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PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY FOR 2022-2029 (41 C/4)

OUTLINE

Source: 35 C/Resolution 1.

Background: By 35 C/Resolution 1, the General Conference underscored the importance of allowing all Member States to contribute to the elaboration of the Draft Medium-Term Strategies (C/4) of UNESCO, and recommended that in the preparation of future C/4 strategies, the Director-General, in [her] consultations with Member States, provide guidance regarding the need to focus on new challenges and core priorities.

Purpose: The Director-General submits the present document containing some preliminary indications of major aspects that could be considered by the General Conference when providing preliminary guidance for the preparation of the next Draft Medium-Term Strategy (41 C/4).

Decision required: paragraph 23.



Job: 201913379

Introduction

1. In view of the preparation of the next Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4), the General Conference is invited at its 40th session to discuss the strategic direction and the principles that should govern the preparation and drafting of the 41 C/4 document, and decide on the roadmap for the preparation of the Draft Strategy.
2. The present document should be read in conjunction with documents 40 C/INF.18, and 40 C/7 on the preparation of the Draft 41 C/5, which will be the first quadrennial Programme and Budget in the implementation of the new Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029.
3. The current Medium-Term Strategy (37 C/4) was elaborated on the basis of the guidance provided by the 36th session of the General Conference in its decision 36 C/Resolution 1, which took on board the recommendations of the Executive Board to adopt “*a brief, succinct and rolling C/4 document of a policy-oriented and strategic nature, with a limited number of cross-cutting strategic objectives with which all programmes should be aligned.*”
4. As such, the current Medium-Term Strategy revolves around two Overarching Objectives of peace and sustainable *development*; with nine Strategic Objectives; Africa and gender equality as two global priorities; and the small island developing States (SIDS) as priority target group.
5. In addition, the following two strategic documents have been drawn up to complement the Medium-Term Strategy, the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, and the UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan for 2014-2021, which were approved by the General Conference at its 37th session (37 C/Resolution 1). *Furthermore*, in pursuance of 36 C/Resolution 79, the Secretariat had prepared and started implementing the Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021.
6. To implement the Medium-Term Strategy (37 C/4), the nine Strategic Objectives had been translated into actionable results in two quadrennial programmes and four biennial budgets: The 37 C/5 and 38 C/5 covering the first quadrennium (2014-2017) have been implemented, with results achieved reported on in the Analytical Programme Implementation Report (APIR) ([204 EX/4 Part I](#)). The Organization is currently implementing the Approved 39 C/5, and has submitted for the adoption of the 40th session of the General Conference, the biennial budget in the Draft 40 C/5 that covers the implementation of the last biennium 2020-2021.

Preparation of the draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4)

Background

7. The next UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy is being developed under unprecedented circumstances. Its target date, 2029, corresponds to the 2030 deadline set by the international community for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This shows that the strategy which the Organization will adopt for the next decade is utterly crucial. There will be no second chance. UNESCO’s tangible contribution to this immense collective effort will, to a great extent, guide and justify its own future as a specialized agency of the United Nations system.
8. UNESCO’s future strategy will also have to take into account the present and future changes resulting from the measures established (and planned) as part of both the Organization’s strategic transformation and the United Nations reform. This reform, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in March 2018 ([A/RES/72/279](#)), reflects the Secretary-General’s ambitious vision for the repositioning of the United Nations development system. It aims to draw on the unique and diversified expertise of the entities of the United Nations and make the system more integrated, coherent, effective and efficient and more accountable to Member States with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
9. UNESCO has begun to implement its own strategic transformation with a view to improving the Organization’s efficiency and effectiveness, increasing the impact of its actions, and enabling its

repositioning so that it can better respond to the current and future concerns of its Member States and consolidate its central role and authority in the areas which are at the core of its mandate. UNESCO's strategic transformation is thus firmly in keeping with the ambition of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to modernize the entire United Nations system in order to help Member States to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals both within the context of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

10. Based on three main pillars, UNESCO's strategic transformation aims: to change the Organization's structure and update its management culture (pillar 1); to strengthen its means of action, by working on operational issues, communication, strategic partnerships and UNESCO's presence in the world (pillar 2); and to engage the Organization in comprehensive strategic reflection so that it can adapt its actions and develop programmes in accordance with current world issues and future needs (pillar 3). The third pillar entails an in-depth strategic reflection on the programmes which are under way and those which have yet to be devised. This reflection must take into account developments in today's world; it must also take into account challenges and opportunities at the global, regional and national levels. It must do all this by means of a consultative and inclusive process involving Member States and all UNESCO's networks and partners (see also document 40 C/55 on UNESCO's strategic transformation).

11. The future Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO will need to be coherent, ambitious, yet realistic and tailored to our resources. It will chart the path forward for the Organization and its Member States to address together the complex and rapidly evolving challenges ahead, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver on its international commitments in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

The 40th session of the General Conference: debate and decision

12. As planned in the context of pillar 3 of UNESCO's strategic transformation, informal consultations have started in the framework of a house-wide strategic reflection process that involves all UNESCO stakeholders, within the Secretariat, with UNESCO international and intergovernmental bodies, and, more recently, with UNESCO Member States through the Permanent Delegations.

13. The Assistant Directors-General for the programme sectors have begun a strategic review of their programmes, in close cooperation with the field offices, category 1 institutes and the central services concerned. The programme discussions, both those conducted at the statutory meetings of the governing bodies of international and intergovernmental programmes and those conducted as part of the work of the Executive Board of UNESCO, will enable the eventual definition of a medium-term strategic vision for the Organization. At the same time, they will highlight the added value and impact of UNESCO programmes and help to identify worldwide and regional trends and challenges and opportunities which now have and will continue to have an impact on the Organization's future strategic and programmatic directions. The statutory reports of each of the international and intergovernmental programmes, which are submitted to the General Conference at its 40th session contain pertinent information on the corresponding activities and results.

14. In July 2019, a series of "Dialogue" meetings between the Permanent Delegations and the Assistant Directors-General of the programme sectors was organized in UNESCO Paris, in pursuance of the Executive Board decision (206 EX/Decision 5.II.F), by which it encouraged the Director-General to "*ensure that future discussions on pillar 3 take a transparent dialogue-based approach.*"

15. These informal dialogues enabled fruitful exchanges regarding the major trends, the main challenges and the opportunities, which now have an impact on UNESCO's work and which will have an impact on UNESCO's work over the next 10 years; they also enabled fruitful exchanges regarding UNESCO's comparative advantages and the strengthening of its role, globally, regionally and nationally.

16. Member States appreciated this opportunity for an inclusive, innovative and participatory strategic reflection exercise. Highlights of the views expressed by the Permanent Delegations, in addition to the analysis prepared by the different programme sectors are captured in document 40 C/INF.18.

17. Moreover, similar events and dialogues have been held within UNESCO, as well as outside the Organization, such as the High-level summits and events¹ held in the context of the 74th United Nations General Assembly in New York on relevant matters, whereby Member States have reaffirmed their collective commitment to the SDGs and to the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda implementation (See also the outcomes of these summits in the Annex to document 40 C/INF.18).

18. It is expected that document 40 C/INF.18 serve as food for thought for the debates at the 40th session of the General Conference Commissions meetings on the future Medium-Term Strategy (41 C/4), and help guide the adoption by the Member States of their final decision on the general strategic direction and the principles that should govern the preparation and drafting of the C/4 document.

19. Furthermore, and in accordance with the General Conference agenda of work, Member States at the Joint meeting of Commissions will have at their disposal the summary of discussions held at the Forum of Ministers of Culture (19 November 2019) and the Conclusions of the Youth Forum, in addition to the summaries of debates held by each Programme Commission on related matters.

Roadmap for the preparation of the draft 41 C/4

20. The strategic reflection process, as described in document 205 EX/5.III.D Rev., has already begun. It is suggested that the process be centred on a variety of approaches or areas of work, which should always be organized in an inclusive and consultative manner. Thus, on the basis of the work already begun, the preparation of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 will include the main steps explained below. These steps will be carried out according to the timeline in the annex to this document and will permit examination and decision-making by UNESCO's governing bodies at each major stage of the process.

- A. At the 40th session of the General Conference, Member States will examine the documents prepared by the Secretariat (documents 40 C/11 and 40 C/INF.18) and take a decision on the strategic directions and principles according to which the Strategy should be developed. Following the examination of the present document as well as the related information documents, the General Conference may wish to consider and take its decision in its deliberations on the following:
- (i) the Roadmap for the preparation of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (see Annex); and
 - (ii) any principle or issue that should guide the preparation and drafting of the C/4 document, for instance:
 - UNESCO's mission and vision statements;
 - key functions;
 - identification of the Organization's "global" priorities; priority or target groups (countries; populations; other);
 - focus on a limited number of cross-cutting overarching and strategic objectives;

¹ In addition to the general debate at the UNGA 74th General Assembly (17-24 September 2019, New York), world leaders participated in a series of summits and high-level meetings to boost action on climate change and accelerate progress on sustainable development, in the context of five high-level events, among which are: the Climate Change Action Summit (23 September), preceded by the Youth Summit (21 September); the United Nations SDG Summit (24-25 September); and the High-Level Mid-term Review meeting of the SAMOA Pathways (27 September).

- interdisciplinary and transversal approach;
- other.

- B. Thus, the resolution, once adopted by Member States at the 40th session of the General Conference will establish the schedule, methodology and guiding principles for the preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy. The strategic reflection on programmes will be conducted on this basis. It will also be based on the relevant audit and evaluation reports and further informed by the results of the review of UNESCO's programme performance which, through the **Strategic Results Report (SRR)**, the Director-General will submit to the Executive Board at its spring 2020 session. The SRR and its conclusions should enable the Secretariat and Member States to identify the areas and/or programmes requiring modification in the short, medium and long term – as regards content, implementation and resources required. The SRR will also contain proposed ways of moving forward, including the identification of emerging priorities. The Strategic Results Report will thus be one of the Executive Board's main decision-making tools with regard to the Organization's future programmatic directions.
- C. At the same time, in the first half of 2020, the Secretariat will organize the Director-General's consultation with Member States and Associate Members and partners (including national commissions, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the preparation of the draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5). This process is in line with the work and consultations undertaken previously. The Director-General's consultation will be carried out through the following:
- (i) An online survey (spring 2020); the structure and methodology of the 2020 questionnaire will be reviewed and improved in order to take into account the comments and recommendations received by the Secretariat with regard to the 2016 questionnaire. Member States will be invited to submit a single response on behalf of their respective governments and national commissions. The response deadline will be set so as to allow for national consultations with the various stakeholders, including national experts who are members of UNESCO's international and intergovernmental programmes.
 - (ii) Consultations with Member States and their national commissions, at subregional and/or regional levels, organized by the field offices in cooperation with the relevant services at Headquarters, in spring 2020; at the global level, within the framework of the seventh Interregional Meeting of National Commissions, which is to be held from 25 to 29 May 2020 in Lugano, Switzerland.

The results of the online survey, as well as the reports of the regional and global consultations, will be published and made available to the Executive Board within the statutory time frames.

- D. In addition, as indicated in document 204 EX/31, the Director-General will invite independent personalities reputed in UNESCO's fields of competence to advise her on emerging challenges and trends, including those of a global and interdisciplinary nature, which are relevant and likely to have an impact on UNESCO's fields of competence. To that end, on 23 September 2019, the Director-General appointed 12 high-level personalities, who have a variety of backgrounds and who represent all geographical regions, to the High-Level Reflection Group, which will begin its work in early November 2019. The Group will have the opportunity to exchange with the Director-General and the senior managers, and conduct its work throughout 2020 contributing to further the debates on future trends impacting the Organization's work in its fields of competence, and to help inform the Director-General's Preliminary Proposals on the 41 C/4 and the 41 C/5.

21. According to the proposed roadmap, this inclusive and consultative strategic reflection process should enable the Director-General to prepare her “Preliminary Proposals on the Draft 41 C/4 and 41 C/5”, pursuant to the corresponding resolution adopted by the General Conference at its 40th session. These proposals will be submitted for the consideration of the Executive Board at its 210th session (autumn 2020); the Board will take its decision on the follow-up and guiding principles to be applied in the preparation of the full version of the draft Medium-Term Strategy.

22. The Secretariat will thus continue the preparation of the draft Strategy, which, as appropriate, will further draw from the findings of other relevant analyses and processes of reflection and strategic dialogue with all UNESCO stakeholders, and which will be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration at its spring 2021 session. According to the timeline proposed in the annex to this document, these processes end with the presentation of the draft Strategy at the 41st session of the General Conference (autumn 2021) for its final consideration and adoption by Member States so that it can be launched in January 2022.

Proposed resolution

23. The General Conference may wish to adopt the following resolution:

The General Conference,

Having examined documents 40 C/11 and 40 C/INF.18,

Recalling Article I of UNESCO’s Constitution, which states that the purpose of the Organization is “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations”,

Reaffirming the abiding relevance of UNESCO’s mandate to the achievement of sustainable development and international peace, and *stressing* the importance for UNESCO of supporting its Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as of the other relevant internationally agreed development goals,

Emphasizing the importance of aligning UNESCO’s action on the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change,

Recognizing the need for UNESCO to continue evolving, adapting and renewing itself in order to consolidate its role in international cooperation more effectively,

1. *Underscores* the opportunity for UNESCO to further harness its multidisciplinary expertise and experience in its fields of competence, in order to strengthen its position within the United Nations development system, and achieve synergies and greater impact;
2. *Welcomes* the Director-General’s efforts in pursuing a strategic transformation process aimed at enhancing the Organization’s operational efficiency, harnessing its comparative advantages to address the challenges of the contemporary world, strengthening its programmes and their impact, and making UNESCO better fit to address the challenges of the future;

3. *Invites* the Director-General, when preparing the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4), to:
 - (a) take into account the debates and decision on this item at the 40th session of the General Conference,
 - (b) proceed with the preparation of the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and with the related consultations of Member States and relevant stakeholders according to the roadmap and timeline presented in the Annex of document 40 C/11.

ANNEX

PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY 2022-2029 (41 C/4) AND THE DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET 2022-2025 (41 C/5)

	2019	2020			2021		
	Autumn	February-May	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	
Secretariat	40th GC		Executive Board (209th)	Executive Board (210th)	Executive Board (211th)	Executive Board (212th)	41st GC
	Draft road map for the preparation of 41 C/4 and 41 C/5	- DG's consultations with Member States and Associate Members, including their National Commissions, IGOs and NGOs on the preparation of 41 C/4 and 41 C/5, through: i) questionnaire ii) Global meetings of National Commissions In addition: - Regional consultations of National Commissions (by Field Offices) - Consultations of UNESCO's IIBs (piloted by sectors)	2020 Strategic Results Report (SRR)	Preliminary proposals on the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5)	Draft Medium Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5)	Follow-up of the Board's recommendations	Draft Medium Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5)
Executive Board/ General Conference	Resolutions containing strategic directions for the 41 C/4 (2022-2029) and 41 C/5 (2022-2025)		Review of the SRR and recommendations to the GC on the future direction of the programme	Recommendations of the Executive Board	Decisions and recommendations of the Executive Board to the General Conference on the Draft Medium Term Strategy (41 C/11), and on the Draft Programme and Budget (41 C/6)	Recommendations of the Executive Board to the GC (41 C/11 and 41 C/6 Add.)	Discussion and adoption of the Medium Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5)