

**EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL FORUM  
OF NGOs IN OFFICIAL PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO**

7-8 December 2017  
Paris, UNESCO HQ

***“NGOs AND CLIMATE CHANGE”***  
*[Provisional title]*

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**BACKGROUND**

In accordance with the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with NGOs, adopted by the UNESCO's General Conference in 2011, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee is entrusted to organize, in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, International Forums of NGOs on a UNESCO priority issue.

In order to take into account the cultural and geographic diversity of civil society and involve new associations located in diverse regions of the world, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the UNESCO Secretariat organize the Forums where possible outside of the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Seven Forums have been organized on the following topics: “Which Education Goals for Tomorrow Citizens of the World of tomorrow: Is quality enough?” (Paris, France - 2013); “Access to Water for All in Africa” (Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire - 2014); “The Role of Youth in Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage” (Sozopol, Bulgaria - 2014); “The Role of Women in Fighting Poverty” (Paris, France - 2015); “Rapprochement of Cultures: One Humanity Beyond Diversities” (Beijing, China – 2016) ; “From Promoting to Building Peace with NGOs” (Querétaro, Mexico – 2016); “Youth and its Social Impact” (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – 2017).

**THE THEME**

Climate change is a complex issue that has an impact on global issues, including poverty, economic development, population growth, sustainable development and resource management. Hence, the solutions come from all fields and disciplines of research and development.

Addressing climate change is one of the keys to achieving sustainable development. It is urgent to reorient our technologies, our sciences, our finances and, above all, our mentalities, to transform our economies and ensure a sustainable future for all.

In 2015, the international community reached a historic Agreement on climate change in Paris, during the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). That same year governments adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development together with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among which SDG 13 calls on Member States to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

This new context provides a momentum for the international community — States, IGOs, NGOs, civil society, enterprises – to take action to implement the Paris Agreement.

UNESCO, through its multidisciplinary mandate in education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication is in a unique position to provide a holistic response to climate change. Through these different programmes - hydrology, geosciences, man and biosphere, oceans, management of social transformations, education - UNESCO provides valuable tools and data as well as possible solutions for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

An [updated UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change](#) was approved by the UNESCO's Executive Board at its 201<sup>st</sup> session in April 2017 and is submitted to the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference for endorsement. The objective of the UNESCO Strategy is “to enable Member States to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts through education, sciences, culture and information and communication, in line with their respective National Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the COP21 Paris Agreement, and in the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDG 13”.

The thematic action focus areas identified in the Strategy are:

- A. Supporting Member States to develop and implement climate change education and public awareness programmes and policies;
- B. Promoting interdisciplinary climate knowledge and scientific cooperation for climate change mitigation and adaptation (including through its International Hydrological Programme (IHP), International Geoscience Programme (IGCP), Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST), Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems Programme (LINKS), and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC);
- C. Promoting cultural diversity and cultural heritage safeguarding for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- D. Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting ethical and gender equality principles in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Within these thematic focus areas, priority shall be given to actions contributing to Gender Equality, Africa, SIDS and the engagement of youth.

The NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO have a key role to play in supporting UNESCO Strategy on Climate Change, given the issues related to the Organization's mandate. It should be noted in this respect that the text refers to the needs to build and strengthen partnerships with non-state actors. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the NGO community as a whole are explicitly mentioned as key partners on issues of common interest linked to actions promoting the implementation of the Strategy.

Thus, the Forum on the topic of Climate Change will take place in this context.

The proposal for a Forum follows on from the NGO Action day on Climate Change in 2015 where a Declaration on this topic was prepared towards the COP21 and co- signed by numerous NGOs ([http://www.ngo-unesco.net/en/pdf/FR\\_Declaration6octobreONGsurCC\\_.pdf](http://www.ngo-unesco.net/en/pdf/FR_Declaration6octobreONGsurCC_.pdf)). During the COP21, the Committee was also the initiator of two debates on this theme at Le Bourget, within the framework of the UNESCO Pavilion and the Civil Society village.

## **THE FORUM**

In accordance with the aforementioned Directives, the Forum is organized by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat and with the active participation of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO.

It will be addressed primarily to NGOs in official partnership with the Organization, but is also open to the participation of other organizations and institutions (notably the Ocean and Climate Platform), as well as representatives of Member States.

During two days of debates, the Forum will seek to reflect on the UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change and to identify avenues of action for NGOs to support UNESCO's work and make recommendations to the Organization. A Poster Exhibition (infographic, photos, etc.) will also be organized showing the work of NGOs on climate change as well as the results of the online consultation.

A questionnaire is available online (<https://goo.gl/forms/7BjGR5eS7qL5Eyca2>), aiming at compiling information on what NGOs are doing in face of climate change and how they contribute to the UNESCO priorities. Preparatory group meetings are also taking place in Paris supporting the organization of the event, involving NGOs representatives and the UNESCO Secretariat.

### **Themes of the Forum**

Three main themes have emerged, which will outline the program of the Forum:

#### ***Ocean and Climate Change***

- *The ocean source of eco-innovations,*
- *Citizen engagement,*
- *The ocean in the climate system*

#### ***The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Addressing Climate Change***

- *Education and awareness of communities to adopt more sustainable lifestyles*
- *Sensitization of national, regional and international decision-makers on changes in hydrological systems affecting the quantity and quality of water resources*
- *Involvement and role of women and youth*
- *Gender and climate change*
- *Ethics of climate change*

**Cultural heritage, Biosphere reserves and Indigenous peoples' knowledge and actions**

- *Indigenous peoples are also custodians of our environment; their strategies for biodiversity conservation and resilience in the face of climate change*
- *Degradation of the environment and poverty; what resilience models to counter this double aggression?*
- *Over-exploitation of natural resources exacerbated by climate change and the displacement of local populations; do protected areas such as World Heritage sites and Biosphere reserves offer solutions?*

**PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME (TBC)**

Times	Day 1	Times	Day 2
09:30-10:00	Registration		
10:00-13:00	Opening Ceremony Explanation background Keynote Conference	10:00-13:00	<i>Working session on “The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Addressing Climate Change” - Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship</i>
	Break		Break
	<i>Working session on “The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Addressing Climate Change” – Ethics of Climate Change</i>		<i>Working session on “Cultural heritage, biosphere reserves and indigenous peoples”</i>
13:00-14:30	Lunch break**	13:00–14:30	Lunch break**
14:30-17:30	<i>Working session on “Ocean and climate change”</i>	14:30 - 17:30	<i>Working session on “Cultural heritage, biosphere reserves and indigenous peoples”</i>
	Break		Break Walking Gallery - voting
	<i>Working session on “Ocean and climate change”</i>		Conclusions Closing Ceremony