

Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations¹

Approved by the General Conference at its 28th session² and amended at its 31st session.³

Preamble

1. In implementation of the provisions of Article XI of its Constitution, UNESCO has built up over the years a valuable network of cooperative relations in its fields of competence with non-governmental organizations representing civil society. Given the pre-eminent role that the founders of UNESCO intended non-governmental organizations to play, this partnership bears witness to the importance of the work of those organizations alongside government-sponsored action in international cooperation in the service of peoples for development, equality, international understanding and peace.
2. Fifty years after its foundation, and on the threshold of the third millennium, UNESCO notes with satisfaction the increasingly active role being played by organizations representing civil society in international cooperation, and wishes to define a new framework within which the relations it desires to maintain with such organizations may develop under the most favourable conditions.



1. These Directives take the fullest possible account of the principles and practices of the United Nations, as established in the relevant resolutions of the Economic and Social Council.
2. See 28 C/Resolutions, p. 99.
3. See 31 C/Resolutions, pp. 87-8.

3. These relations are designed, on the one hand, to enable UNESCO to secure advice, technical cooperation and documentation from non-governmental organizations and, on the other, to enable such organizations, which represent important sections of public opinion, to express the views of their members. Since UNESCO is not a funding institution, these relations will be essentially of an intellectual nature.
4. The following provisions are designed to further the aims of UNESCO by securing the broadest possible assistance from competent non-governmental organizations¹ representing civil society in the preparation and in the execution of its programme, and thus increasing international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. In addition, they should promote the emergence of new organizations that are representative of civil society in those regions of the world where such organizations, for historical, cultural or geographical reasons, are isolated or weak, and help to integrate such organizations into the network.
5. Taking into account the non-governmental organization's own objectives and the type of collaboration that is possible with UNESCO, two main types of relations will be established: the first will involve sustained cooperation both upstream and downstream from UNESCO's programming and priorities (formal relations); the second will consist of a flexible and dynamic partnership in the implementation of UNESCO's programmes (operational relations).

I. Formal relations

1. General principles

- 1.1 UNESCO may establish formal relations with international² non-governmental organizations. According to the structure and aims of such organizations, the nature of their cooperation with UNESCO and the scale of the contribution they are able to make, such relations shall come

1. Separate Directives govern UNESCO's relations with foundations and similar institutions.

2. "International" non-governmental organizations are defined as interregional and regional bodies, in the geographical or the cultural sense.

under one of two different categories: consultative relations and associate relations. Relations shall be established for renewable periods of six years.

2. **Conditions**

2.1 An international organization shall qualify as an organization that may maintain formal relations with UNESCO provided that it has not been established by intergovernmental agreement and that its purposes, functions and operation are non-governmental and non-profit-making in character.

2.2 Such an organization shall fulfil the following conditions:

- (a) it shall be engaged in activities in one or more specific fields of UNESCO's competence, and it shall be able and willing to make an effective contribution to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives, in conformity with the principles proclaimed in UNESCO's Constitution;
- (b) it shall be effectively engaged in activities at the international level in a spirit of cooperation, tolerance and solidarity in the interests of humankind and with respect for cultural identities;
- (c) its regular active membership (consisting of groups and/or persons) shall be international, permitting it, as far as possible, to ensure significant representation of the various cultural regions its vocation is to serve;
- (d) it shall form, through its membership, a community linked by a desire to pursue the objectives for which it was established;
- (e) it shall have a recognized legal status;
- (f) it shall have an established headquarters and be governed by democratically adopted statutes stipulating, in particular, that its general policy shall be determined by a conference, congress or other representative body; those statutes shall also stipulate that it shall have a permanent, representative and regularly renewed governing body, representatives who are duly elected by the main body of the organization, and basic resources deriving chiefly from members' contributions, that enable it to function and to communicate regularly with its members in various countries;
- (g) it shall have been in existence and have been carrying out activities for at least four years at the time of its requesting the establishment of formal relations.

3. **Consultative relations**

- 3.1 If it deems such a decision to be useful for the achievement of the objectives of UNESCO, the Executive Board may, either on the proposal of the Director-General or at the request of the non-governmental organization itself, admit a non-governmental organization fulfilling the conditions defined in Article 2 above and wishing to cooperate with UNESCO to the category of formal relations known as “consultative relations”.
- 3.2 Such organizations must have given proof of their ability to supply UNESCO, at its request, with competent advice on questions coming within their purview and to contribute effectively by their activities to the implementation of UNESCO’s programme.
- 3.3 The Executive Board shall apply the following principles:
- (a) where an organization’s primary objectives are related to those of another specialized agency of the United Nations system than UNESCO, that agency must be consulted;
 - (b) admission to the category of consultative relations (i) shall not be granted on an individual basis to organizations belonging to a larger body already admitted and authorized to represent those organizations in respect of the whole of their functions; and (ii) shall be possible only once the organization has maintained continuous and effective operational relations with UNESCO for a period of at least two years;
 - (c) where a number of separate organizations exist in any particular field of UNESCO’s activity, their admission to the category of consultative relations on an individual basis may be deferred with the object of encouraging the establishment of umbrella organizations or coordinating bodies that are better able to further UNESCO’s aims by bringing all these organizations together and may be entitled to request the establishment of associate relations, as defined in Article 4 below. The application of this principle shall not, however, deprive UNESCO of the direct cooperation of organizations whose assistance in one of the fields that are within its competence would be especially desirable.
- 3.4 In addition, the Director-General may decide to broaden the scope of the conditions for admission to formal consultative relations to include international networks or similar institutions of a non-governmental nature that meet the criteria set out in paragraph 2.2 above and, in addition to the mere exchange of information, may make a significant contribution to the implementation of concrete projects in UNESCO’s fields of competence, but whose structure and governing bodies are not of an

international nature owing to their legal status and the legal framework within which they conduct their activities. In such cases, before taking a decision the Director-General shall consult the competent authorities of the Member State in which the headquarters of the institution concerned is located. He shall keep the Executive Board informed of any decisions he may take under the terms of this paragraph.

4. **Associate relations**

4.1 A very small number of umbrella organizations that are broadly international in membership, bring together specialist international professional associations, have proven competence in an important field of education, science, culture or communication, and have a record of regular major contributions to UNESCO's work may, at their request and on the recommendation of the Director-General, be admitted by the Executive Board to the category of formal relations known as "associate relations".

4.2 In addition to the cooperation referred to in Article 3 above, close and continuous working relations shall be maintained with these organizations, which will be invited by the Director-General to advise him regularly on the preparation and execution of UNESCO's programme and to participate in UNESCO's activities.

5. **Admission**

5.1 The Director-General shall acquaint each organization admitted to either of the categories of formal relations with the corresponding obligations and advantages. UNESCO's relations with these organizations shall not become effective until the competent body of the organization concerned has signified its acceptance of those obligations and advantages. Requests rejected by the Executive Board may not be resubmitted to the Board until at least four years have elapsed since its decision.

6. **Modification, termination and suspension of relations**

6.1 Where the Director-General considers that circumstances make it necessary to downgrade an organization to the other category, he shall refer the matter to the Executive Board for a decision. Before doing so, he shall inform the organization concerned of the grounds for his proposal and shall communicate any observations the organization may wish to make to the Executive Board before any final decision is taken.



6.2 The same provisions shall apply if the Director-General deems it necessary to terminate UNESCO's formal relations with an international non-governmental organization. Furthermore, a complete absence of collaboration for a period of four years between UNESCO and an organization maintaining formal relations with UNESCO shall result in the automatic termination of those relations.

6.3 As an interim measure, the Director-General may, if circumstances so require, suspend relations with an organization until such time as the Executive Board is able to take a decision. This provision shall also apply in cases where an organization's relations with the United Nations have been suspended or terminated.

7. **Obligations of international non-governmental organizations maintaining formal relations with UNESCO**

7.1 (a) *Consultative relations*

Organizations maintaining formal consultative relations shall:

- (i) keep the Director-General regularly informed of those of their activities that are relevant to UNESCO's programme and of the assistance given by them to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives;
- (ii) acquaint their members, by all the means at their command, with those UNESCO programme activities and achievements that are likely to interest them;
- (iii) at the Director-General's request, give advice and provide assistance in connection with consultations on the preparation of UNESCO's programmes, and in connection with UNESCO's inquiries, studies or publications falling within their competence;
- (iv) contribute, by their activities, to the execution of UNESCO's programme and, as far as possible, include in the agenda of their meetings specific items relating to UNESCO's programme;
- (v) invite UNESCO to be represented at those of their meetings whose agenda is of interest to UNESCO;
- (vi) submit to the Director-General periodic reports on their activities, their statutory meetings and the support they have given to UNESCO's action;
- (vii) contribute substantially to the preparation of the sexennial report by the Executive Board to the General Conference on

the contributions made to UNESCO's activities by non-governmental organizations, in accordance with Section V, paragraph 3, below;

- (viii) send representatives, as far as possible at the highest level, to the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations provided for in Section III, Article 1, below.

(b) *Associate relations*

In addition to the obligations contained in (a) above, organizations maintaining formal associate relations with UNESCO shall:

- (i) collaborate closely with UNESCO in expanding those of their own activities that come within UNESCO's fields of competence;
- (ii) assist UNESCO in its efforts to promote international coordination of the activities of non-governmental organizations working in a common field and to bring them together under umbrella organizations;
- (iii) send representatives at the most appropriate level to the various types of consultation in which the Director-General invites them to take part and for which their expertise is essential;
- (iv) maintain, through their networks and regional and national representatives, effective coordination with UNESCO's field units and with the National Commissions for UNESCO in the various countries.



8. **Advantages granted to international non-governmental organizations maintaining formal relations with UNESCO**

8.1 In accordance with the provisions of Article IV, paragraph 14, of the Constitution, organizations maintaining formal consultative or associate relations with UNESCO shall be invited by the Director-General to send observers to sessions of the General Conference and its commissions. Both these observers and those referred to in Article IV, paragraph 13, of the Constitution 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.

8.2 Organizations maintaining formal consultative or associate relations with UNESCO may, under the authority of their governing body, submit written statements to the Director-General on UNESCO programme matters

within their competence. The Director-General shall communicate the substance of these statements to the Executive Board or, if appropriate, to the General Conference.

8.3 In addition, the following advantages shall be granted to organizations maintaining formal consultative or associate relations:

(a) *Consultative relations*

- (i) they shall receive, after agreement with the Secretariat, all appropriate documentation relating to the programme activities corresponding to the aims proclaimed in their constitutions;
- (ii) they shall be consulted by the Director-General on UNESCO's proposed programme;
- (iii) they may address plenary meetings of the General Conference on particular matters of major importance that fall within their competence, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference;
- (iv) they may be invited by the Director-General to send observers to meetings organized by UNESCO on matters within their competence; if unable to be represented at those meetings, they may forward their views in writing;
- (v) they shall be invited to attend periodic conferences of non-governmental organizations;
- (vi) with a view to encouraging the emergence of organizations that are representative of civil society in those regions of the world where such organizations are still weak or isolated, and their inclusion in the network of international cooperation, the Director-General may propose the conclusion of cooperation agreements or plans of action concerning UNESCO's programme priorities in the region concerned, subject to the same provisions as those contained in paragraph (b) (iv) below, with regional non-governmental organizations that are competent, effective and representative in those regions and maintain consultative relations with UNESCO.

(b) *Associate relations*

In addition to the advantages described in paragraph (a) above:

- (i) as a general principle, these organizations shall be associated as closely and regularly as possible with the various stages of the planning and execution of UNESCO's activities within their own particular field;

- (ii) they may address plenary meetings of the General Conference, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference;
- (iii) as far as is possible, office accommodation may be provided on the most favourable terms for those organizations with which it is particularly necessary for the Secretariat to keep in constant touch for the implementation of UNESCO's programme;
- (iv) framework agreements for cooperation may be concluded for a renewable period of six years with such organizations, setting the joint priorities they and UNESCO undertake to pursue during that period;
- (v) international associations/federations that are members of umbrella organizations maintaining associate relations with UNESCO may receive directly, upon request, the documentation that UNESCO sends to organizations maintaining formal relations with it.

II. Operational relations

1. General principles

1.1 The Director-General may, if he deems it useful for the implementation of UNESCO's programmes, cooperate with any non-governmental organization in a type of relations known as "operational relations".

1.2 These relations are designed to enable UNESCO to establish and maintain flexible and dynamic partnerships with any organization of civil society that is active in UNESCO's fields of competence at whatever level, and to benefit from that organization's operational capacities in the field and its networks for the dissemination of information. Furthermore, these relations should make it possible to encourage the emergence of organizations representative of civil society, and their interaction at the international level, in those parts of the world in which they are weak or isolated. Finally, these relations should make it possible to gauge the competence and operational effectiveness of international non-governmental organizations with which UNESCO has previously had no relations whatsoever and which are desirous of establishing formal relations with it.

2. Conditions

2.1 Non-governmental organizations wishing to establish operational relations must meet the following conditions:



- (a) organizations of an international nature that only partially meet the conditions laid down in Section I for the establishment of formal relations must have the operational capacity and the competence to implement, in the best possible manner, the activities provided for in UNESCO's programme;
- (b) organizations of a national, local or field nature must have the same operational capacity. All cooperation with such organizations must be conducted in consultation with the National Commission for UNESCO of the Member State concerned and, if appropriate, in liaison with UNESCO's field units. Such organizations may not be admitted to formal relations.

3. **Obligations**

3.1 Organizations maintaining operational relations with UNESCO shall undertake to keep the Director-General informed of their activities concerning UNESCO's fields of competence and to contribute to the sexennial report drawn up by the Executive Board, in accordance with Section V, paragraph 3, below, on the assistance given by such organizations to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives.

3.2 They shall further undertake to acquaint their members, by all the means at their disposal, with those of UNESCO's programme activities and achievements that may be of interest to them.

4. **Advantages**

4.1 International organizations maintaining operational relations with UNESCO shall enjoy the following advantages:

- (a) the Director-General shall take all necessary measures to ensure the appropriate exchange of information and documents with them on matters of joint interest;
- (b) in accordance with the provisions of Article IV, paragraph 14, of the Constitution, the Executive Board may invite them to be represented as observers at specified plenary meetings of the Conference and meetings of its commissions. Requests from these organizations, indicating those items of the Conference's agenda in the discussion of which their representatives would like to take part, must reach the Director-General at least one month before the opening of the General Conference session;
- (c) they may be invited to send observers to certain UNESCO meetings if, in the opinion of the Director-General, they are in a position to make a significant contribution to the work of those meetings;

- (d) they may be invited to participate as observers in various collective consultations of NGOs organized by UNESCO in connection with the implementation of its programme;
- (e) they may have access to some of the financial procedures for cooperation described in Section IV of these Directives, if the Director-General considers that they are the most competent to assist in the execution of certain tasks scheduled in UNESCO's programme;
- (f) they may be invited to send observers to the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations provided for in Section III, Article 1 below; they may attend meetings of the Standing Committee provided for in paragraph 1.3.1 of Section III below, in the same capacity.

4.2 Contracts may be concluded with organizations of a national or local nature maintaining operational relations with UNESCO, if the Director-General deems them to be the most competent to contribute to the execution of certain tasks scheduled in UNESCO's programme, due allowance being made for the provisions of Section II, paragraph 2.1(b). They may also be invited to attend certain meetings organized by UNESCO if it is felt that they may make an appropriate contribution.

5. **Termination of relations**

5.1 A complete absence of collaboration for a period of four years shall result in the automatic termination of relations.

III. Collective consultations with non-governmental organizations

1. **Conferences of non-governmental organizations**

1.1 *International conference*

International non-governmental organizations maintaining official relations (formal or operational relations) with UNESCO may, with the approval of the Director-General, hold a conference every two years to review the state of cooperation with UNESCO, conducting collective consultations on the main lines of UNESCO's programme and facilitating cooperation between organizations having common interests. This global forum shall enable the Director-General to gather



advice and suggestions from international non-governmental organizations that are UNESCO's partners in the priority fields of its programme.

1.2 *Regional conferences*

Non-governmental organizations maintaining formal or operational relations with UNESCO may, with the approval of the Director-General, hold conferences in the various regions at regular intervals, with a view to examining the state of cooperation with UNESCO, holding collective consultations on UNESCO's programmes and regional priorities, and facilitating cooperation among organizations having common interests. Such conferences shall bring together, as a matter of priority, the organizations of the region concerned and the regional or national representatives or members of international organizations maintaining formal relations with UNESCO.

1.3 *Follow-up and evaluation machinery*

These conferences shall make provision for appropriate follow-up and evaluation machinery (networks), in cooperation with the field units and National Commissions.

1.3.1 *NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee*

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations shall elect a NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee that reflects the geocultural diversity of the Member States of UNESCO, at least one third of whose members shall be organizations maintaining formal associate relations with UNESCO. The Conference shall also adopt its rules of procedure, which shall be proposed in draft form by the Committee and approved by the Director-General. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee's role between meetings of the Conference shall be to:

- (a) represent the interests of all the organizations with regard to UNESCO;
- (b) cooperate with the Director-General;
- (c) implement the resolutions adopted by the Conference;
- (d) ensure the appropriate exchange of information with the non-governmental community it represents and, in this connection, promote consultation among NGOs at all levels;
- (e) make preparations, in consultation with the Director-General, for the subsequent session of the Conference;
- (f) ensure that the interests and opinions of NGOs taken collectively

are reflected by UNESCO in the preparation of major world conferences organized by the United Nations;

- (g) take all possible steps to inform non-governmental organizations of the possibilities open to them for participation in an individual capacity in these conferences and in their preparation, in accordance with the rules laid down by the United Nations.

The premises and secretariat facilities necessary for the meetings of the Conference and for the work of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee shall, as far as possible, be provided free of charge by the Director-General.

2. **Collective consultations on specific subjects**

- 2.1 All non-governmental organizations maintaining formal or operational relations with UNESCO may be invited to send representatives to the various collective consultations regularly held by UNESCO for the implementation of its various programmes, if such organizations can make a specific contribution to the subjects examined in these consultations. These arrangements shall serve the purpose of ensuring the best possible cooperation in the pursuit of the shared priority objectives.

IV. **Financial and material arrangements for cooperation**

- 1. UNESCO may grant various forms of financial and material contributions to non-governmental organizations likely to make a particularly effective contribution to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives as defined in its Constitution and to the implementation of its programme.

2. **General principles**

- 2.1 Financial and material contributions granted by UNESCO to non-governmental organizations shall be governed, as appropriate, by the following principles:
 - (a) they shall be granted in accordance with the relevant rules currently in force;
 - (b) they shall be granted for programmes and activities that have a bearing on UNESCO's priorities or constitute a useful addition to UNESCO's programmes and activities;
 - (c) in no circumstances shall they constitute a permanent commitment on the part of the Organization;



- (d) financial contributions shall be granted solely for the purpose of supplementing the revenue that the beneficiary organization derives from other sources;
- (e) an organization receiving financial contributions shall have made appropriate arrangements for regular evaluation of the activities so financed and the submission of reports on the implementation of those activities.

3. **Forms of contribution**

3.1 The various forms of financial contribution shall comprise (i) the awarding of various types of contract (contracts for the implementation of framework agreements; other contracts for the implementation of UNESCO's regular programmes; contracts under the special programme of support to non-governmental entities for activities in developing countries); (ii) contributions under the Participation Programme; and (iii) subventions.

3.2 Material contributions may include office accommodation, in accordance with the terms of Section I, paragraph 8.3 (b) (iii); use of UNESCO's conference facilities, and the granting of UNESCO's patronage.

4. **Conditions for the granting of financial and material contributions and for the submission of reports**

4.1 The conditions for the granting of financial and material contributions and for the submission of the corresponding reports shall be considered and adopted by the Executive Board, on the proposal of the Director-General. They may be revised as needed.

V. **Periodic review of relations**

1. The Director-General shall include in his periodic reports information on the main aspects of cooperation between UNESCO and non-governmental organizations.

2. At each regular session of the General Conference the Director-General shall present a concise report on any changes that have taken place by decision of the Executive Board in the classification of international organizations admitted to the various categories of formal relations with UNESCO. This report shall also contain the list of organizations that maintain operational relations with UNESCO, together with those that have submitted requests for admission to the two categories of formal

relations or to the category of operational relations and whose requests have not been accepted.

3. The General Conference shall receive, every six years, a report by the Executive Board on the contribution made to UNESCO's activities by organizations maintaining formal relations with it. The report shall include an evaluation of the results of cooperation with organizations maintaining operational relations with UNESCO. It shall also indicate the results of cooperation under framework agreements concluded with certain organizations, and make recommendations on the renewal of such framework agreements. Finally, it shall contain a list of those organizations whose lack of collaboration has resulted in the automatic termination of formal or operational relations with UNESCO, in accordance with these Directives (Section I, paragraph 6.2 and Section II, paragraph 5.1).

VI. Requests for the establishment or modification of relations

1. The Executive Board shall rule once a year on matters within its mandate relating to the establishment of relations between UNESCO and non-governmental organizations, as defined in these Directives.
2. The Director-General shall ensure that the Executive Board is informed of every decision taken by him under the terms of these Directives.
3. Requests for the establishment or modification of formal relations shall be submitted no later than 31 December of each year.
4. Requests for the establishment of operational relations may be submitted at any time. They shall be accompanied by a copy of the statutes and of the instrument of legal recognition of the organization, a list of members, with their nationalities, a recent report covering at least two years of activities and a brief description of the projects that the organization hopes to implement in cooperation with UNESCO.

VII. Informal relations

1. UNESCO may maintain informal relations with other non-governmental organizations.