

**Outcome document from the
Working group on "Strengthening NGO-UNESCO Partnership"
under the aegis of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee**

**Theme 1 : Strengthening the dialogue
between NGOs and Member States of UNESCO**

The evolution of society, the intensification of international relations and the globalization confer a growing importance to the organizations of the civil society.

As Non-state actors, NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO operate through their networks on all the continents, in agreement with the values and priorities of UNESCO, closest to the populations for which they are often the spokespeople.

NGOS have been able to associate selflessness and the skills of volunteers and employees as well as form structures successful and innovative enough to fulfill their humanitarian missions. Their actions on the ground, and their technical skills in areas well specialized, allow them to set priorities and to propose solutions to the specific problems, by becoming true providers of resources from States and international organizations.

In order to consolidate the foundations of peace and an equitable and sustainable development , NGOS wish to strengthen their dialogue with Member States with a view to the elaboration and the implementation of UNESCO programs in the framework of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This document deals with bilateral relations between NGOs and Member States and does not ignore the importance of the collective work of NGOs. It is part of the reflection carried out by the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (PNG Committee) of the Executive Board on "Relations with non-governmental partners "(document 207EX / 33).

INTRODUCTION

1. Since its creation, UNESCO has implemented a policy of partnership, in particular with NGOs, in order to face global challenges. NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO continue to demonstrate their unfailing commitment as well as their willingness to participate in and contribute to the achievement of the objectives and priorities of the Organization. They express by this document their desire to intensify their international cooperation by strengthening the dialogue with the Member States in order to act efficiently in the areas of education, science, culture, communication and information. The actions of NGOs are in line with the priority themes of UNESCO such as education for all, gender equality, youth, the climate crisis and the new technologies in favour of sustainable peace.

2. By being aligned with the new strategy (document 207EX/11), which recalls that "non-governmental organizations remain key partners for UNESCO", NGOs are fully committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of UNESCO programs.

3. This reflection is the outcome of the 2018 ICNGO recommendations and is based on the 2011 Directives, which provide a framework for the cooperation of NGOs in official partnership. It is also a contribution to the reflection undertaken by the States, in the framework of the Committee on NGP, regarding the relations with the Member States (197EX/29. INF2, 204EX/23, 207 EX/33). These documents correspond to the need of establishing the terms of a detailed and constructive dialogue for the strengthening of interaction between NGOs and Member States.

I. ISSUES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF COMMUNICATION

Lack of visibility of NGOs and the ICNGO

4. NGOs have noted a lack of visibility of their skills and their collective actions within UNESCO, and, in the same way, the role of the ICNGO. It seems essential to improve the knowledge of the actions brought by the different stakeholders in order to strengthen the partnership between them : Member States, S UNESCO Secretariat and NGOs.

5. The Consultation of the list of NGO partners with their respective fields of action and contact details should be facilitated. Reporting it to Member States and National Commissions would promote a better visibility for NGOs, the ICNGO and the Liaison Committee (LC).

6. NGOs often note, during the formal or informal meetings with the Member States, that they hardly know the roles of the ICNGO and the LC.

7. With a view to a more relevant cooperation between the stakeholders, it seems important to consider NGOs' increased participation, as observers in the Committee on NGP and the other governing bodies of UNESCO.

8. NGO partners need to know the programs and priorities of UNESCO in order to share their opinions and suggestions, in accordance with the guidelines of 2011¹, relying in particular on the questionnaire prepared in the framework of the consultation for the development of the medium term strategy, of the draft program and budget of UNESCO.

Strengthening the communication between NGOs, the Secretariat and the Member States

9. According to the Guidelines of 2011, the LC² is responsible among other things for representing the interests of the whole network of NGO partners vis-a-vis UNESCO and

¹ http://portal.unesco.org/fr/ev.php-URL_ID=48884&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

² *Extracted from the Directives of 2011: VI.1.(i)" they may, under the authority of their governing body, submit written statements at any time to the Director-General on UNESCO programme matters within their competence. The Director-General shall, if he/she deems it to be necessary, communicate the substance of these statements to the Executive Board or, if appropriate, to the General Conference."*

ensuring that the collective positions of NGOs are taken into account by UNESCO in the preparation of its draft program³.

10. In this framework, it appears necessary to strengthen the communication to the Member States and the sectors concerning the collective work of NGOs relating to UNESCO programs, in particular the Forums⁴.

11. In the framework of their collective work under the aegis of the LC, the communication of NGOs with the Member States, must be done through the NGO Section of the Secretariat.

12. In addition, NGOs would like the circulation of the monthly letter to be resumed and sent to non-governmental partners with a copy to the Permanent Delegations. Through the information shared, such a letter helps to promote communication between NGOs and Member States.

13. The development under the auspices of the LC of a protocol on collective relations between NGOs, on the one hand, the Secretariat and the Member States, on the other hand, would facilitate the interactions between these four actors.

14. For better visibility of NGOs and the Liaison Committee, it would be appropriate to define with the Secretariat procedures of communication to transmit the information to the sectors and to the Member States.

Need for the establishment of communication procedures between the different actors

15. The list of focal points of each sector should be accessible to NGOs⁵, in order to facilitate the cooperation with the program sectors, field offices and the National Commissions ⁶⁷.

³ *Extract from the Directives of 2011: "XI. 2. NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee*

2.1 The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee's role between meetings of the International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations shall be to :

(a) represent the interests of all the NGO partners with regard to UNESCO;

(b) take all necessary steps to ensure the proper functioning and efficiency of the partnership between the community of NGO partners and UNESCO;

(c) ensure the appropriate exchange of information with the non-governmental community it represents and, in this connection, promote consultation among NGOs at all levels;

(d) implement the resolutions adopted by the International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations and make preparations, in consultation with the Director-General, for the subsequent session of the International Conference, including, for the first session of the International Conference, its draft rules of procedure;

(e) ensure that the opinions of NGOs taken collectively are reflected by UNESCO in the preparation of its draft programme;

(f) contribute to preparations for the debates of the Executive Board's Committee on Non-Governmental Partners, in particular by promoting, as far as possible, the participation of a large number of NGOs;

(g) organize, in consultation with the UNESCO Secretariat, a twice-yearly NGO Forum on a UNESCO priority issue".

⁴ *Extract 207EX/33 of 2019: "29 It should be underlined however, that many respondents are not aware of the possible modalities of Member States' involvement in the activities of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and stress the need to be better informed of the work of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the International Conference of NGOs ".*

⁵ *Extract 204EX/23 of 2018: 6. While carrying out their mandate, programme sectors and field offices have acquired, to different degrees, mechanisms to consult and exchange with civil society on specific issues or modalities for multi-stakeholder engagement, which encourage governments, NGOs, the private sector and other organizations to work together to achieve common goals"*

16. Better information on the programs of UNESCO and their implementation by the Member States would enhance collaboration between NGOS, States and National Commissions. In this goal, the annual reports of the National Commissions⁸ represent a source of information that is very useful for NGOS.

II. STRENGTHENING OF THE PARTICIPATION OF NGOS IN THE GOVERNING BODIES

The General Conference

17. NGO partners may attend the General Conference as observers and take the floor according to the modalities defined in the Directives⁹.

18. The informal mechanism the NGOs' Space represents in the framework of the General Conference is conducive to strengthening the dialogue with the Member States. The presentation sessions and dialogue planned in this space most often address the themes that relate directly to the understanding of the functioning of UNESCO by NGOS. Choosing themes in cooperation with the Member States, more particularly the National Commissions would help put forward the common concerns of States and NGOs' and entail a greater attendance of this space by representatives of States.

The Executive Board

19. NGO partners are invited to take part, as observers, in the meetings of the Committee on non-governmental partners (NGP) only. To be able to participate in the plenary meetings and the submit a written request for the authorization of the President of the Council.

⁶ *Extract 207EX/33 of 2019: "26. Ad hoc spaces and opportunities for dialogue between Member States, the Secretariat and NGOs could thus be promoted and/or reinforced by programme sectors and field offices: "*

⁷ *Extract 197 EX/29.INF. 2 of 2015: "71.While it is true that the Organization works with various international, regional and local NGOs, we cannot overlook the fact that much of the cooperation is very often developed with NGOs that are not in official partnership with UNESCO, both at international and national levels: the programme sectors, field offices and National Commissions attest to well-established collaboration with more than 100 NGOs that were not in official partnership. The selection of partners often takes place informally, driven by their reciprocal objectives and interests, without using the list of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO. At the same time, NGOs whose expertise is sought are not invited to enter this formal relationship, often because they are unaware of the existing procedures and opportunities they offer "*

⁸ *Extract from the Directives of 2011: VI.1. (a)" The Director-General shall take all necessary measures to ensure the appropriate exchange of information and documents with NGOs on matters of joint interest"*

⁹ *Extract from the Directives of 2011: VI.1(c) official NGO partners of UNESCO whose admission lies within the competence of the Executive Board may send observers to sessions of the General Conference. The other official NGO partners of UNESCO may be invited to send observers on the decision of the Director-General acting on behalf of the General Conference. These observers may make statements on matters within their respective competence in the commissions, committees and subsidiary bodies of the General Conference, with the consent of the presiding officer; they may address plenary meetings of the General Conference on particular matters of major importance that fall within their competence with the authorization of the Bureau of the Conference, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference".*

20. In order to strengthen relations between NGO and Member States, to benefit from the thoughts and expertise of NGO partners and in order to enrich the debates before the decision-making process, NGO partners, with an expertise on the items discussed at the Executive Board, could be invited to each session of the Executive Board as observers.¹⁰

The Committee on NGP

21. The Committee on non-governmental partners (NGP) of the Executive Board has a mandate which aims to open the governing bodies to the contributions of civil society. It is therefore a key body for the strengthening of the dialogue with the Member States.

22. In accordance with the preamble to the Directives of 2011, it should be recalled that NGOS are official partners for the development and implementation of the programs of UNESCO¹¹.

23. The working sessions of the Committee on NGP having occurred no more than one day a year since the biennium 2014-2015, it would be advisable to study the feasibility for NGO partners to have the time to be able to undertake more in-depth reflections with the Member States, with a view to establishing a more efficient intellectual partnership during the drafting of the programs.

24. As well the organization of thematic debates during the sessions of the Committee would allow NGP to establish a real contact between NGOS and Member States to deepen the issues relating to the programs of UNESCO¹².

¹⁰ *Extract 204EX/23 of 2018: 14. Extending the participation of NGOs as observers in the meetings of the Executive Board (plenary and commissions) beyond the NGP Committee. Three options are open for consideration in this respect:*

- *A limited number of UNESCO's official partner NGOs – three representatives, for example – could be admitted to participate regularly as observers at the sessions of the Executive Board (in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board). Only NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO would be eligible and could be selected in consultation with the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, taking into account their relevance to the items on the agenda of the session;*
- *The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee – whose members are elected by the International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations to represent the interests of all the NGO partners with regard to UNESCO – could be admitted to participate as observers at the meetings of the Executive Board (in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board), as the sole entity representing all NGO partners at the Board on a regular basis*
- *Like at the General Conference, all official partner NGOs could be invited as observers to each session of the Executive Board (in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board).*

¹¹ *Extracted from the Directives of 2011: "Preamble.2. Non-governmental organizations are now involved in all of UNESCO's fields of competence. These Directives provide the framework within which the partnerships it desires to maintain with such organizations may develop under the most favourable conditions. The Directives are designed to make the non-governmental organizations official partners for the development and implementation of UNESCO's programmes. The aim is to develop a genuine partnership culture allowing UNESCO to legitimize its action, achieve its objectives and make them more visible. Since UNESCO is not a funding institution, this partnership will be essentially of an intellectual nature."*

¹² *Extract 207EX/33 of 2019: "32. Already established mechanisms – in particular the Committee on Non-Governmental Partners (NGP Committee) – may be seen, therefore, as appropriate platforms where to strengthen dialogue between Member States and NGOs. In view of a better exploitation and more efficient use of the NGP Committee's mandate, and its role as a place for dialogue between Member States and NGOs, a majority of respondents consider that the NG could benefit for the organization of thematic debates, already foreseen by its Terms of Reference, that could allow for specific and relevant exchanges between Member States and NGOs on issues relating to programme implementation and the 2030 Agenda. It is up to the Executive Board and its NGP Committee to consider how to ensure an effective implementation of the Committee's Terms of Reference and capitalize on it in the broader context of the present reflection on governance."*

25. Hearings of NGOS could be organized in the framework of the Committee on NGP during the reviewing of some items on the agenda of the session in order to allow NGOS to contribute to the study of these points and thus enrich the reflection and debates of the Executive Board.¹³

III. DIALOGUE WITHIN EXISTING MECHANISMS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN NGOS AND MEMBER STATES

The International Conference of NGOS

26. The International Conference of NGOS (ICNGO) brings together all the NGO partners of the Organization every two years and constitutes, according to the Directives, an element of the collective cooperation, of encounter and dialogue between NGO partners and the Member States.

27. The preparation of the CIONG and the choice of its theme, could give rise to an exchange enriched with the Member States' inputs; similarly, their increased presence in the round tables or discussion panels would testify to the reciprocal desire of an effective partnership¹⁴.

28. The guidelines suggest the ICNGO should hold thematic debates and propose the conclusions to the Director General in order to enrich the formulation of programs; the themes could be selected on the basis of the priorities of some States. The dialogue between NGOS and Member States would be reinforced¹⁵.

The International NGO Forums organised in consultation with UNESCO

29. The organization of the FORUMS is part of the functions of the LC, as stated in the Guidelines¹⁶.

30. The preparatory work for the forums makes it possible to associate NGOS who discover the action of UNESCO. Often, they wish to continue working with the Organization. They also allow NGOS to work concretely with the host countries and their National Commissions.

31. Within the framework of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the partnership, a group of NGOs has been reflecting on the preparation, financing, unfolding and follow-up of the forums.

¹³ *Extract 204EX/23 of 2018: "NGO hearings could be organized within the framework of the NGP Committee in connection with the items on the agenda of the session, in order to allow NGOs to contribute to the consideration of these items and enrich the reflection and discussion of the Executive Board."*

¹⁴ *Extract 204EX/23 of 2018: "representatives of Member States could be further involved in round tables or discussion panels during the conference, alongside experts and NGOs – a synergy that would open a space for dialogue and cooperation on an ad hoc basis. Similarly, subject to funds available for this purpose, there could be a day before the Conference in which NGOs could exchange with Member States on the theme of the Conference."*

¹⁵ *Extract 207EX/33 of 2019: "The International Conference of NGOs has been widely recognized by respondents as a potential mechanism for specific opportunities of exchange between Member States and NGOs, especially concerning the contribution of NGOs to the mandate and priorities of the Organization."*

¹⁶ *Extracted from the Directives of 2011: XI.2.1.g "organize, in consultation with the UNESCO Secretariat, a twice-yearly NGO Forum on a UNESCO priority issue".*

This reflection includes the participation of Member States and the communication between NGOs and Member States on the forums.

32. Other States representing the five geographic areas could join the host country for the preparation of forums so that more diversified may be addressed and a growing number of States may participate in forums.

33. The evaluation and follow-up of the forums on the ground should be conducted in close collaboration with the States concerned.

The National Commissions

34. The National Commissions have the responsibility to promote the transmission of the information, to encourage interactions, and to coordinate joint actions between civil society and UNESCO.

35. Meetings between NGOs and the National Commissions, particularly during the General Conference, would better coordinate the implementation of the programs of UNESCO by the NGOs on the ground and the actions of the National Commissions with the civil society of their country.

36. Efforts in favour of a greater cooperation between NGOs and National Commissions and UNESCO field offices at the local, national and regional levels would be an important element in the strengthening of the dialogue between NGOs and Member States. This would involve cooperation with the national branches of international NGOs working in the field, building on UNESCO's implementation of its programs¹⁷.

The conventions and the collective consultation of NGOs

37. The thematic collective consultations are planned by the Directives¹⁸. The collective consultation of NGOs for Education 2030 is the only mechanism of this kind at UNESCO and the key pillar for the implementation of SDG 4 in partnership with civil society including NGOs.

38. The creation of other collective consultations would strengthen the partnership and multilateral cooperation as mechanisms for the sectors and Member States to benefit from the expertise and mobilizing capacity of NGOs around a priority program of UNESCO.

39. The follow-up to the Conventions are the mechanisms which may also contribute, through the creation of forums of NGOs, to the interaction between NGO partners and Member States. We can refer here to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, the 2005 Convention on the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the World Heritage Convention adopted in 2012, for which the NGOs organize NGO forums on world heritage.

¹⁷ *Extract 207EX/33 of 2019: "On the one hand, an important number of respondents identify arenas outside the governing bodies as more appropriate platforms for strengthening dialogue between Member States and NGOs, in line with the intergovernmental nature of UNESCO; and focus on dialogue with NGOs at country level, including through National Commissions.*

¹⁸ *Extracted from the Directives of 2011: XI.3"Collective consultations on specific subjects may be organized by the Secretariat with specialized NGOs, to ensure their contribution to the development and implementation of certain of UNESCO's priority programmes".*

CONCLUSION

In the framework of their reflection on the strengthening of the dialogue between the NGOS and Member States of UNESCO, NGOs in official partnership thank the Member States for their reflection and constructive proposals regarding the item on the agenda of the Committee on NPG on "Relations with non-governmental partners" and make the following proposals that are in line with the official texts in force:

1. They wish to act in favor of an enhanced visibility of NGO partners, the International Conference of NGOs and the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee
2. They propose the establishment of procedures for the information and communication between the NGOS and Member States,
3. They encourage the Secretariat to resume the dissemination of the Monthly Letter to the non-governmental partners,
4. They propose offering a broader participation as observers to the Executive Board,
5. They wish to strengthen the dialogue with the Member States by the organization of thematic debates relevant to the framework of the Committee of the NPG and of the existing interactive mechanisms in order to deepen the issues relating to the programs of UNESCO,
6. They wish to associate the Member States more closely in the preparation and conduct of the International Conference of NGOs.
7. They wish the forums could contribute more widely to the dialogue with the Member States by their preparation, their conduct, their assessment and monitoring as recommended in the Guide for the organization of the forums proposed by a group of NGOS,
8. They underline the importance of the dialogue between NGOS and National Commissions in order to promote the implementation of the programs of UNESCO in connection with the field offices.

October 8, 2019

Working Group on the Strengthening of the partnership of NGO-UNESCO

Responsible: Diego Gradis (Traditions for Tomorrow) for the Liaison Committee

Group of NGOS responsible for the conduct of a reflection on the strengthening of the dialog NGOS-Member States

Responsible: Christine Roche (International Catholic Center of Cooperation with UNESCO)

The steering group: Gabrielle de Milleville (Make Mothers Matter), Maryvonne Kayser (World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations), Christiane Johannot-Gradis (Traditions for Tomorrow), France Marquet (South Asia Foundation), Christian Breuil (CMA TLV),), Marc Toillier (Union International Christian of heads of enterprises).

The participating NGOS: Lisbeth Gouin (World Organization for the pre-school education), Maria Antonietta Malleo (International Fellowship of Reconciliation), Marie Claude Allez (ATD 1/4 MONDE), Jean Maurice Beau, Elisabeth Birene (ICSW), Monique Bouaziz and Danièle Lévy (International Alliance of Women), Raoul Alonso (International Association of Educators for Peace), Mélaine Camps (International Association of School Psychology), Bernard Loing (Traditions for Tomorrow), Magali Noah (National Association of the cultures of the world), Françoise Oriol (UATI.UISF), Silja Fischer (BMI), Jean Claude Guillemard (International School Psychology Association)