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COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR THE MOST PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This document presents the comprehensive strategy for the Management of Social Transformations Programme adopted by the Bureau of its Intergovernmental Council, at its meeting on 27 and 28 January 2016. The development of the strategy was initiated by the Intergovernmental Council in the decisions taken at its 12th Ordinary Session and informed by the deliberations of the Executive Board (197 EX/Dec.40) and General Conference (38 C/Res.104, paragraph 5), in connection with reflection on document 39 C/5 and on the implications for UNESCO of the 2030 Agenda.

This item has no financial implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 16.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. At its 12th Ordinary Session, held in Paris on 1 and 2 June 2015, the Intergovernmental Council (IGC), having taken note of preliminary proposals made by the Secretariat for the development of a comprehensive strategic approach to the MOST programme, requested the Director-General “to submit to the IGC, at the Extraordinary Session to be convened during the 38th session of the General Conference for the primary purpose of elections to the Bureau, a comprehensive draft strategy for the MOST Programme, previously consulted with the Bureau, with a view to presenting the strategy as adopted to the Executive Board at its 199th session in April 2016”.

2. A draft strategy, prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the substantive discussions at the 12th Ordinary Session, and taking account also of the then emerging 2030 Agenda for universal inclusive and sustainable development, was circulated to the IGC Bureau for consultation in July 2015.

3. At its 197th session, the UNESCO Executive Board discussed “MOST Programme Contributions to the Post-2015 Development Agenda” (document 197 EX/40), taking account of the decisions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 to establish what is henceforth known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In its decision thereon, the Executive Board welcomed “the initiative of the Intergovernmental Council of the MOST Programme (IGC-MOST) in drawing up a comprehensive strategy for the Programme” and indicated that it awaited “with interest the discussion to take place at its 199th session”.

4. This positive view with respect to the development of a comprehensive strategy for the MOST programme was reaffirmed in the course of the deliberations of the General Conference on document 39 C/5, particularly as it relates to the 2030 Agenda. In its resolution thereon, the General Conference stressed “the importance of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme in the design of public policies based on foresight and scientific evidence to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and further underscored “the need to define a clear and effective communication strategy for the programme and to establish coordination mechanisms for its activities and cooperation with other United Nations agencies and regional organizations” (38 C/Resolution 104, paragraph 5).

5. At its Extraordinary Session, held in Paris on 14 November 2015, the IGC took note of the outcomes of discussion at the Executive Board and General Conference and requested its Bureau, “after further consultation with members of the IGC, and taking account of the input of the Scientific Advisory Committee, to adopt at a meeting to be convened for that purpose in late January 2016 a comprehensive draft strategy for the MOST Programme for submission to the Executive Board at its 199th session”.

6. The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) met in Paris on 26 and 27 October 2015 and conducted an in-depth discussion of strategic issues for MOST, the substance of which was forwarded to the IGC for its consideration.

7. Having conducted further consultations during December 2015 and January 2016, including with SAC as a follow-up to the aforementioned meeting thereof, the Bureau of the IGC duly met in Paris on 27 and 28 January 2016 to adopt the comprehensive strategy for the MOST programme, which is hereby submitted to the Executive Board.

8. The purpose of the strategy, the full text of which has been distributed as document 199 EX/7.INF, is to affirm the role of MOST, as an intergovernmental science programme on social transformations, in supporting the articulation of policies for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to enhance the capacity of MOST to respond to these challenges in the transformed context of international cooperation.

STRATEGIC MISSION AND VISION

9. In this broad setting, and within the framework of Strategic Objective 6 of document 37 C/4, the comprehensive strategy defines MOST's specific mission as supporting Member States in improving participatory policy-making processes to promote human rights in the context of more inclusive and sustainable human development. The strategy emphasizes that such improvement requires a strengthened research-policy interface, which draws on knowledge from the social and human sciences to establish a culture of evidence-informed decision-making.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

10. The main strategic objective of MOST is, thus, by the end of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021, to enhance the capabilities of Member States to generate evidence through high quality and autonomous research and make use of it in the formulation and choice of participatory policies relevant to UNESCO's fields of competence to fulfil the 2030 Agenda.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

11. Within the 2030 Agenda, MOST will put particular emphasis on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". This Goal constitutes both a specific ensemble of issues for which the research-policy nexus is of great importance and a cross-cutting set of preconditions for the realization of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Under SDG 16, MOST will give particular significance to Target 16.7: "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels". Work in this area responds directly to the encouragement given to MOST by the Executive Board "to strengthen its links with civil society, with a view to fostering its participation in policy dialogues at all levels" (197 EX/Decision 40, paragraph 11).

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP

12. In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the comprehensive strategy emphasizes the importance of maintaining a clear focus on social transformations and of enhancing ownership of MOST by its two primary constituencies: Member States, and knowledge communities in the social and human sciences. With this in mind, the Bureau of the IGC has decided to initiate the preparation of a 2016-2021 Action Plan for Implementation of the MOST Strategy and has requested all Bureau members to engage in consultation with the respective regional groups in order to establish the draft content thereof by 30 June 2016.

OPERATIONAL PILLARS

13. To fulfil this overall vision, the comprehensive strategy structures MOST around three pillars – research, intergovernmental forums and knowledge brokering – and outlines operational implications for each. These include the well-established mechanisms, such as MOST Ministerial Forums and MOST Schools, the implementation of which was specifically noted with satisfaction by the Executive Board in 197 EX/Decision 40, paragraph 7. The comprehensive strategy also showcases new initiatives expressing its aims that are being implemented through the 37 C/5 and 38 C/5 workplans, including the Futures Knowledge Laboratory, the Inclusive Policy Lab and a renewed commitment to selective publication of high-quality and policy-relevant research outputs. The importance of communication is also underlined, and specific operational proposals are made to ensure that MOST is more visible to relevant audiences and contributes more effectively to shaping global, regional and national agendas on social transformations.

RESOURCES

14. The comprehensive strategy also reviews resource issues relevant to MOST, emphasizing that, in addition to the regular budget allocated within each C/5 document, which secures funding for the permanent staff of the secretariat and for core statutory activities, including meetings of the IGC and Scientific Advisory Committee, achievement of the strategic objectives requires a higher level of extrabudgetary support to UNESCO as well as in-kind support, in particular through implementation by Member States of their own activities to fulfil the objectives of the strategy within the framework of the Action Plan referred to in paragraph 12 above.

15. Implementation of the comprehensive strategy would have no financial implications for the secretariat, in so far as tasks under its responsibility are covered by appropriations made for this purpose within the Budget for 2016-17 (Major Programme III, Main Line of Action 1, Expected Result 1).

16. In view of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

“The Executive Board,

1. Reiterating 197 EX/Decision 40 and in particular the recognition therein “that the MOST Programme might be an invaluable resource for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) set under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,
2. Noting 38 C/Resolution 104, in paragraph 5 of which the General Conference stressed “the importance of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme in the design of public policies based on foresight and scientific evidence to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,
3. Referring to 38 C/resolution 41 on the Programme and Budget for 2016-17 as it relates to Major Programme III,
4. Taking note of the decision on the development of a comprehensive strategy for the MOST Programme taken by its Intergovernmental Council (IGC) at its Extraordinary Session held in Paris on 14 November 2015 and of the outcomes of the meeting of the IGC Bureau held in Paris on 27 and 28 January 2016,
5. Having examined document 199 EX/7 presenting an overview of the strategic process for the MOST Programme and the comprehensive strategy, contained in document 199 EX/7.INF,
6. Welcomes the initiative of the Intergovernmental Council of the MOST programme to draft a comprehensive strategy fully aligned with document 37 C/4 and with the requirements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
7. Endorses the comprehensive strategy as submitted to it in document 199 EX/7.INF;
8. Requests the Director-General to submit to its 201st session a report on initial steps taken towards implementation of the strategy, taking account *inter alia* of the outcomes of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Intergovernmental Council, scheduled from 13 to 15 March 2017.”