



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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## Items 24, 26, 28, and 29 of the provisional agenda

### COMMENTS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON ITEMS PRESENTED BY MEMBER STATES WHICH MAY HAVE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Following 170 EX/Decision 5.1, which states that “the Executive Board shall not take a decision involving expenditure unless it has before it a report from the Director-General on the administrative and financial implications of the proposal”, the Director-General is presenting her comments on four items presented by Member States at the present session of the Executive Board.

#### **Item 24: Support for establishment of a UNESCO Normative Instrument for Open Educational Resources – 199 EX/24, Item proposed by Slovenia**

**199 EX/24.Rev. proposed by Slovenia and co-sponsored by Cote d'Ivoire, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Republic of Djibouti, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.**

2. The Director-General expresses her appreciation to Slovenia for introducing this item to undertake an independent preliminary study of the desirability, the technical and legal aspects as well as the administrative and financial implications of a new standard-setting instrument on Open Educational Resources (OER) for examination by the 201st session of the Executive Board, with a view to inscribing this item on the agenda of the 39th session of the General Conference.

3. The Director-General observes that this proposal is in line with UNESCO's programme priorities, concerning the building of Inclusive Knowledge Societies.

4. The Director-General welcomes that this proposal recognizes the significant contribution of UNESCO to supporting the use of OER to expand access to learning of better quality at lower cost, since the inception of the concept in 2002 at a UNESCO Forum.

5. The Director-General expresses special thanks to the Government of Slovenia for the initiative to host the second World OER Congress in 2017

6. The Director-General also welcomes the fact that the approval by the Executive Board will not have a financial implication for the Organization, as the Draft Resolution proposed calls for the use of extra budgetary resources for the implementation of the preliminary study. Should the Executive Board approve this proposal, she will ensure that the relevant international partners and stakeholders are duly consulted throughout the process of preparing the preliminary study.



**Item 26: UNESCO's Role in Encouraging Girls and Women to be Leaders in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Design, and Math Fields – 199 EX/26, Item proposed by the United States of America**

7. The Director-General welcomes the proposed item presented by the United States of America on UNESCO's role in encouraging girls and women to be leaders in science, technology, engineering, arts/design, and math fields. Achieving gender equality in all areas, including in sciences, is a condition in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. This proposal provides an opportunity to strengthen inter-sectoral work between the Education Sector (Major Programme I) and Natural Sciences Sector (Major Programme II) and the Communications and Information Sector (Major Programme V).

8. Under the umbrella of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP II), Natural Sciences Sector is working towards providing strong role models for women in science, building capacities of women scientists and engineers improving sex-disaggregated data in science and inventorying STI policy instruments affecting gender equality, and supporting the increased participation of women in high-level scientific processes. The Natural Sciences Sector will continue to lead UNESCO's work in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

9. In an effort to increase inter-sectoral cooperation and cooperation with category 1 centers and other prominent partners on STEM education, the Natural Sciences Sector is working with the Education Sector, the Communication and Information Sector, European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP). After mapping current STEM-related activities, potential for closer cooperation was explored and agreement found towards the launch of a global platform for STEM Teacher Training, and an action plan for coordinated and common activities. As a next step, UNESCO will enlarge its partnership with the Global Alliance for STEM Education and regional or national partners through its network of field offices.

10. The Education Sector promotes science, technology, and mathematics education through its work on gender equality. Science and math education for girls and women is promoted as one of the three pillars of the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education: Better Life, Better Future. Furthermore, UNESCO is contributing to technology through its technical and vocational education (TVET) programme.

11. In the implementation of the Organization's Programme and Budget for 2014-2017 (37 C/5 and 38 C/5), the Secretariat has been requested by Member States to prioritize its focus areas and minimize the number of targets and expected results for the benefit of areas where UNESCO has comparative advantage. In the Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 (39 C/5), it is expected that UNESCO will further streamline its efforts and resources for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. In view of the above, the Secretariat is not in a position to deliver a dedicated programme in the field of arts/design within its existing capacity in this biennium due to lack of expertise in this area and limited resources. For the Secretariat to work in the area of arts/design with a view of promoting gender equality in science within the 39 C/5, it will need to mobilize extrabudgetary funds, identify specialized expertise in this field, and gradually build its programme over time. However, the Director-General would like to assure the proponent and supporters of this draft resolution that arts/design are elements of the Education Sector's work in areas such as teachers, TVET, education for sustainable development and global citizenship education.

**Item 28: UNESCO's assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic in restoring the World Heritage Site Archeological Monuments of Palmyra – 199 EX/28, Item proposed by the Russian Federation**

13. The Director-General welcomes the proposed item presented by the Russian Federation on UNESCO's role in Safeguarding and Preserving Palmyra and Other Syrian World Heritage sites. This item highlights that cultural heritage is a central element in the conflict in Syria, and closely linked to peace-keeping and humanitarian concerns. In this regard, and as outlined in Resolution 38 C/48, "Reinforcement of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict", adopted by the 38th session of the General Conference, UNESCO stands ready to harness the role of cultural heritage to foster recovery, dialogue and peace. This endeavour is part and parcel of the overall UNESCO response to the crisis in Syria. As such, it is important to integrate the protection of Syrian cultural heritage into the overall United Nations response to the crisis in Syria. A key element to success is indeed to ensure broad participation in and coordination of the efforts of Member States, United Nations and its agencies, as well as other partner organizations and experts working on Syrian cultural heritage.

14. UNESCO's actions for the safeguarding of Syrian built, moveable and intangible cultural heritage are guided by the Emergency Action Plan for Syria adopted in August 2013, and further detailed in the first international meeting on this issue that UNESCO organized in May 2014. In the framework of the project "Emergency Safeguarding of Syrian Cultural Heritage", funded by the European Union, and co-funded by Austria and the Government of Flanders (Kingdom of Belgium), the UNESCO Beirut Office has been monitoring and documenting the damages incurred by built, movable and intangible heritage since March 2014 through a dedicated Observatory. The Beirut Office has also been coordinating actions with all entities working on Syrian cultural heritage, to document and/or protect it, through damage assessment, inventories and first-aid measures. UNESCO has provided Syria with recommendations for first-aid measures for the World Heritage Sites of Damascus in December 2013, and the Crac des Chevaliers in May 2014, in cooperation with ICCROM, in line with the World Heritage Committee decisions. These actions are key to prepare future interventions at Syrian World Heritage sites with the highest scientific standards and qualified expertise.

15. The World Heritage Centre reports yearly to the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation of Syrian World Heritage sites, of sites inscribed on the Tentative List, and of intentionally destroyed properties, including religious ones. The forthcoming 40th session of the World Heritage Committee (Istanbul, 10-20 July 2016) will discuss Syrian World Heritage sites in detail. The Committee has repetitively "urged the State Party (Syria) to safeguard damaged properties through minimal first aid interventions, to prevent theft, further collapse and natural degradation, and refrain from undertaking conservation and reconstruction work until the situation allows, for the development of comprehensive conservation strategies and actions that respond to international standards in full consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies". The World Heritage Committee also requested a joint Reactive Monitoring mission by the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM to all six Syrian World Heritage sites, as soon as the security situation allows. In this regard, a mission is foreseen to the Old City of Damascus in June 2016, and will be possibly extended to the Crac des Chevaliers.

16. The Secretariat will include assistance in relation to Palmyra and other damaged World Heritage sites in the on-going elaboration of the Action Plan of its Strategy for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict. As soon as the security situation allows, UNESCO will send an international experts mission to Palmyra and other damaged significant sites in Syria to support the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in its ongoing efforts to conduct damage assessment and undertake first-aid actions.

17. The Secretariat recommends that the implementation of the proposed draft decision be followed by the World Heritage Centre.

18. Finally, the Secretariat welcomes the call for voluntary contributions and assistance to implement the provisions of this decision.

**Item 29      Memory of the World Programme: Exploring Means for Further Improvement – 199 EX/29, Item proposed by Germany**

19. The Director-General expresses her appreciation to Germany for introducing this item related to the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme and its contribution to the preservation of documentary heritage, including the review undertaken by the International Advisory Committee (IAC), following its decision taken at the 12th meeting of the MoW International Advisory Committee, in Abu Dhabi in October 2015.

20. Should the Executive Board approve this Draft Resolution, the Director-General will ensure the distribution of the final report of the International Advisory Committee to Member States, and keep the Executive Board appropriately informed of the progress of the review undertaken by IAC.