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Deputy Director-General
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Directors of Bureaux, Offices and Divisions at
Headquarters
Directors and Heads of Established Offices and Institutes
away from Headquarters

Subject: Enhanced Delegation of Authority to UNESCO Field Offices and Revised Reporting Lines

1. The independent external evaluation of UNESCO (IEE) emphasized a responsive and empowered field presence as a key condition to position UNESCO closer to country needs, resources and partners and an important determinant of enhanced service delivery. The IEE consequently called to "strengthen and devolve power to field offices accompanied by suitable accountability and oversight mechanisms".

2. Genuine programme decentralization, and consequent decentralization of authority and flexibility in implementation and management, is a prerequisite to empower field offices. As a principle, decisions must be placed at the level nearest to implementation. Being in the forefront of programme delivery, the field offices need to have sufficient authority to respond to day-to-day challenges and programmatic exigencies that confront them as they perform their tasks. Truly decentralizing programme management and personnel administration is a major step to achieve this.

3. To this end, **Directors/Heads of field offices, in all regions, will have expanded authority for overall management of their operations, financial resources (both regular budget and extrabudgetary allocations) and staff towards the attainment of the expected results in the approved work plans.** All staff in any field office (regional, national or liaison office) will report directly to the Director/Head of the office and no longer directly to Headquarters sectors or services. The Director/Head will thus be empowered to assume first-line responsibility and accountability for the overall performance of the office.

I. Implementing a new reporting relationship

4. The implementation of a simpler reporting system and structure will apply to the entire field network in all regions, as follows.

(i) **Directors of multisectoral regional offices in Africa as well as Directors/Heads of field offices in other regions** report to the responsible programme ADGs - and to the Africa Department for field offices in Africa - on the delivery of agreed expected sectoral and intersectoral results and the use of decentralised programme resources, including extrabudgetary resources, through the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP), serving as a single entry point.

(ii) **Heads of national offices in Africa** report to the Director of the concerned multisectoral regional office on the delivery of agreed expected results and the use of decentralised programme resources.

(iii) **All staff working in field offices**, including programme officers out-posted in UNESCO desks and programme antennas, report directly to the Directors/Heads of their respective office concerning all aspects of programme design and implementation¹. Directors/Heads of field offices will consult the concerned programme ADG when assessing the performance of international programme staff. Directors/Heads of field offices will also be closely associated to the decision-making process concerning the appointment and removal of all international staff in countries under their coverage, with the programme ADGs (for international programme staff) and the CFO (for administrative officers) retaining responsibility for the final recommendation to the Director-General.

- Regular consultations will continue to be held between field offices and Headquarters concerning all matters related to programme (planning, execution, monitoring and reporting). In particular, programme officers will maintain collaboration and regular knowledge exchanges with technical colleagues at Headquarters and in other field offices to ensure programme coherence and the highest standards of

¹ Taking into account the functional autonomy of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC), IOC staff in UNESCO field offices will continue to report to ADG/IOC on programme-related matters, while being administratively supervised by the Director/Head of the field office

technical quality. The Director/Head of the field office is copied on all important communication to ensure that she/he is up-to-date on all the issues pertaining to the country or region.

- Administrative officers will maintain a functional reporting line to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

II. Enhanced authorities for programme management and related accountabilities

5. An examination of accountability and authority within UNESCO showed that there is considerable scope for improvement, especially as regards the level of managerial discretion granted to decentralized offices. The empowerment of field offices in this regard is expected to improve timely and quality service delivery and, eventually, lead to greater satisfaction of beneficiaries and partners.

6. The directions set out below are intended to provide greater operational flexibility to field offices managers. They are premised on the principles that:

(i) Directors/Heads of field offices who are held accountable for achieving agreed results should have adequate authority to do so and should be given as much flexibility/control over resources as practical;

(ii) More autonomy in decision-making and flexibility in distribution of available resources should be matched with a commensurate accountability.

7. The following provisions towards further devolution of authority to Directors/Heads of field offices and programme managers apply to the entire field network in all regions.

Improving resource use efficiency

8. Delegated authority also includes field-based decisions over budget resources. Directors/Heads of field offices are therefore granted extended authority with regard to programme management² in order to allow greater responsiveness, foster a more efficient use of resources, and ultimately enhance overall programme performance.

² Except activities pertaining to IOC and the World Heritage Centre (WHC), in line with the terms of the C/5 Appropriation Resolution which provides that budgetary allocations to these programmes shall not be subject to transfers

- a) Directors/Heads of field offices are authorized to adjust work plans to respond to evolving situations and needs and to make programme adjustments within a MLA as long as these are not altering the expected results agreed upon in the field office approved work plans, which are part of the Organization's results-based programming, management and budgeting (RBM/RBB) system. As a consequence, Directors/Heads of field offices are granted authority to approve allocation/allotment adjustments within a Main Line of Action (MLA), in consultation with the concerned Programme ADG.
 - b) Furthermore, adjustments between MLAs under the same appropriation line may also be authorized by Directors/Heads of field offices. However, the justification for the amendment must be properly documented and the amended work plans should stay in line with the instructions, guidelines and decisions of the Director-General or governing bodies and with any relevant UNESCO strategies or policy frameworks. Additionally, adjustments entailing a net transfer between MLAs in excess of one fourth of the field office approved work plans provisions for any of the concerned MLAs will require the prior approval of the responsible programme ADG.
 - c) All such work plan amendments are entered in the programme management system (SISTER) by the responsible officers. The Director/Head of the field office follows up on all reprogramming of activities and ensures that the work plans as reflected in SISTER are up-to-date at all times and in line with the approved C/5 expected results.
 - d) Notwithstanding the foregoing, proposals towards amending the work plans expected results and/or associated performance indicators do require, in all cases, a formal validation by the ADG responsible for the C/5 expected results to which they contribute and by BSP.
9. To facilitate greater effectiveness and responsiveness, the simplification of processes and procedures for field operations is also being considered in the context of the on-going review by the Change Management Working Group (CMWG) of existing administrative processes with a view to increasing their efficiency and effectiveness and rendering them more relevant to current business needs.

Increasing delegated authority over all field-based activities

10. In order to ensure the operational coherence of corporate programming and service delivery, **the principle of subsidiarity that precludes Headquarters from implementing action that can be carried out by a field unit shall be fully observed. Having national or regional activities implemented by Headquarters should become the exception.** The empowerment of field offices will thus translate in increased consultation or approval role for Directors/Heads of field offices for most activities, including clearance of missions from outside the region/country under their coverage as well as clearance of mission programmes.

11. Additionally, while observing the current restrictions on travel, Directors/Heads of field offices are authorized to approve travel within the countries under their coverage for all staff under their direct supervision, within the limits of the approved work plans travel budgets that may not be exceeded through an amendment to the work plans unless expressly authorized by the responsible programme ADG.

Clarifying accountabilities

12. The increased managerial discretion granted to Directors/Heads of field offices is matched with a commensurate accountability for programme delivery.

13. Accountabilities of staff at lower levels shall also be clearly defined and understood. The work plans establish each programme staff's contribution to and accountability for the achievement of agreed outputs/deliverables contributing to expected results as laid down in the Approved C/5 and its work plans. Once the cascade of expected results and chain of responsibilities are determined and each staff is aware of what and to whom she/he is accountable, each staff is liable for the effective and efficient use of the resources allocated towards the attainment of the expected results.

14. In this context, accountability will be clearly linked to: (i) the achievement of agreed objectives and deliverables contributing to expected results; (ii) fair and accurate reporting on performance including explanations for any deviations or lack of progress; (iii) stewardship of funds; and (iv) all aspects of performance in accordance with regulations, rules and standards.

15. The notion of performance embraces both the achievement of programme objectives, and the efficiency and effectiveness with which those objectives are met. Therefore, Directors/Heads of field offices also have clear responsibility for the rigorous management and efficient use of decentralized funds from both the regular budget and extrabudgetary resources.

16. The empowerment of field offices will be accompanied by an appropriate accountability framework for all staff in the field with management and administrative responsibilities. Staff posted to field offices will be expected to exercise delegated authority in strict compliance with all applicable rules and regulations and they should therefore keep themselves apprised of existing and updated prescriptive content. HRM and BFM will ensure that such staff have attended an orientation programme to affirm their knowledge of the Organization's rules, procedures and processes, and to better prepare them for working on the field.

17. Post descriptions will be revised to reflect the revised reporting lines and the increased delegation of authority to field offices.

III. Interaction with Headquarters

Accountabilities of Headquarters services

18. **Programme ADGs** are responsible and accountable for global programme coherence and C/5 results attainment and, consequently, for the oversight of all decentralized programmes. They provide guidance and programmatic support, as needed, to field units, including all aspects of programme design, delivery and resources.

19. **The Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP)** serves as the entry point for programme reporting, considering that decentralization concerns many units in the Organization and that there is strong need for a focal point with a programme coordination and monitoring role. Accordingly, periodic reports by Directors/Heads of field offices on programme implementation status are channelled through BSP for consideration by the responsible sector ADG. Based on inputs by the concerned programme sector ADGs and the Directors of the relevant corporate/support services at Headquarters, BSP also ensures the performance assessment for Directors/Heads of field offices, **in consultation with Programme ADGs**, except for Heads of national offices in Africa whose performance assessment is ensured by the Director of the parent multisectoral regional office, and Liaison Offices

whose performance assessments of Directors and Heads are ensured by ODG.

20. More specifically, BSP is entrusted with the following tasks:

- a) in its traditional role as overall coordinator of the work planning process, BSP ensures proper consultation at all levels during that process, especially between the field and headquarters, resolving disagreements as they emerge; this includes proper backstopping to field offices, such as in the formulation of UNESCO Country-Programming Documents (UCPDs) when applicable;
- b) coordinating, receiving and reviewing periodic reports on programme execution;
- c) coordinating the assessment of the performance of Directors/Heads of field offices, based on programme delivery performance, but also taking into account other dimensions of their responsibility as Directors/Heads of field offices. This function will be performed in close consultation with the relevant sectors and services and will be detailed in specific guidelines;
- d) backstopping field offices in their involvement in UNDAFs and other joint programming exercises at the national level;
- e) coordinating overall resource mobilization efforts, ensuring due diligence of potential private sector partners and clearance of funding agreements.

21. **The Africa Department** (AFR) is entrusted with the following core tasks:

- a) institutional and intersectoral coordination of Global Priority Africa and of related reports and major initiatives, in close cooperation with all Secretariat entities in charge of designing, implementing and monitoring Priority Africa;
- b) focal point for UNESCO's relations with the African Member States, the African Union and Africa's Regional Economic Communities, in close consultation with programme sectors, the UNESCO Liaison Office in Addis Ababa and the field offices concerned; AFR also will ensure that due account is taken of the governments'

visions of regional integration in maintaining relations with African Member States;

- c) in the context of the reform of the UNESCO Field Network in Africa, support for the five multisectoral regional offices and the category 1 institutes active in the region, bolstered by a mechanism for regular consultation between field offices and Headquarters;
- d) coordination of future-oriented thinking on Africa, in particular by organizing forward-looking meetings at the end of each biennium to set/confirm priorities, with the participation also of representatives and experts from other regions;
- e) better integration of UNESCO into regional United Nations mechanisms in Africa, ensuring, in particular, that the multisectoral regional offices cooperate technically and financially in existing mechanisms.
- f) support to the Directors and Heads of field offices in Africa in their functions as Representative to Member State(s), providing advice and guidance as necessary.

22. The Director of the Executive Office of the Director-General (ODG) will continue to ensure the performance assessment for Directors/Heads of liaison offices.

23. The Division for Gender Equality in the Office of the Director-General is entrusted with the following tasks:

- a) coordination and monitoring of Global Priority Gender Equality and in particular the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), in close cooperation with the Programme Sectors, and all the field offices ;
- b) coordination and review of periodic reports on mainstreaming gender equality as well as alignment with relevant United Nations mechanisms such as UN-SWAP ;
- c) coordination and implementation of UNESCO's capacity development and training programmes for the implementation and mainstreaming of Priority Gender Equality;
- d) contribution to the performance assessment of Gender Focal Points.

24. The Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM) is responsible for managing the performance appraisal system for field office Directors, in close consultation with all

relevant sectors/bureaux/offices at Headquarters and in the field. The performance appraisal system for field office Directors/Heads establishes a stronger link between the performance of individual Directors/Heads and that of their office. The outcomes of the review of field offices' periodic programme execution and management reports as well as the results of field office audits will be important elements in the performance evaluation of Directors/Heads of field offices. HRM also will continue to provide support, advice and guidance on all aspects of human resources management.

25. **The post-conflict and post-disaster Unit** (PCPD) will be based in ODG and will continue to ensure the coordination and planning of UNESCO's strategic responses to post-conflict and post-disaster situations and the Organization's support for transition countries, including through efficient and timely provision of support to field offices in formulating and executing post-conflict and post-disaster responses as well as through adequate staffing and administrative support mechanisms.

26. **The Sector for External Relations and Public Information** (ERI) provides advice and guidance on the representation function and supports the Directors and Heads of field offices in all regions, except Africa, in their function as Representative to Member State(s). This function is performed by AFR with respect to field offices in Africa.

27. **The Bureau of Financial Management** (BFM) provides financial management support, oversight of Administrative Officers, technical backstopping for financial and administrative matters and handles field offices running costs, budgets and administrative procedures.

28. **The Bureau of Management of Support Services** (MSS) acts as the central coordinating and strategic entity for the safety and security of personnel and premises in the field and is responsible for the overall compliance with established security policies and strategies. The MSS Security Unit provides advice and support on all issues concerning the safety and security of personnel and premises in the field. The Unit also monitors and reports on security issues at Field Offices.

Ensuring programme coordination and coherence

29. Decentralization should be based on an active interaction between Headquarters and the field, with appropriate involvement by all concerned, guaranteeing that the Organization fully benefits at its various levels of intervention from a feedback loop between policy and experience. The prevailing principle will be that of devolution of authority to, and accountability of

Directors/Heads of field offices for the design and implementation of the programme carried out at the field level, in all of its dimensions, based on appropriate prior consultations with Headquarters programme sectors. The definition of the programme will be the subject of discussions and agreement between the field and Headquarters, as well as between national and regional offices, and between field offices and institutes at the time of the formulation of work plans, immediately before the start of each biennial budgetary period³. These consultations will be designed to ensure overall coherence of purpose and means between the global and field-level approaches, also including discussions of UNESCO's role vis-à-vis the UN system. The same process will apply to the validation of programmatic changes, monitoring and reporting throughout the implementation period.

30. In case of disagreement between a field office and Headquarters (or between a regional and a national office), either at the time of formulation of the work plans or during the implementation period, the issue should first be resolved between the individual field units and the sector/bureau/office concerned. If disagreement persists, BSP will examine the issue in consultation with all relevant parties and make a recommendation to the Director-General. On broader questions or when there are persistent disagreements involving several individual field offices and/or sectors, the Secretariat's Programme Management Committee (PMC) may be called to submit a recommendation to the Director-General for her arbitration.

31. A detailed table of authorities and accountabilities will be issued pursuant to this DG/Note and DG/Note/14/2 of 3 January 2014 on the Reformed Field Network in Africa.

32. These decisions take effect immediately.

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³ Within the new four-year programme cycle, work plans will be reviewed every two years to take into account the new budget context and other emerging issues