

# Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO

Adopted by the General Conference at its 20th session.<sup>1</sup>

## **Preamble**

*Whereas* the purpose of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as assigned to it by its Constitution, 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,

*Whereas* it is essential, if the Organization is to achieve this purpose, that in each Member State it should have the active support of the intellectual and scientific communities and the cooperation of the population,

*Considering* the framework provided by Article VII of the Constitution, which stipulates to this end that “each Member State shall make such arrangements as suit its particular conditions for the purpose of associating its principal bodies interested in educational, scientific and cultural matters with the work of the Organization, preferably by the formation of a National Commission broadly representative of the government and such bodies”,

*Whereas* National Commissions, established under Article VII of the Constitution, are helping in an effective way to make UNESCO’s objectives better known, broaden its range of influence and promote the execution of its programme, by involving the intellectual and scientific communities of their respective countries in this work,

*Whereas* the General Conference, on various occasions and particularly at its 19th session, has emphasized the need to associate Member States, through their National Commissions, more closely with the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the Organization’s programmes, and has recommended that National Commissions be strengthened as advisory, liaison, information and executive

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1. See 20 C/Resolutions, pp. 116-19.

bodies and that cooperation between National Commissions be furthered at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, *The General Conference*, meeting in Paris at its 20th session, this twenty-seventh day of November 1978 approves the present Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO.

## Article I

### **Purpose and functions**

1. The function of National Commissions is to involve in UNESCO's activities the various ministerial departments, agencies, institutions, organizations and individuals working for the advancement of education, science, culture and information, so that each Member State may:
  - (a) Contribute to the maintenance of peace and security and the common welfare of humankind by participating in the activities of UNESCO which aim to advance the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture, and preserve, increase and diffuse knowledge;
  - (b) Play an ever-increasing role in UNESCO's work, and particularly in the formulation and execution of its programmes.
2. For this purpose, National Commissions:
  - (a) Cooperate with their governments and with services, organizations, institutions and individuals concerned with questions within UNESCO's competence;
  - (b) Encourage participation of national, governmental and non-governmental institutions and various individuals in the formulation and execution of UNESCO's programmes so as to secure for the Organization all the intellectual, scientific, artistic or administrative assistance that it may require;
  - (c) Disseminate information on the objectives, programme and activities of UNESCO and endeavour to arouse public interest in them.
3. In addition, and depending on the requirements and arrangements of each Member State, National Commissions may:
  - (a) Participate in the planning and execution of activities entrusted to UNESCO which are undertaken with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other international programmes;
  - (b) Participate in the search for candidates for UNESCO posts financed under the regular programme or from extra-

- budgetary sources, and in the placement of UNESCO fellowship holders;
  - (c) Participate with other National Commissions in joint studies on matters of interest to UNESCO;
  - (d) Undertake on their own initiative other activities related to the general objectives of UNESCO.
4. National Commissions collaborate with each other and with UNESCO's regional offices and centres in fostering regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation in education, the sciences, culture and information, particularly through the joint formulation and execution of programmes. This cooperation may bear upon the preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects and may take the form of joint surveys, seminars, meetings and conferences and exchanges of information, material and visits.

## Article II

### **Role of National Commissions in their relations with Member States**

1. Each Member State defines the responsibilities of its own National Commission. In general, National Commissions:
- (a) Foster close liaison between state agencies and services, professional and other associations, universities and other centres of research and education, and other institutions concerned with education, the sciences, culture and information;
  - (b) Cooperate with the delegations of their respective governments at the General Conference and at other inter-governmental meetings convened by UNESCO, *inter alia* by preparing the contributions of their governments to the work of these meetings;
  - (c) Follow the development of UNESCO's programme and call the attention of the appropriate agencies to the potential benefits of international cooperation;
  - (d) Contribute to national activities related to UNESCO's programme and to the evaluation thereof;
  - (e) Provide a channel for disseminating information obtained from other countries on matters of domestic interest in education, the sciences, culture and information;
  - (f) Encourage, at the national level, interdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation between institutions concerned with education, the sciences, culture and information, with a view to helping to bring intellectual resources to bear on certain priorities for development.

2. Depending on the arrangements made by each Member State, National Commissions may also be expected, *inter alia*:
  - (a) To assume, alone or in collaboration with other bodies, responsibility for the operation of UNESCO projects in the country and for national participation in subregional, regional or international UNESCO activities;
  - (b) To inform national agencies and institutions of the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the General Conference or by other meetings, or included in studies and reports; to encourage their discussion in the light of national needs and priorities; and to provide for such follow-up activities as may be required.

### Article III

#### **Services rendered to UNESCO by National Commissions**

1. In each Member State, the National Commission ensures the permanent presence of UNESCO in its country and contributes to the Organization's effort to promote international cooperation in the field of intellectual activities.
2. National Commissions are important sources of information for UNESCO on national requirements and priorities in regard to education, science, culture and information, thereby enabling the Organization to take Member States' requirements more fully into account when preparing its programmes. They also contribute to the Organization's standard-setting work and to the orientation or execution of its programme by making their views known when surveys or inquiries are carried out and by replying to questionnaires.
3. National Commissions disseminate information:
  - (a) To the mass media and the general public, on UNESCO's objectives, programmes and activities;
  - (b) To individuals and institutions concerned with any aspect of UNESCO's work.
4. National Commissions must be able to contribute effectively to the implementation of UNESCO's programme:
  - (a) By mobilizing on its behalf the assistance and support of the country's specialized communities;
  - (b) By assuming operational responsibility for some of UNESCO's programme activities.

## Article IV

**Responsibilities of Member States towards National Commissions**

1. It is incumbent upon each Member State, under Article VII of the Constitution, to provide its National Commission with the status, structure and resources necessary to enable it effectively to discharge its responsibilities to UNESCO and to the Member State.
2. Each National Commission will normally include representatives of ministerial departments, services and other bodies interested in matters of education, science, culture and information, as well as representative individuals belonging to the specialized communities involved. Its members should be sufficiently senior and competent to secure for it the support and cooperation of ministries, services, national institutions and persons capable of contributing to UNESCO's work.
3. National Commissions may include executive and standing committees, coordinating bodies, subcommissions and any other subsidiary body, as appropriate.
4. For their effective operation, National Commissions require:
  - (a) A legal status which is consistent with Article VII of the Constitution of UNESCO and the provisions of this Charter and which clearly defines the responsibilities vested in the National Commission, its membership, the conditions governing its operation and the resources on which it may draw;
  - (b) A permanent secretariat, provided with:
    - (i) a high-level staff, whose status, and in particular that of its Secretary-General, should be clearly defined, and who should be appointed for a sufficiently long period to ensure the necessary continuity of experience;
    - (ii) sufficient authority and financial means to enable it to carry out efficiently the functions specified in this Charter and to increase its participation in the activities of the Organization.
5. It is important for close collaboration to be established in each Member State between its permanent delegation to UNESCO and its National Commission.

## Article V

**Responsibilities of UNESCO towards National Commissions**

1. It is incumbent upon the Director-General of UNESCO to take the measures that he or she deems most appropriate in order to involve National Commissions in the formulation,

- implementation and evaluation of the Organization's programme and activities and to ensure that close liaison is established between its various regional services, centres and offices and the National Commissions.
2. The Organization fosters the development of National Commissions and supplies them, to the utmost of its ability, with the facilities needed for the discharge of their functions:
    - (a) By giving advice and making available the services of consultants or members of the Secretariat in order to assist Member States, at their request, to establish or reorganize their National Commission;
    - (b) By providing training for new Secretaries-General and other officials of National Commissions;
    - (c) By providing them with material assistance;
    - (d) By informing them of all missions of visiting UNESCO officials and consultants and of any other UNESCO activity planned in their country;
    - (e) By providing them with documentation and information materials;
    - (f) By providing support for the National Commissions in the translation, adaptation and dissemination of the publications and documents of UNESCO in national languages, and assistance in the production of their own publications.
  3. UNESCO can extend and develop its action through National Commissions by:
    - (a) Entering into contracts with them, wherever necessary, for the execution of activities included in its programme;
    - (b) Providing financial support for regular subregional and regional meetings held by National Commissions for the purpose of discussing common concerns, formulating proposals relating to the programmes and arranging for the joint execution of specific projects;
    - (c) Providing advice and technical support for such meetings through the participation of UNESCO officials;
    - (d) Fostering the establishment of cooperative relationships enabling the decisions taken at subregional and regional meetings to be followed up;
    - (e) Providing financial and technical support for the liaison machinery established by National Commissions;
    - (f) Fostering the organization of meetings of Secretaries-General, particularly in connection with sessions of the General Conference.

4. UNESCO encourages contacts between the National Commissions of the different regions by continuing and increasing the support it gives to:
  - (a) Meetings of groups of Secretaries-General from all regions to exchange ideas and experiences on specific problems;
  - (b) Interregional collective consultations of Secretaries-General of National Commissions;
  - (c) National Commissions of one region wishing to send an observer to the conferences of National Commissions of other regions;
  - (d) Joint projects and other cooperative activities undertaken by National Commissions of different regions.