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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNESCO PRIZE FOR GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

SUMMARY

The Government of People's Republic of China has proposed to the Director-General the establishment and funding of a Prize entitled the "UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education" to reward outstanding efforts of individuals, institutions other entities or non-governmental organizations engaged in activities in girls' and women's education. This proposal is in conformity with the Revised Overall Strategy for UNESCO Prizes and its constituent criteria (191 EX/Decision 12).

This document presents information on the proposed Prize and summarizes the related feasibility study regarding its establishment. The document also presents the draft statutes and financial regulations for the proposed Prize. The Executive Board is invited to decide on the establishment of this Prize.

This item is co-sponsored by Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cuba, Ethiopia, France, Gambia, Greece, Italy, Madagascar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 20.

Background

1. Gender equality in education is a basic human right. However in 2012, over 30 million girls of primary school age were out of school, of whom close to 50% are expected never to enrol, while an even higher number of adolescent girls are excluded from learning. Despite decades of promoting education for all, gender equality in education remains an elusive and incomplete agenda. Women and girls have not benefited equally from education and training. Even when they have access to education, girls face many interrelated and intersecting challenges that prevent them from reaching their full potential. Despite firm and strong global commitments to address the education of girls and women as a priority, significant challenges remain.

2. Gender equality is a global priority for UNESCO. In 2011, UNESCO launched the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, known as 'Better Life, Better Future', guided by the conviction that educating girls and women can break the cycle of poverty and foster greater social justice. In this regard, since 2014, Ms Peng Liyuan, First Lady of the People's Republic of China, has been actively promoting the cause of girls' and women's education as UNESCO Special Envoy for the Advancement of Girls' and Women's Education. The International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education (Beijing, 1-5 September 2015) was an occasion for participants from 14 countries to interact with Ms Peng Liyuan. Furthermore, at the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) high-level event held during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, 25-27 September), the First Lady of China pledged her commitment and support to education as the key to unlock progress on all other Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Currently, UNESCO does not have any Prize scheme in place to encourage and publicize good practices in girls and women's education. The Government of the People's Republic of China has made a proposal to the Director-General of UNESCO to establish a Prize to reward the advancement of girls' and women's education.

Outline of the proposed "UNESCO Prize on girls' and women's education"

4. The 'UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education' would be awarded annually to two prize winners who have made outstanding contributions in this field. The Prize, which consists of monetary reward of US \$50,000 for each of the two winners, will be given to individuals, institutions other entities or non-governmental organizations actively engaged in identified priority areas. The Prize rewards in particular activities that are innovative and/or have a high impact. The Prize would be established for an initial period of five years (2016-2020).

5. As Prize donor, the Government of the People's Republic of China has committed to providing the fund for the award, as well as for the related administration and management of the Prize expenses related to staff, prize selection process, award ceremony, public information activities and overhead charges.

6. As is common practice for UNESCO Prizes, nominations will be submitted from the Governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, as well as from non-governmental organizations maintaining official partnerships with the Organization and that are active in relevant fields covered by the Prize. A jury of five recognized experts in the area of girls' and women's education will review the applications and submit their recommendation to the Director-General.

Findings of the feasibility study

7. In conformity with the Revised Overall Strategy for UNESCO Prizes and its constituent criteria (191 EX/Decision 12) concerning the creation of new Prizes, a feasibility study assessing the programmatic relevance of the Prize, its prestige, integrity, management, as well as financial arrangements was commissioned. The study was also guided by the 2012 Evaluation of UNESCO Prizes conducted by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS, document IOS/EVS/PI/114 of February

2012). The methods used for the study included document review, focus groups discussions and semi-structured interviews with staff at Headquarters and a representative of the donor. As the study was conducted under very tight time constraints, external stakeholders were not interviewed and a limited number of documents were consulted. This document provides the summary of the findings of the feasibility study.

Relevance of the Prize to UNESCO's programme

8. The proposed Prize is considered to be of high relevance to the programme of UNESCO and would directly contribute to three Strategic Objectives related to Major Programme I of UNESCO's Medium-term Strategy 2014-2021 (37C/4)¹ and to those of the second "UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2021" (GEAP II). Furthermore, the proposed Prize would contribute to two Goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Goal 4) and "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (Goal 5).

9. The feasibility study highlighted the importance of developing a precise focus for the Prize in order to ensure its distinctiveness and an added value globally. In conformity with UNESCO's strategy for the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education and the Organization's programme in girls' and women's education, the following were identified as potential focus areas of the Prize:

- Supporting girls/adolescent girls to transition from primary education to lower-secondary education and to complete full basic education;
- Supporting adolescent girls and young women to acquire literacy skills;
- Supporting the creation of a gender-responsive and safe teaching-learning environment, free of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV);
- Engaging female and male teachers to develop gender-responsive teaching attitudes and practices and be change agents, and
- Supporting adolescent girls and young women to acquire knowledge and skills for them to adequately transition from school to work and lead a fulfilling life.

In addition, special attention will be given to initiatives/programmes/projects in favour of countries where progress in girls and women's education continue to be a challenge.

Prestige of the Prize

10. The feasibility study indicated that no other UNESCO prize of this nature exists and therefore this Prize would be unique in promoting girls' and women's education. The findings of the feasibility study suggested that the prize amount is an important factor in influencing the prestige and credibility and notes that the amount of US \$50,000 for each of the two winners is proposed.

11. An important consideration in regards to the prestige of the Prize is the need to involve personalities with recognized reputation and expertise in the field of girls' and women's education as jury members, with due attention to equitable geographical distribution.

12. The study found that the date of the ceremony was also considered to have an important impact on the Prize visibility. A date that coincides with an internationally-recognized day related to girls and women would increase its visibility.

¹ 1) Supporting Member States to develop education systems to foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all, 2) Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens, and 3) Advancing education for all (EFA) and shaping the future international education agenda.

13. The study notified the importance of adequate resources to be allocated for communication and promotion, including a noteworthy Prize ceremony. In addition, an adequate amount of money and resources needs to be attributed to outreach through press and social media. Leveraging all communication channels of UNESCO and its partners to ensure a large number of nominations is regarded as important. The use of UNESCO's networks, UNESCO National Commissions and heightened use of social media was also recommended.

Integrity of the Prize

14. The Chinese Government strongly supports girls' and women's education and has made great strides in ensuring equal access for all. As UNESCO Special Envoy for the Advancement of Girls' and Women's Education, the First Lady of China brings her longstanding commitment and that of her country to the Prize.

Management of the Prize

15. The Prize would be fully managed and administered by UNESCO. The Education Sector, which would be the focal point for this Prize, has sufficient experience and expertise in administering Prizes. For the daily management of the Prize, the People's Republic of China will second a professional with international experience.

16. The study indicated the need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the prizes. It is recommended to have a separate budget is set aside for external final evaluation. The Prize coordinator would also be expected to develop a conceptual framework support for collecting key information to improve standards and practices in prize administration as well as the promotion of girls' and women's education.

Financial considerations

17. The Government of the People's Republic of China has committed US \$200,000 per year to fully fund all costs related to the Prize during its proposed five-year period. This amount includes the Prize-money (i.e., two prize winners receiving US \$50,000 each), communication activities, jury meetings, the award ceremony and logistics costs for the Prize administration as well as mandatory overhead costs. For the daily management of the Prize, the donor will second a professional to UNESCO Secretariat in accordance with UNESCO's legal framework on loans and secondments. The funds will be transferred into a Special Account, which is to be established under the Financial Regulations for the Prize.

18. The feasibility study stressed the need for adequate administrative support, including funding for modern information and technology support to allow for systematic collection of data and monitoring, and the importance of ensuring smooth financial administration.

Conclusion

19. Overall, the proposed "UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education" complies with the Revised Overall Strategy for UNESCO Prizes. In particular, it is seen as contributing directly to UNESCO's global priority on gender equality and to the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, as well as the Organization's programme in girls' and women's education. The planned award amount is considered to have positive impact on the prestige of the Prize.

Proposed draft decision

20. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 197 EX/47 on the proposal for the establishment of the “UNESCO Prize for girls’ and women’s education”,
2. Welcomes the proposal which is in accordance with the Revised Overall Strategy for UNESCO Prizes (191 EX/Decision 12);
3. Approves the establishment of the ‘UNESCO Prize for girls’ and women’s education’;
4. Approves the Statutes of the aforementioned Prize, as set out in Annex I of document 197 EX/47;
5. Takes note of the Financial Regulations of the Special Account for the ‘UNESCO Prize for girls’ and women’s education’ as set out in Annex II of document 197 EX/47.

ANNEX I

STATUTES OF THE UNESCO PRIZE FOR GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Article 1 – Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the 'UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education' is to reward the outstanding efforts of individuals, institutions, organizations or other entities engaged in activities promoting girls' and women's Education. The Prize would contribute to two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Goal 4) and "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (Goal 5). The Prize would reward in particular activities that are innovative and/or have far-reaching sustainable impact.
- 1.2 The objective of the Prize is in conformity with UNESCO's policies and is related to the Programme of the Organization in the field of Education. The proposed Prize is considered to be of high relevance to the programme of UNESCO and would directly contribute to three Strategic Objectives related to Major Programme I of UNESCO's Medium-term Strategy 2014-2021 (37C/4) and to those of the second 'UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2021' (GEAP II).

Article 2 – Designation, amount and periodicity of the Prize

- 2.1 The Prize shall be entitled 'UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education'.
- 2.2 The Prize shall be funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China and shall consist of US \$200,000 per year for its first five-year period (2016-2020), which shall cover both the monetary value of the Prize and the costs of administering the Prize. Any interest that may accrue shall be added to the overall contribution.
- 2.3 All funds received and the interest accrued thereon shall be kept in a special interest-bearing account for the Prize (see financial regulations in Annex II).
- 2.4 The full staff cost will be borne by the People's Republic of China. Additional operating/management cost of the Prize, including all costs related to the award ceremony and public information activities, estimated at \$100,000, shall also be fully covered by the People's Republic of China. The Director-General will determine a mandatory overhead cost amount to be applied and charged against the funds in the special account, which is to be established under the financial regulations for the Prize.
- 2.5 The Prize shall be awarded annually, initially for five years, starting from its 2016 edition. The Prize amount may be equally divided between up to two winners.

Article 3 – Qualifications of candidates

- 3.1 Candidates shall have made outstanding innovation in and significant contributions to supporting and/or promoting girls' and women's education. Prizes may be conferred upon individuals, institutions, other entities or non-governmental organizations that have effectively promoted the advancement of girls' and women's education.

Article 4 – Designation/Selection of the prize winners

The prize winners shall be selected by the Director-General of UNESCO on the basis of the assessments and recommendations made to him/her by a jury.

Article 5 – Jury

- 5.1 The Jury shall consist of five independent members, being personalities with a recognized reputation in the field, while also taking into consideration the need for equitable geographical distribution, gender balance in the composition of the jury and the principle of non-payment of honoraria. They shall be appointed by the Director-General for an initial two-year period, with the possibility of renewal for the remainder of the five-year period of the Prize. Representatives and alternates of Members of the Executive Board cannot be appointed as jurors. Jurors involved in a real or potential conflict of interest shall recuse themselves from further deliberations or be asked by the Director-General to do so. The Director-General may replace members of the jury for reason.
- 5.2 The Jury shall elect its own chair and deputy chair. Members shall receive no remuneration for their work, but will receive allowances for travel and accommodation, where required. A quorum of three jurors present will be required for jury deliberations to proceed. The working languages for deliberations of the jury shall be English and French.
- 5.3 The Jury shall conduct its business and deliberations in conformity with these Statutes and shall be assisted in the performance of its task by a member of the UNESCO Secretariat designated by the Director-General. Decisions shall be taken by consensus to the extent possible, and otherwise by secret ballot until a simple majority is obtained. A member shall not take part in a vote concerning a nomination from his or her country.
- 5.4 The Jury shall meet once every year.
- 5.5 The Jury shall send an assessment of nominations and accompanying recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO no later than ... [dates to be decided by the Director-General].

Article 6 – Nomination of candidates

- 6.1 When UNESCO has received the funding of the prize, as indicated in Article 2 above, the Director-General of UNESCO shall officially invite the submission of nominations to the Secretariat of the Prize... [dates to be decided by the Director-General] from the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, as well as from non-governmental organizations maintaining official partnerships with the Organization and active in relevant fields covered by the Prize.
- 6.2 Nominations shall be submitted to the Director-General by the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, and by non-governmental organizations maintaining official partnerships with UNESCO. A self-nomination cannot be considered.
- 6.3 Each nomination shall be accompanied by a written recommendation, which shall include, in English or French, *inter alia*:
 - (a) a description of the candidate's background and achievements;
 - (b) a summary of the work or the results of the work, publications and other supporting documents of major importance, submitted for consideration;
 - (c) a definition of the candidate's contribution to the Prize's objectives.

Article 7 – Procedure for the awarding of the Prize

- 7.1 The Prize shall be awarded by the Director-General at an official ceremony held for that purpose at UNESCO Headquarters. UNESCO shall officially announce the names of the prize winners.
- 7.2 If a work being rewarded has been produced by two or three persons, the Prize shall be awarded to them jointly. In no case may a prize amount be divided between more than three persons.
- 7.3 The prize winners, if possible, shall give a lecture on a subject relevant to the work for which the Prize has been awarded. Such a lecture shall be organized during or in connection with the Prize ceremony.
- 7.4 The work produced by a person since deceased shall not be considered for the Prize. If, however, a prize winner dies before he/she has received the Prize, then the Prize may be presented posthumously (awarded to relatives or institutions).
- 7.5 Should a prize winner decline the Prize, the jury shall submit a new proposal to the Director-General.

Article 8 – Sunset clause – mandatory renewal of the Prize

- 8.1 Six months prior to the agreed end of the term of the Prize (five years), the Director-General of UNESCO together with the donor will undertake a review of all aspects of the Prize and decide about its continuation or termination. The Director-General will inform the Executive Board of UNESCO about the results of this review.
- 8.2. In case of termination of the Prize, the use of any unspent balance of funds shall be determined by the Director-General, in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Prize.

Article 9 – Appeals

No appeals shall be allowed against the decision of UNESCO with regard to the award of the Prize. Proposals received for the award of the Prize may not be divulged.

Article 10 – Amendments to the Statutes of the Prize

Any amendment to the present Statutes shall be submitted to the Executive Board for approval.

ANNEX II

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS OF THE SPECIAL ACCOUNT FOR THE UNESCO PRIZE FOR GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Article 1 – Creation of a Special Account

- 1.1 In accordance with Article 6, paragraphs 5 and 6, of the Financial Regulations of UNESCO, there is hereby created a Special Account for 'UNESCO Prize for of girls' and women's education' hereafter referred to as the Special Account.
- 1.2 The following regulations shall govern the operation of the Special Account.

Article 2 – Financial period

The financial period shall correspond to that of UNESCO.

Article 3 – Purpose

The purpose of the "UNESCO Prize for girls' and women's education" is to reward the outstanding efforts of individuals, institutions, organizations or other entities engaged in activities promoting girls' and women's education. The proposed Prize is considered to be of high relevance to the programme of UNESCO and would directly contribute to three Strategic Objectives related to Major Programme I of UNESCO's Medium-term Strategy 2014-2021 (37C/4) and to those of the second 'UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan' 2014-2021 (GEAP II). Furthermore, the proposed Prize would contribute to two Goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Goal 4) and "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (Goal 5).

Article 4 – Income

The income of the Special Account shall consist of:

- (a) voluntary contributions from States, international agencies and organizations, as well as other entities;
- (b) such amounts provided from the regular budget of the Organization as might be determined by the General Conference;
- (c) such subventions, endowments, gifts and bequests as are allocated to it for purposes consistent with the object of the Special Account;
- (d) miscellaneous income, including any interest earned on the investments referred to in Article 7 below.

Article 5 – Expenditure

The Special Account shall be debited with the expenditure relating to its purpose as described in Article 3 above, including administrative expenses specifically relating to it.

Article 6 – Accounts

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer shall maintain such accounting records as are necessary.

- 6.2 Any unused balance at the end of a financial period shall be carried forward to the following financial period.
- 6.3 The accounts of the Special Account shall be presented for audit to the External Auditor of UNESCO, together with the other accounts of the Organization.
- 6.4 Contributions in kind shall be recorded outside the Special Account.

Article 7 – Investments

- 7.1 The Director-General may make short-term investments of sums standing to the credit of the Special Account.
- 7.2 Interest earned on these investments shall be credited to the Special Account.

Article 8 – Closure of the Special Account

The Director-General shall decide upon the closure of the Special Account at such time as he/she deems that its operation is no longer necessary and inform the Executive Board accordingly. The Director-General shall decide about the use of any unspent balance of funds.

Article 9 – General provision

Unless otherwise provided in these Regulations, the Special Account shall be administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations of UNESCO.



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CORRIGENDUM

On the cover page, the Summary table should read as follows:

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