers, all except those contributors from UNESCO or the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee were from 11 African countries and represented all regions of the continent. 47% of speakers and panellists were women, perhaps reflecting the views expressed during the Forum for the need to accelerate gender equality in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths sectors in the region.

### **Section 7: Strengthening Partnership with National Commissions for UNESCO**

Recalling the recommendation of the 2022 International Conference of NGOs, the Liaison Committee developed a strategy for building closer and more effective cooperation with the National Commissions in this mandate. This started with informal discussions with those National Commissions who had previously expressed support or interest in the work of the Committee or NGO partners, and resulted in building a significant event in the Partnership Hub at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Conference. This involved presentations on cooperation by the Secretaries-General of the National Commissions from Côte d'Ivoire, France, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Alongside the panellists, interventions from the Secretaries-General of the National Commissions of Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany and the Republic of Korea were well received by 92 audience members from NGOs. As noted above, bilateral meetings were held between the Liaison Committee and 7 National Commissions during the General Conference.

Reflecting the strong role played by the French National Commission in support of NGOs in official partnership, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs was invited to revise and extend the chapter on the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee for the forthcoming updated edition of the "Handbook for National Commissions" (current edition reference ERC/RSC/NAC/2007/PI/100), which is expected to be published in the first half of 2025.

Taking the opportunity afforded by existing travel supported by his NGO, the Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs met with the Secretaries-General of the National Commissions of Ghana, Kenya and Uganda in September 2024, securing their commitment to the development of the 17<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs.

The Traditional Meeting of National Commissions in the margins of the Executive Board was held on 16 October 2024 at Headquarters. The Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs made a presentation alongside the Director of the Division of Partnerships, highlighting opportunities for National Commissions to engage with the network of NGO official partners; this was met with significant positivity, and interventions from National Commissions of Austria, Czechia, Moldova, Philippines, and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The presentation focused on recognising NGOs as catalysts for implementation of

national action plans and programmes which seek to reach communities often outside the reach of the National Commissions.

### **Section 8: Thematic Mapping of NGOs in Official Partnership**

Responding to the recommendation of the 2022 International Conference of NGOs, the Liaison Committee in partnership with the Secretariat launched a multilingual Thematic Mapping of NGOs in partnership. This process is time consuming and resource-intensive, and requires the participation of NGO partners – to date, only 40% of NGOs in official partnership have responded to repeated calls for engagement.

It should be noted that this process could not have been launched without the generosity and technical skill of Liaison Committee member International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE). On behalf of the whole network of NGO partners, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee would like to thank IAESTE for their continued and significant investment in this process.

The thematic mapping launched in 2023 (see documents 217 EX/31 and 42 C/41) continues to gather more comprehensive data about the NGOs thematic focus, expertise and geographical scope (see the box below for a preliminary analysis). This mapping intends to provide more detailed and accurate information on the current expertise and action of NGO partners to allow for further synergies and opportunities for collaboration between NGOs and UNESCO.

The initial results are consistent with trends observed in a review of 65 partnerships with Associate status carried out between 2020 and 2023. Approximately 30% of these NGOs cooperate with UNESCO in the field of education, 25% in communication and information, 23% in social and human sciences, 14% in culture and 8% in natural sciences. These results show a good distribution of thematic expertise throughout the fields of competence of the Organization, at this early stage.

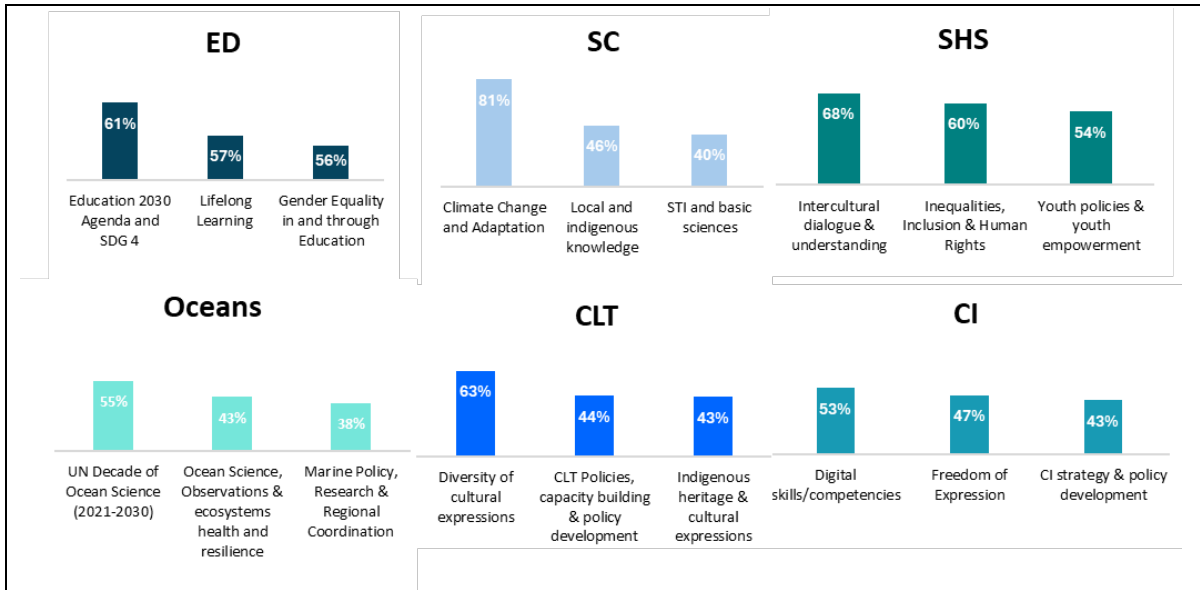
The thematic mapping also provides an opportunity to collect updated information on the functional expertise and geographical scope of these NGOs. For instance, 43% of respondent NGOs focus mostly on advocacy, 12% function as collaboration and facilitation platforms and 10% as umbrella organizations; 5% focus on grass-roots project implementation or programme delivery, 2% have expertise in research or policy development and 1% focus on project-funding or philanthropic activities.

#### **Preliminary Analysis of 2024 Thematic Mapping Update**

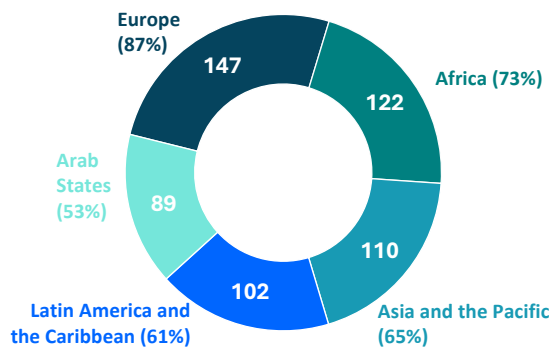
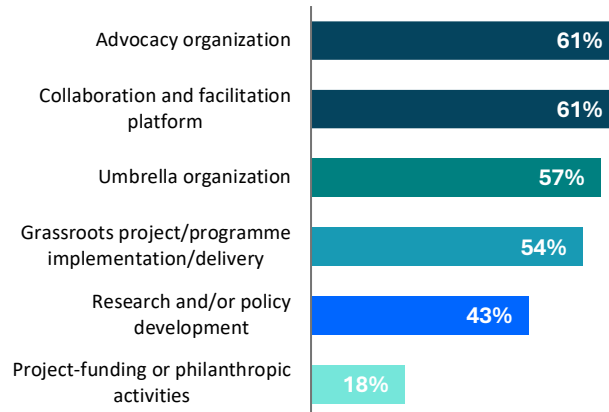
This preliminary analysis is based on responses from 40% of NGOs in the official network at the time of extracting the data.

The data indicates a strong NGO activity across UNESCO's fields of competence: 95% in Education (ED), 88% in Social and Human Sciences (SHS), 77% in Communication and Information (CI), 71% in Culture (CLT), 54% in Natural Sciences (SC), and 24% in Oceans.

(NB: NGO respondents could select more than one option per question). The main themes per major programme are highlighted below.



Regarding functional expertise, over half of the NGOs indicated focusing on advocacy, facilitating collaboration, supporting coordination, or implementing field projects. Activities that require substantial knowledge or financial resources, such as research, policy development, and project funding are less frequent but still noteworthy. In particular, 18% of NGOs indicated engagement in project funding or philanthropic activities.



In terms of geographical scope, most of the respondent NGOs reported having a presence in multiple countries across various regions, indicating a broad and diverse geographic engagement. The presence in Africa (73%) is particularly significant and 49 % of NGOs signalled operating in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).



## Section 9: Prioritising Youth Engagement

Seeking to capitalise on the good work undertaken in the 2022-2024 mandate when the Liaison Committee convened an *ad hoc* group of youth representatives from NGOs to prepare guidelines for youth advocacy at UNESCO, one of the first formal decisions of the Liaison Committee in 2023 was to launch a formal Youth Working Group. Célie Denez, representative of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) was co-opted by the Committee as the first Youth Liaison, and worked with former Chairperson Davide Grosso and Committee member Nelsy Lizarazo to draft Terms of Reference for the group. More than 50 youth representatives (that is, under the age of 35) attended the first meeting of the Working Group in July 2023, and provided significant input in the creation of the 14<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs.

Reflecting the difficulties of volunteer representation and the challenges facing early-career professionals, Ms Denez stepped away from the role in mid-2024 due to professional commitments. The Liaison Committee appointed Jovana Kocavska, alternate representative of IAESTE, as the second Youth Liaison. With her guidance, the group is being re-energised, and will play a prominent role at the 2024 International Conference of NGOs, with a Strategic Dialogue aimed at generating input to the Conference's collective contribution on the draft Programme and Budget (43 C/5).

For the first time, in 2023, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee was invited to nominate a Representative to the UNESCO Youth Forum. 41 Youth Representatives responded to the survey organised by the Working Group, giving a collective basis for input and representation at the Youth Forum. Based on the geographic and linguistic requirements specified by the UNESCO Youth Sector, Melissa Mejía Flórez of New Humanity NGO was selected to represent the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee during the Youth Forum, where she made several significant interventions highlighting the priorities captured in the questionnaire.

Some NGOs have asked whether there should be a focus on intergenerational dialogue rather than a Youth Working Group or panel. This form of dialogue is certainly important and should be encouraged, but there is also a need for collective discussion and representative of diverse experiences amongst young people participating in these processes, to ensure our outputs and outcomes leave no one behind.

## Section 10: Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030

The Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CCNGO/ED2030) is a key mechanism of civil society inclusion within UNESCO's framework for action on Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goal 4. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee holds an *ex officio* seat on the Coordination Group of CCNGO/ED2030, currently held by Abdel Basset Ben Hassen, Vice-President of the Liaison Committee. The Committee promotes NGO participation, facilitates thematic synergies, ensures representation at coordination events, and advocates for CCNGO/ED2030 priorities. By addressing themes such as sustainability, cultural inclusion, and education in emergencies, the Committee aligns its efforts with CCNGO objectives and supports initiatives like the Transforming Education Summit follow-up and Greening Education Partnership.

In 2024, a major achievement was the relaunch of a survey assessing Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) progress and challenges in implementing SDG4 since the 2022 Transforming Education Summit. The findings, presented at the Global Education Meeting (GEM) in Fortaleza, Brazil, provided valuable insights into achieving inclusive and quality education. The Committee's collaboration with CCNGO/ED2030 underscores its critical role in advancing shared goals for sustainable development and education. By promoting NGO

engagement and amplifying CCNGO/ED2030's voice in UNESCO forums, the Liaison Committee helps bridge the gap between UNESCO, civil society, and global education mechanisms.

### **Section 11: Communication**

One of the most significant challenges faced by the Liaison Committee is technically-skilled human resource capacity. The Committee's website is maintained by the Chairperson of the International Conference of the NGOs and the Executive Secretary of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, which saves money but also requires time.

The website has been updated regularly throughout the mandate, and is fully available in both English and French in parallel. In 2023, the Liaison Committee's website received 13,241 unique visitors (meaning specific computers or devices connecting at least one, duplications are not counted). As of 18 December 2024, this has increased to 16,619 unique visitors in 2024. This is an increase of around 65% over the previous two year mandate. 34 events have been uploaded by NGOs to website during the current Liaison Committee's tenure. Unfortunately, due to the limited capacity, these events were not always been uploaded as quick as we would have liked.

Regular letters have been sent to NGOs from the Liaison Committee regarding events, consultations, and opportunities. An online newsletter was sent by email twice, but metadata showed an incredibly low level of opening or click-through; it was therefore decided to replace this with a rolling series of updates placed on the website.

The very high level of engagement in open meetings convened by the Liaison Committee, including the consultations, indicates improved success of communications; but of course more can be done. The Liaison Committee is hopeful that the International Conference will elect candidates with suitable technical skills and capacity for the incoming mandate.

### **Section 12: Legal Status**

During the 2020-2022 mandate, updated legal and financial legislation within the European Union meant that the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee was faced with the challenge of having to establish a form of legal status in its own right. The 2022 International Conference of NGOs asked the incoming Liaison Committee to consider this, and work was duly undertaken. This was crucial as, under current legislation, and without a registered legal entity, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee would be subject to losing its bank account, would not be able to accept donations from other stakeholders, secure insurance for events, and would face other, similar challenges.

A significant process of research and preparation was undertaken, including working with the UNESCO Secretariat, consulting the office of Legal Affairs, and considering the limited number of options available to an organisation such as the Liaison Committee. We are pleased to report that the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee has now secured registered legal status, and the current Committee expresses its pleasure in leaving the future of the Committee safer and more secure for those who follow us in service of the network of NGOs in official partnership.

### **Section 13: Celebration of International Days**

The celebration of International Days has long been a feature of civil society action around the world. Many of the NGOs holding official partnership status with UNESCO were formative in the campaigns for the creation and adoption of these International Days by the United Nations and its agencies and organisations. One of the views this Liaison Committee has taken from the

outset is that we do not exist to replace NGOs, but rather to support engagement and cooperation with UNESCO. To this end, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee offered the support requested by informal groups of NGOs celebrating International Days, including attending events, providing letters of support, and interventions or remarks by video. The achievements and success of these groups are not the Liaison Committee's, and as we do not seek to deprive NGOs of their recognition in their own right, such activities are not recorded in this Report of the Activities of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

#### **Section 14: Finances (Report from the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee Treasurer)**

As part of the mission entrusted to me by the representatives of the NGOs elected to the Liaison Committee and in accordance with legal and statutory requirements, I am honored to present the accounts of the UNESCO-NGO Liaison Committee. These accounts were closed on 15 December 2024, for a period starting on 1 January 2023, covering 24 months.

The UNESCO-NGO Liaison Committee is an entity created under *the Guidelines concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations*. It operates on a cash accounting basis.

The cash accounting method records income and expenses when financial flows occur. Therefore, income is recorded upon receipt, while expenses are recorded upon disbursement.

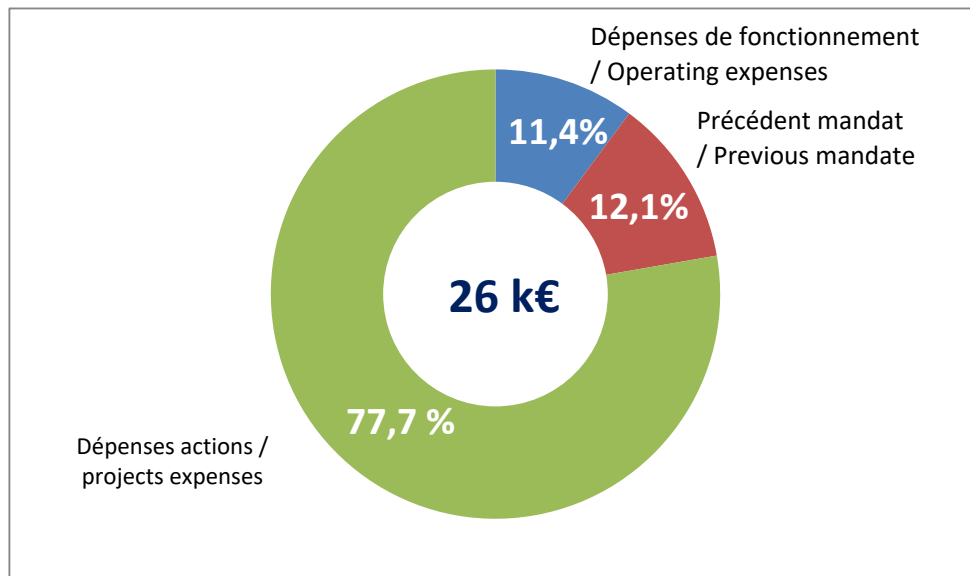
As previously mentioned, the accounts were closed on 15 December to allow their presentation at the International Conference of NGOs scheduled from 17-19 December. However, it should be noted that these are provisional results. The final accounts will be closed on 31 December 2024.

An income statement is attached to this financial report. Consequently, my observations will be limited to summary remarks and additional information useful for understanding the accounts.

The amounts mentioned in this report are expressed in **euros**.

For the 2022-2024 mandate, the total budget of the Committee amounts to more than **€26,000**, distributed as follows:

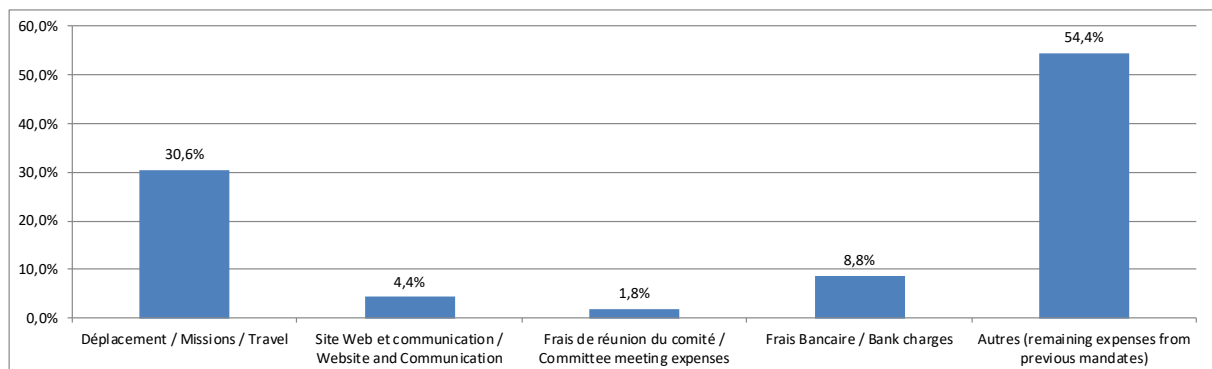
- **€2,640** for operating expenses,
- **€3,150** for expenses related to the previous mandate of the Committee,
- **€20, 224** allocated to activities carried out by the Committee during this period.



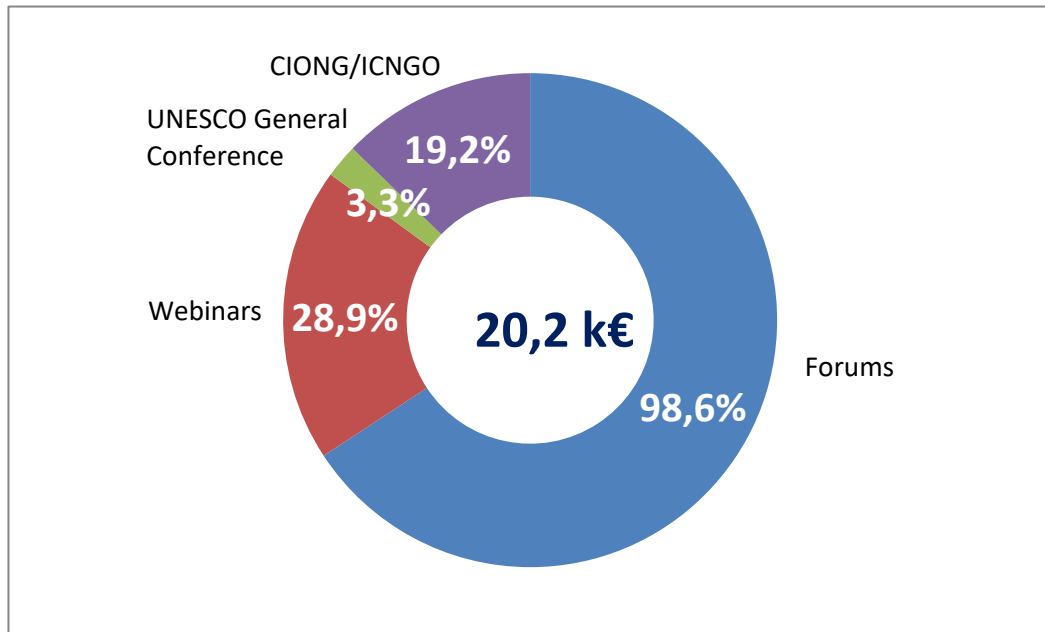
In other words, nearly 78% of the expenses were dedicated to the activities and projects carried out by the Liaison Committee.

The general expenses of the Committee mainly consist of expenses related to the organization of meetings, travel of the president or Committee members to events and meetings as well as communication and website management costs.

Furthermore, the Committee also had to cover expenses incurred during the previous mandate (2020-2022). These expenses mainly concern costs related to the 2022 International Conference of NGOs and the 13th International Forum of NGOs, held in Ottawa, Canada, on 21-22 November 2022.



The action expenses for the 2022/2024 mandate include the organization costs of the International Conference of NGOs of €2,600, the organization costs of the 4 forums of €13,300, the costs of the activities of the Liaison Committee during the UNESCO General Conference of €500, and the organization costs of various webinars of €3,900.



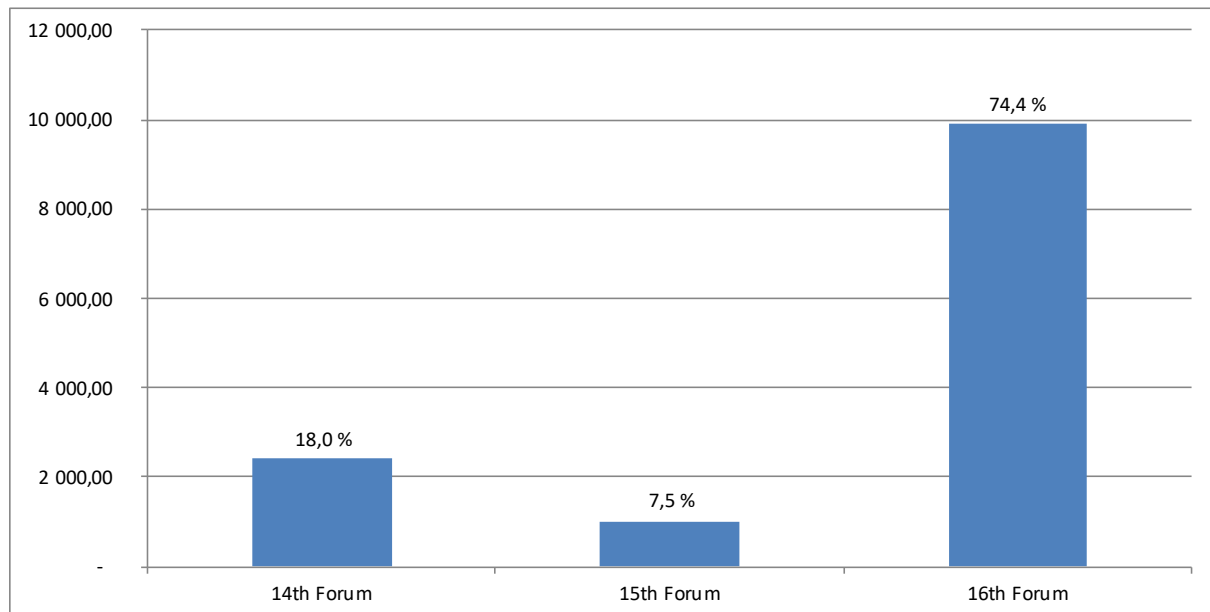
It should be noted that, of the €13,300 spent on organizing the forums, nearly €10,000 was dedicated to the **16<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs**, organized in official partnership with UNESCO on the theme "*Sustainable Cultures*". This event was held in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) on 15-16 April 2024.

The **15<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs**, held also in official partnership with UNESCO, addressed the theme "*Transforming Mentalities*". This event, organized on January 24 and 25, 2024, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, benefited from the infrastructures provided by UNESCO, which helped limit logistical expenses.

As for the **14<sup>th</sup> International Forum**, on the theme "AI & Youth", and the **17<sup>th</sup> Forum**, on the theme "*Leadership, Experience, and African Expertise in the International Decade of Science for Sustainable Development*", they were both organized online. The associated expenses mainly concerned interpretation costs.

Similarly, the costs related to the organization and conduct of webinars mainly consist of interpretation expenses.

The expenses related to French/English interpretation are currently one of the main charges of the Committee. Simultaneous interpretation plays an essential role during our events (forums, conferences, and webinars) as it ensures smooth and effective communication between participants. By eliminating language barriers, it promotes immediate and unhindered exchange of ideas and information. Moreover, simultaneous interpretation helps create an inclusive environment, allowing all participants to express themselves and actively engage on an equal footing. This strengthens international collaboration among NGOs and supports our common mission.



The expenses related to the 17<sup>th</sup> International Forum held on 10-11 December 2024 have not yet been accounted for due to the absence of corresponding invoices. However, this forum benefited from financial support from the science sector (receivables), which will cover all associated costs.

**In terms of income**, the Committee's revenues come exclusively from voluntary contributions from NGOs, which have brought in nearly **€30,000** over the past two years, marking a significant increase of **55%** compared to the previous mandate.

You will find, in the appendix, the list of NGOs that have made a voluntary contribution during this period. We extend our sincere thanks to them for their valuable support, which enabled the realization of the initiatives and actions carried out by the Liaison Committee throughout this mandate.

Additionally, the income generated by the placement of the Committee's money in a savings account amount to **€254.25**.

Beyond the income resulting from the voluntary contributions of NGOs, it is important to highlight the direct support of the UNESCO Secretariat, which actively contributed to the Committee's activities. This support included the funding of certain expenses, such as room rentals, translation costs, and other essential logistical services. This financial and logistical support assisted with delivery of the programme, and included significant extra-budgetary support for the 16<sup>th</sup> International Forum of NGOs held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

This was also the case for the NGO Associated Country Women of the World, to which President Nick Newland belongs. Indeed, to accompany and support him in his role as President, this NGO covered many expenses related to his role within the Liaison Committee.

The Liaison Committee has three bank accounts: two current accounts and a savings account. As of 15 December 2024, the balances of these accounts amount to **\$858 USD**; **€9,203.98** and **€29,816.30** respectively.



Trésorerie / Cash		
Solde au 31 décembre 2022		
	Compte en EUR	31 321,20 €
	Compte en USD	\$858
	Livret A	4 562,05 €
Solde au 15 décembre 2024		
	Compte en EUR	9 203,98 €
	Compte en USD	\$858
	Livret A	29 816,30 €

Throughout this mandate, the Liaison Committee has demonstrated exemplary financial rigor in managing its budget. By optimizing its resources, it has managed to limit its operating expenses to a minimum, allowing for the organization of a maximum number of activities. All non-essential expenses have been carefully avoided, and the expertise and resources of Committee members have been mobilized to reduce costs whenever possible.

For the first time since the implementation of the new guidelines, the Liaison Committee's mandate presents a positive financial result. Indeed, to date, the income statement shows a surplus of nearly **€3,000**, in contrast to the deficit of **€15,000** recorded during the previous mandate.

However, this positive result should not obscure a fundamental problem: the Committee's own resources, mainly derived from voluntary contributions from NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, are not sufficient to finance the biannual organization of NGO Forums on priority themes of UNESCO's programme, as provided for in the *Guidelines concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations*, the biannual organization of *NGO Forums* on priority themes of UNESCO's program.

For example, for the **17<sup>th</sup> International Forum**, organized online on the theme "*Leadership, Experience, and African Expertise in the International Decade of Science for Sustainable Development*", the Committee relied on financial support from the Natural Sciences sector, which covered the associated costs.

To ensure better sustainability of the Committee's actions, it will be essential in the future to plan for external funding for the organization of Forums or webinars.

Furthermore, efforts to rationalize operating costs must continue to maintain, in the medium term, a financial balance in line with available resources. This will ensure the sustainability of activities while respecting the objectives defined by the partnership with UNESCO.

### **Section 15: Meetings of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee**

During the 2022-2024 mandate, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee held one meeting in an in-person/hybrid format (immediately after the 2022 International Conference of NGOs), and held 11 full online meetings. Alongside this, the Executive of the Committee, consisting the President, both Vice-Presidents, Executive Secretary and Treasurer meet nine times across the mandate. Additional, smaller meetings were held on an *ad hoc* basis to address specific issues or activities. Minutes and reports of meetings are published on the Liaison Committee website in English and French.

## **Section 16: 2024 International Conference of NGOs**

The final act of the 2022-2024 programme of work is to deliver the 2024 International Conference of NGOs. This programme, themed around “Building Capacity for Action”, highlights all the work of NGOs in official partnership and the Liaison Committee in aligning our programmes, with the ultimate goal of strengthening representation, diversity, and action.

Reflecting our intention to address the Programmatic Priorities of UNESCO, the programme included 50 speakers participating in person and online, of whom 33, or 66%, were women; 18, or 36%, were youth; and 9, or 18%, were from Africa.

We gratefully thank all speakers and panellists, and acknowledge the representative of the Director-General, Mr Xing Qu, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO. Alongside the more than 275 representatives of NGOs and civil society, we welcome the significant presence of Member States and National Commissions for UNESCO who stand alongside us in securing our space at UNESCO.

## **Conclusion**

As reported in the opening of this document, the basis of our programme of work for 2022-2024 was the set of Recommendations adopted by the 2022 International Conference of NGOs. As a Committee, we are proud to say that we have delivered on all of these Recommendations, and significantly strengthened the recognition of NGOs as crucial partners for UNESCO’s programmatic priorities.

It is important to acknowledge the significant assistance offered to the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee by the Secretariat of UNESCO. The Division of Partnerships, under Director Julien Pellaux, is the stalwart champion of NGOs within UNESCO, and it is impossible to overstate the intellectual and administrative support the Section for Civil Society Partnerships provides. Chief of the Section, Sabina Colombo, is well known to all NGOs at UNESCO, and her personal and deep-seated belief in the contribution of civil society is without equal. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee offers our most sincere thanks to Julien and Sabina, along with Luis-Alberto Vargas Rojas, and all the staff in the Division of Partnerships and wide Bureau of Strategic Planning who have contributed to our programme of work in the past two years.

We believe that NGOs are catalysts for action, implementation, delivery, and success of our shared goal of peace. If this goal is to be achieved, the energy of NGOs must continue to be mobilised alongside all other stakeholders within the United Nations ecosystem. Indeed, it is these Non-Governmental Organisations in official partnership with UNESCO which play the most critical role within the framework of civil society; the Liaison Committee is a body to support, encourage, and highlight the activities of NGOs, but not to replace them. NGOs must strengthen their advocacy actions within UNESCO, each using their networks of influence and the results of their activities, to make the case for change.

It is our hope that the incoming Liaison Committee, elected by the 2024 International Conference of NGOs will continue the approach of alignment with UNESCO’s priorities and programmes through a lens of inclusion and diversity, adopted in 2020 and passionately pursued ever since.

It has been an honour to serve you, the family of NGOs at UNESCO, for the past two years.

Respectfully submitted to the 2024 International Conference of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO, on 18 December 2024.

**The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee**

Nick Newland, Chairperson of the International Conference of NGOs

Dr Teresa Kennedy, Vice-President, Liaison to IOC/UNESCO (ICASE)

Abdel Basset Ben Hasen, Vice-President, Liaison to CCNGO/ED2030 (AIHR)

Olga Legacka, Executive Secretary (IAESTE)

Cyril Noirtin, Treasurer (ROTARY)

Claire Boursier (ICSSPE)

Davide Grosso (CIM/IMC)

Insa Babylas Ndiaye (ARTERIAL NETWORK)

Yibo Liu (CEAIE)

Nelsy Lizarazo (CLADE)

Petya Zelenski (SOZOPOL)