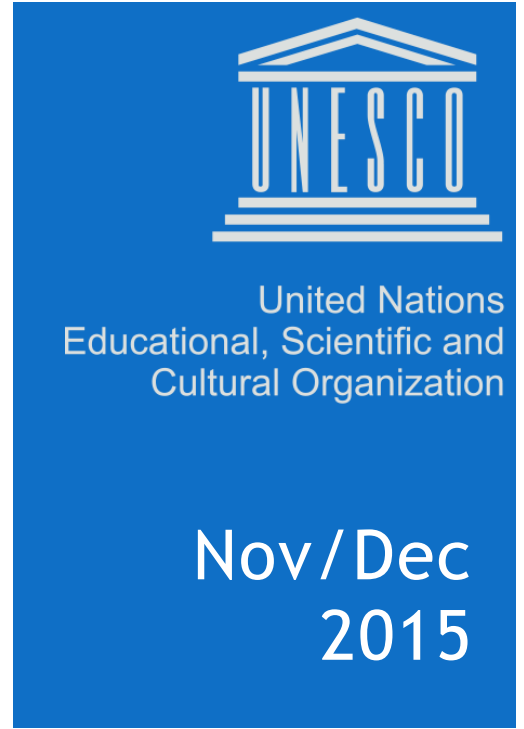




UNESCO TEHRAN CLUSTER OFFICE COVERING AFGHANISTAN, I.R. IRAN, PAKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN



IN THIS ISSUE

Happy New Year!

Dear readers,

On behalf of the Tehran Cluster countries, I would like to wish you all a very happy, healthy and successful 2016!

The year 2015 has been a busy and exciting one for us and in this latest edition of our newsletter, you will find an update of our activities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Iran during the last two months of the year.

UNESCO and UNHABITAT with the support of ECO jointly launched a sub-regional project on seismic hazard and risk analysis, covering our four cluster countries. Government representatives and seismic experts from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Iran attended the kick-off meeting of the project in Tehran and also participated in the Iranian national school earthquake drill.

Turkmenistan celebrated its 20th anniversary of Permanent Neutrality status on 12 December with a major international conference in Ashgabat at which UNESCO was invited to deliver a speech on our contributions towards the new sustainable development agenda.

In Pakistan, UNESCO supported the Government in developing a reliable flood early warning system by organizing a two-day international workshop. And in Afghanistan UNESCO conducted a three-day curriculum workshop to share the draft curriculum framework with the participants.

You will be able to read more about these and many other activities and events in this edition of the newsletter.

Last, but not least, Iran was elected a Member of UNESCO's Executive Board during the 38th session of the General Conference. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Government of I.R. Iran and in particular to the Permanent Delegation in Paris for this important election.

We hope you will enjoy reading our newsletter and wish you all a good start of the New Year!

With best regards,

Esther Kuisch Laroche
Director & Representative
UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office



UNESCO organizes training workshop on updating and harmonizing Tentative List of Heritage Sites of Pakistan



UNESCO organizes national consultative meeting on the role of ICTs for empowerment of persons with disabilities in Iran

Feature Stories

UNESCO and UN Habitat launch sub-regional project on seismic hazard and risk analysis

From 29 November to 1 December, the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and the UN Habitat Office in Tehran organized the kick-off meeting of a unique joint project on seismic hazard and risk analysis covering Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan.

The project is supported by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and national partners in each of the countries, and aims at using the most recent methods and technologies for seismic hazard analysis, which will result in evaluating and re-assessing the seismicity of the four countries. Moreover an updated assessment will be carried out on the seismic hazardous parts of two selected cities in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan and a seismic risk map will be developed for these cities.

Training and capacity-building of national experts is one of the main components of this Project. For this, UNESCO in partnership with UN-Habitat will train a core team of experts from each of the four countries on the methodologies that will be used throughout the project and will supervise their work to carry-out the tasks under the project in accordance with the agreed methodology.

The final products of this Project will be updated sub-regional hazard maps of the four countries, seismic risk maps of selected cities, and a final report with policy level recommendations, which will be disseminated to government offices for use as a decision-making tool. These products will help streamline urban development policies to focus efforts on priority areas identified by the project and to retrofit building codes in line with the identified seismic hazards.

The kick-off meeting, which was held from 29 November to 1 December, marked an important first-step in implementation of this project. On the first day of the meeting, the participants from the four countries attended the annual earthquake and safety drill at Pasadaran Vocational Girls' School in the Abdulabad district of Southern Tehran. In



the afternoon, they visited the Geophysics Institute of Tehran University.

The following two days were dedicated to presentation by the participants from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan about their available data and past experiences and technical discussions with other experts from Turkey and Japan.

UNESCO as the sole UN agency with the mandate of Sciences is well positioned to contribute to global disaster risk reduction; especially that it is imperative that sciences underpin all technological innovation and engineering solutions needed to address universal challenges including natural disasters.

This Project therefore falls well in line with UNESCO's mid-term strategy, which reads as follows: "UNESCO will promote international collaboration on the assessment and monitoring of global changes and natural hazards, including droughts and floods and geohazards, as well as tsunamis; the generation and sharing of scientific knowledge leading to the understanding of natural hazards; and by the reduction of disaster risks."

In her opening speech, Ms. Kuisch Laroche, Director and Representative of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, talked about the importance of disaster risk reduction in the newly adopted 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

"Goals number 9 and number 11 of the 2030 Development Agenda highlight the need to reach resiliency in cities and human settlements. This more than ever urges us to come together and join our efforts to improve the resiliency of cities. I am therefore very pleased and proud of our partnership with UN Habitat and so many other important stakeholders who are here with us today to work together on the implementation of this joint project", she said.

The Deputy Secretary General of the ECO Secretariat, Mr. Seyed Jaleadin Alavi Sabzevari, expressed the full support of his organization to this important project and said he looked forward to expanding the project in the future to the rest of the ECO member states.

Feature Stories

UNESCO conducts a three-day curriculum workshop in Afghanistan



The Deputy Ministry of Education for Literacy (DMoEL) with technical assistance of UNESCO conducted a three day curriculum workshop at the Kabul Serena Hotel from November 21st to 23rd, 2015.

The purpose of conducting the curriculum framework workshop was to share the draft curriculum framework with the participants while enhancing their understanding of the underlying competency-based approach, to obtain feedback and draw from participants' experiences and knowledge to enrich the draft curriculum framework, and to agree upon a final statement on the draft curriculum framework that will be presented to decision-makers at the Ministry of Education.

The workshop's opening ceremony started with a speech delivered by H.E. Minister of Education, Dr. Assadullah Hanif Balkhi who emphasized the importance of literacy in enhancing the quality of life of Afghanistan citizens, as well as enhancing social communications. The Minister also endorsed the need for the new teaching and learning curriculum, and extended his gratitude to UNESCO and the international donors for their continuous support.

The national literacy curriculum and textbooks that are used currently, were developed over 10 years ago and do not meet the proficiency, numeracy and life skills expected of adults today. Also, reasons why individuals would participate in literacy courses today may not be quite the same as of 10 years ago, and this reflects a major need to provide literacy education for a different group of people and learners with different needs. Therefore, a forward-

looking curriculum, instructional materials and teaching and learning strategies are required to contribute to the country's development goals. In this manner, the Deputy Ministry of Education for Literacy, under the leadership of its Curriculum Directorate, and with support from UNESCO Kabul Office, have strategized to develop a national youth and adult literacy and basic education curriculum framework.

H.E. Mr. Azim Karblaye, Deputy Minister of Education for Literacy, emphasized the importance of curriculum as a major component of increasing quality in the literacy programme. Mr. Karblaye also stated that the new curriculum is considered to be both demand driven and competency based, which will increase the quality of the programme as a whole.

Mr. Danillo Padillo, head of education unit of UNESCO began his speech by appreciating the Literacy Department for working very closely with UNESCO over the years, as well as for initiating this important curriculum framework workshop.

Mr. Padillo also expressed the UNESCO team's sincerest gratitude to the Governments of Japan, Sweden and Finland for their continuous support to UNESCO, enabling UNESCO to be a strong technical support body to such critical initiatives. "This workshop underscores UNESCO's longstanding assistance in Afghanistan, particularly through the Curriculum Directorate of the Literacy Department, with strong support from UNESCO's Institute of Lifelong Learning" added Mr. Padillo.

In his speech, Mr. Assadullah Muhaqiq, Deputy Minister of Education for Technical Evaluation emphasized the importance of literacy education and particularly the quality of literacy programme as a main focus of the national government in education sector.

Dr. Ulrike Hanemann, from UNESCO's Institute for Life Long Learning gave two presentations. One presentation was on international trends in literacy and the implications of dealing with literacy as a continuum of proficiency levels, with the other presentation focusing on trends in teaching and learning literacy, and implications for the development of literacy materials.

During the workshop the participants joined in many group works through which the participants got opportunity to familiarize with different parts of the curriculum framework, indicate their comments and feedback in the posters, and share the comments and feedback with all participants.

The closing ceremony took place on 23rd of November and the certificates were distributed to the participants in the presence of special representative of First Lady of Afghanistan.



Feature Stories

Turkmenistan celebrates the 20th anniversary of its permanent neutrality status

On 12 December 2015 Turkmenistan marked the 20th anniversary since the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on the international recognition of the country's permanent neutrality.

The country celebrated the anniversary as well as the end of the "Year of Neutrality and Peace" with an international conference in Ashgabat, dedicated to issues of neutrality, peace and sustainable development.

Close to 1,000 guests attended the conference and related festivities, including several Heads of State and Iran's First Vice-President.

Ms. Kuisch Laroche, Director of UNESCO's Cluster Office in Tehran and UNESCO Representative to Turkmenistan delivered a speech on the Organization's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. In her remarks, Ms. Kuisch Laroche highlighted the close ties and longstanding partnership between UNESCO and Turkmenistan – a member of UNESCO's Executive Board.

She also talked about the important role that Turkmenistan can play as a neutral country in the region: "This is a time when poverty and inequalities are deepening, when the planet faces increasing pressure, when conflicts remain aflame and the threat of violent extremism is

rising. This is also a time of unprecedented opportunity, for exchange, dialogue and cooperation, across all borders, for the benefit of all, to protect the planet. Turkmenistan, with its permanent status of neutrality, can play an important role in bringing countries together and facilitating this type of dialogue and exchange."

The UNESCO Representative spoke about the new sustainable development agenda and mentioned that the Sustainable Development Goals reflect UNESCO's vision and competence.

"The Sustainable Development Agenda is an agenda for human rights and dignity. An agenda for poverty eradication. An agenda for sustainability and the protection of the planet. Humanity stands together, on the same planet, and shares the same destiny. This is UNESCO's vision. Taking it forward depends on the political will and engagement of States. And in this context, I wish to thank the Government of Turkmenistan, for its strong leadership and commitment, which is essential today", said Ms. Kuisch Laroche in her closing remarks.

For more information about Turkmenistan's neutrality status, please see: <http://neutral.gov.tm/en>



Feature Stories

UNESCO assists the Government of Pakistan in developing reliable flood early warning system

Islamabad - 21 December 2015: A two-day international workshop titled 'Meaning and Characterizing River Morphology for Hindcasting and Forecasting River Responses to Major Floods' was jointly organized by UNESCO, PCRWR and PMD aimed at setting up a common understanding and direction for river modelling data requirements, from acquisition and measurement methods to effective use in river floods simulations which will be extended from Indus IFAS system to the tributary rivers of the Indus i.e. Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej. This international workshop is part of phase-II of UNESCO's "Strategic Strengthening of Flood Early Warning and Management Capacity of Pakistan" Project, which was launched in March 2015, worth USD 4.05 million. The phase-I of the project worth USD 3.7 million was launched in July 2011 and completed in 2014 in a bid to respond to the 2010 devastated flood in cooperation with the Government of Japan. His Excellency Mr. Hiroshi Inomata, Ambassador of the Japan was chief guest of the event while Dr. Shahbaz Khan, UNESCO Regional Science Director of Asia and the Pacific, Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Chairman PCRWR, Mr. Mitsuyoshi Kawasaki, Representative of JICA, and Dr. Ghulam Rasool, Director General PMD were also present at the workshop.

Ambassador of the Japan commended the immense efforts of UNESCO, PCRWR, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), for their efforts, in his remarks. Dr. Shahbaz Khan, Director, UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific extended his gratitude to the Government of Japan for their support and highlighted the success of Strategic Strengthening of Flood Warning



System and Management Capacity of Pakistan Project. He informed that based on the successful accomplishments of the phase-I project, countries like Namibia, South Sudan, and Myanmar also showed their interest in seeking help from UNESCO and ICHARM to strengthen their flood early warning system.

The international conference was attended by representatives from national and international partner organizations such as International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICARM), Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency - JAXA, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Federal Flood Commission (FFD) and international experts from Australia, France, Indonesia and Japan and their expertise will further enhance river modelling and flood forecasting models for Indus and the Eastern Rivers.



Education

UNESCO organizes entrepreneurship workshop for small and micro businesses in Iran

The 28th of November marked the opening of a four-day workshop on entrepreneurship in the city of Isfahan. The workshop has been organized jointly by the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and the "Isfahan Regional Center for Technology Business Incubators & Science Parks Development under the Auspices of UNESCO" (IRIS), and provides a comprehensive training on COMFAR software for small and micro businesses. The participants of the workshop come mainly from IRIS and Iran's Technical Vocational Training Organization (TVTO). During the opening ceremony Dr. Keshmiri, Head of IRIS, talked about the activities of the UNESCO Category II Centre in skill learning and the importance of international relations in creating a culture of entrepreneurship.

Dr. Parand, Head of TVTO, mentioned that his organization has grown to become a regional hub for skills training. He talked about the continuous cooperation with the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and expressed the hope for future collaboration with UNESCO in the field of Mobile Training and Mobile Learning.



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UNESCO Pakistan holds National Consultation for sensitization of stakeholders on SDG-4/ Education 2030

National Consultation held for sensitization of stakeholders on SDG-4/ Education 2030 and its alignment with the national and provincial/ area policy imperatives

The workshop helped building the understanding and knowledge of key education sector stakeholders on SDG-4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030

Islamabad: UNESCO Islamabad, UNICEF and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan jointly organized the first national consultation workshop on Sustainable Development Goal – 4 (SDG) "the Education 2030 Agenda" in Islamabad. The workshop aimed at developing a common understanding on SDG-4 and devising a roadmap and effective strategies for attainment of quality education and goals set for 2030 which were adopted at the World Education Summit in May 2015 in Incheon Republic of Korea this year.

The workshop is drawn upon the Framework for Action (FFA) Education 2030 adopted in November 2015 by the UNESCO Member States that aims at supporting all countries to realize their own vision and ambitions for education within the framework of the global SDG-4 and its targets. The FFA also proposes ways of implementing, coordinating, financing and monitoring Education 2030 to ensure equal education opportunities for all. The implementation of the 2030 Education Agenda at national level requires country-led actions to drive change, supported by effective multi-stakeholder partnerships and financing.

The event was attended by over 150 participants including officials of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), provincial/ area education departments, civil society organizations, academia, media, United Nations agencies and donor community.

The Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Mr. Muhammad Baliugh ur Rehman in his inaugural speech while terming education as future of Pakistan reiterated government firm resolve to do away with deficiencies to have prosperous and democratic Pakistan. He mentioned that during UNESCO General Conference in November this year, Pakistan fully committed to these goals and they have declared and adopted these goals as the national development goals 2030. He expressed that during the last two years, a phenomenal increase in budgetary provision for education is made. Resource allocations for tertiary education which were just Rs. 40 billion has been enhanced to Rs.80 billion.

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UNESCO organizes four-day consultative meeting on literacy assessment in Iran



From 14-18 November 2015, the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office organized a 4-day consultation meeting to explore feasible approaches to assess different levels of functional literacy in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meeting was co-hosted by the Literacy Movement Organization and brought together Government representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Statistical Centre of Iran, the Ministry of Interior, the Management Planning Organization and academia. The discussions were facilitated by Mr. Shailendra Sigdel from the regional office of UNESCO's Institute of Statistics (UIS) in New Delhi, India.

Since 2003, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics has been actively involved in elaborating innovative approaches and tools to measure the literacy levels of individuals to support decision makers around the world in developing evidence-based policies and solutions.

UIS is also responsible for monitoring international literacy targets associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other globally accepted frameworks for action.

In most countries, including Iran, literacy statistics are based on self-reporting. During the national population census people are asked whether or not they can read and write. If they answer "yes" they are considered to be literate. If they say "no", they are considered illiterate. However, while these conventional statistics are useful for benchmarking progress globally, they do not reflect the full spectrum of skills associated with reading and numeracy, which are required in this 21st century.

Therefore, upon the request of the Literacy Movement Organization, the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office organized this 4-day consultation

meeting to explore new ways of defining and assessing literacy levels in Iran.

The event was opened by Mr. Ali Bagherzadeh, Deputy Minister of Education and Head of the Literacy Movement Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ms. Hoda Jaberian, Education Officer of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, and Mr. Alireza Zahedian, Deputy of the Statistical Centre of Iran.

During his opening speech, Mr. Bagherzadeh talked about Iran's achievements in literacy training and highlighted the objectives of the meeting. He explained that the census-based statistics provide general policy-level information but do not provide the Literacy Movement Organization with the more specific information required to develop effective action plans targeting different segments of the population.

Ms. Hoda Jaberian expressed her appreciation to the Government of I.R. Iran for co-hosting this important event and talked about the importance of functional literacy given that modern technologies have become part of our daily lives. "Literacy assessment is a key intervention to provide the diagnostic information required to monitor and improve literacy skills. UNESCO promotes adopted solutions that correspond to contextual needs and will allow countries at all stages of development to measure a full range of reading and numeracy skills among diverse target groups", she said. "The key objective of this consultative meeting is to create and build on a brainstorming forum that reviews and bring together technical inputs from educational and statistical experts towards a feasible tool that could address the need of literacy assessment in I.R. Iran".

Mr. Zahedian presented an update on results from previous population census in the field of literacy and highlighted the recently conducted test surveys for the upcoming census. He closed his speech by underlining the willingness and commitment of the Statistical Centre of Iran to support and partner with the Literacy Movement Organization and UNESCO in their initiatives focused on literacy assessment.

By the end of the fourth day, participants and representatives from all Government entities finalized three feasible scenarios for a literacy assessment project in Iran. The recommended options were submitted to senior policy makers in the Literacy Movement Organization for their review.

For more information about UNESCO's Institute for Statistics and literacy, please see:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Literacy/Pages/default.aspx>

Education

UNESCO organizes 3-day Training Workshop on Updating and Harmonizing the National Tentative List of Cultural, Natural and Mixed Heritage Sites of Pakistan

Islamabad, 3-5 December 2015: UNESCO office Islamabad in collaboration with Federal Directorate of Archaeology and Museums and with support from UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office organize a 3-day Training Workshop to prepare and finalize the list of potential Cultural, Natural and Mixed Heritage Sites of Pakistan for inscription on the World Heritage List of UNESCO. The workshop also focused on capacity building of the stakeholders on World Heritage protection and management.

Representatives from relevant institutions including Provincial Departments of Culture and Archaeology, Department of Forest, Wildlife, Pakistan Council of Research and Water Resources (PCRWR), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Federal Directorate of Archaeology and Museums participated in the workshop. [Click here to read more](#)



Celebration of Yalda Night in Iran



UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia under Auspices of UNESCO (Tehran ICH Centre) marked Yalda night on 26 December in Emarate Kooshk, Tehran.

Yalda (also known as Shab-e Chelle in Persian) is one of the intangible cultural heritage elements shared by a majority of West and Central Asian countries. Celebrated on the evening of the last day of Azar (December 21st), Yalda is the celebration of the longest night of the year when family members gather for a joyful ceremony.

The event in celebration of Yalda night was attended by authorities from the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism

Organization (ICHHTO) as well as scholars and representatives of different organizations and embassies.

In welcoming the guests, Dr. Parmoun, Director of Tehran ICH Centre, referred to Yalda Night as having the potential for global registration with UNESCO as the tradition is observed beyond Iranian borders.

Ms Esther Kuisch-Laroche, Director and Representative of UNESCO Tehran, mentioned in her speech, which was read out during the opening, that "the Yalda celebrations, which have been practiced for centuries and perhaps millennia, very well exemplify the rich heritage of the Persian people".

The UNESCO Representative expressed her appreciation for the efforts made by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Tehran ICH Centre in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and promoting cultural diversity. "Cultural diversity is our shared heritage. It is an important source of identity and strength, and an engine of innovation and sustainable development", she said.

The gathering was then addressed by Dr Nasiri Gheirdari, Acting Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, who provided the participants with an explanation of the Persian calendar and Yalda Night.

The speeches were followed by a puppetry performance (Kheimaeh Shab Bazi), one of the elements registered on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The event ended with a musical performance and Hafez poem reading by Dr. Mohammad Afsar Rahbeen, Cultural Attaché of the Afghanistan Embassy in Tehran.

For more information about the Tehran ICH Centre, please see: <http://tichct.org/Endevelopment>

Education

Bamiyan (Afghanistan), Isfahan and Rasht (Iran) have joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network



The historic city of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, has joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Bamiyan is known for traditional handicrafts such as carpet weaving, sculpting and folk art, while the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of Bamiyan was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2003. Bamiyan was also recognized as the Cultural Capital of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for the year 2015.

The beautiful city of Isfahan in Iran has been registered because of its creative crafts and folk art, and Rasht (also in Iran) because of its unique gastronomy.



Launched in 2004, and comprising 116 Member Cities, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network aims to foster international cooperation with and amongst cities committed to investing in creativity as a driver for sustainable urban development, social inclusion and cultural vibrancy.

By joining the Network, cities commit to collaborate and develop partnerships with a view to promoting creativity and cultural industries, to share best practices, to strengthen participation in cultural life, and to integrate culture in economic and social development strategies and plans.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network has seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music. Launched in 2004, the Network now comprises 116 cities worldwide. It aims to foster international cooperation with and between cities committed to investing in creativity as a driver for sustainable urban development, social inclusion and cultural vibrancy.

"The UNESCO Creative Cities Network represents an immense potential to assert the role of culture as enabler of sustainable development. I would like to recognize the many new cities and their countries that are enriching the Network with their diversity" declared the Director-General, as UNESCO celebrates in 2015 the 10th anniversary of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the international community in September 2015 highlights culture and creativity as key levers for sustainable urban development. The Network serves as an essential platform to contribute to the implementation and achievement of this international agenda.

The next meeting of the Creative Cities Network is scheduled for September 2016 in Östersund (Sweden).



UNESCO organizes training workshop on management of cultural heritage sites on Tentative List in Iran

Monday 30 October marked the opening of a three-day training workshop on Management of Cultural Heritage Sites in Masouleh, Gilan Province.

The workshop brought together site managers from all over Iran, and particularly from heritage sites registered on the Iran's World Heritage Tentative List. The Tentative List is an inventory of those cultural and/or natural heritage sites which Iran considers to be of outstanding universal value, and which the country intends to consider for nomination to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

The workshop took place in the small mountain town of Masouleh, which is registered on Iran's Tentative List for its unique architecture and lay-out.

During the opening ceremony of the workshop Ms. Esther Kuisch Laroche, Director and Representative of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, said: "In a context of rapidly increasing urban development around many heritage sites, impacts of environmental degradation affecting some of the sites, and a high vulnerability due to seismic

risks, it is important that we focus on strengthening the capacities to properly plan and manage sites on the Tentative List."

The UNESCO Representative also stressed the importance of engaging the community and local stakeholders in decision-making processes and the management of cultural heritage sites.

Dr. Talebian, Deputy Head of the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO), said that the workshop would enable managers to gain more knowledge, which they could use to conduct meetings and workshops in their own sites with the local communities. "This cooperation with UNESCO leads to capacity building for the whole country, increased collaboration between site managers and allows for exchanges of practical knowledge and experience", he said.

The three-day workshop, facilitated by Mr. Duncan Marshall from Australia, focused on conservation and management principles and also included a practical field visit.



Natural and Social Sciences

Pakistan to lead Accreditation of Engineering Qualifications through FEIAP



Islamabad - 17 December 2015: A meeting was held at Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) to proclaim Pakistan's Membership in FEIAP and to explore the prospects of Central Asian and African countries to adopt FEIAP engineering qualification standards under UNESCO-FEIAP partnership. Meeting was attended by UNESCO

Regional Director for Science, Dr. Shahbaz Khan, Chairman PEC, Engr. Jawed Salim Qureshi, President ECO Science Foundation, Dr. Manzoor Soomro and Honorable Ambassador of Tajikistan, H.E. Sherali Jononov. Wide segment of media was also present at the meeting and meeting was followed by a press briefing.

PEC has been actively involved in standardization of engineering education in the country and continual progress has been made in the direction culminated in recognition by FEIAP, the Washington Accord (WA) and International Professional Engineers Agreement (IPEA) of International Engineering Alliance (IEA). In this regard, efforts of UNESCO and especially role of Dr. Shahbaz Khan was appreciated by the Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council. Participants of the meeting were told by Dr. Shahbaz Khan that Pakistan is the first economy of Asia Pacific region which has got recognized by FEIAP. Director UNESCO further elaborated that now Pakistan should lead the initiative of engineering standardization in the region and other countries of Central Asian and African region should learn from Pakistan's experience.

[Click here to read more](#)

UNESCO supports 17th National Earthquake and Safety Drill in Iranian Schools

On 29 November 2015, the 17th National Earthquake and Safety Drill took place in schools all across the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office attended the drill at Pasadaran Vocational Girls' School in the Abdulabad district of Southern Tehran.

As soon as the alarm was sounded, all students dropped underneath their desks, covered their heads and held on to their desks for one minute. After that, the girls went out into the school yard in an orderly manner, where most of them sat down in rows.

During the simulation some of the students carried "injured" girls out of the school and provided first aid to them, while others set up tents and extinguished fires. Community members from the neighboring areas also came to the school to help set up tents and seek safe haven.

During the simulation exercise, the ambulances and fire truck arrived at the school about 15 minutes after the earthquake had hit. Representatives of the Iranian Red Crescent Society pointed out that this is likely what would happen in real life: "As it would take us some time to get to the scene, it is of the utmost importance that students and community members know what to do and how to administer first aid to the wounded in the immediate aftermath of a major earthquake."

The UNESCO Representative, Ms. Kuisch Laroche, spoke about her Organization's commitment towards the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS), which was launched during the 3rd World Conference



on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015. She mentioned that safe schools consist of three important pillars: Safe Learning Facilities; School Disaster Management; Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Resilience Education. She mentioned that UNESCO worked with governments around the world to support and promote those three pillars.

Natural and Social Sciences

Islamabad Proposed as Biosphere Reserve



and attended by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Chairman PSF/ Co-Chairman of the Committee, Prof. Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro, President of ECO Science Foundation and Ms. Vibeke Jensen, Representative of UNESCO in Pakistan, as well as MAB National Committee members representing Forest and Wildlife Departments of all the provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Ministry of Climate Change, MoST, UNESCO, PMNH, IUCN and WWF-Pakistan and Pakistan National Commission for UNESCO were also present at the meeting.

The highlights of the meeting are: New sites by each province were discussed and prioritized for nomination to MAB Secretariat at UNESCO HQs. Provincial/Regional MAB Committees will be formed. Pakistan will start the preparations for the 4th Lima Congress of Biosphere Reserves.

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) is an Intergovernmental Scientific Programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.

[Click here to read more](#)

Islamabad - 10 December 2015: UNESCO Islamabad and Pakistan Science Foundation/ National MAB Secretariat jointly organized 3rd Meeting of National MAB Committee of Pakistan at Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) Head Quarters. The meeting was chaired by

Mr. Fazal Abbas Mekan, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)/ Chairman National MAB Committee-Pakistan,

International Conference "Step towards Tsunami Resilience" takes place in Pakistan



Karachi - 28 November 2015: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Islamabad and Jakarta, NED University of Engineering and Technology (NED-UET) and OXFAM Pakistan, joined hands together, to commemorate 70 years of 1945 Markran Tsunami, to raise awareness among the public regarding natural disasters and their preparedness, with specific reference to Tsunami hazards.

The series of commemoration events included 2-Day workshop on Tsunami Inundation Modeling held at Department of Civil

Engineering, NED-UET on November 26-27, 2015, and "International Conference Steps towards Tsunami Resilience", held on November 28, 2015 at Marriott Hotel Karachi.

Officials and representatives of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Pakistan Navy, UNESCO, IOC, NED-UET, academia and research institutions in Pakistan attended the event.

[Click here to read more](#)

Natural and Social Sciences

Professor of Biotechnology and Bioethicist Zabta Khan Shinwari of Pakistan is awarded 2015 UNESCO Avicenna Prize

UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova on Wednesday awarded the 2015 UNESCO Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science to Pakistani Professor Zabta Khan Shinwari. The award ceremony was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in the presence of Mohammad Farhadi, Minister of Science, Research and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman, Minister of State for Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education of Pakistan.

"We need science that is founded on ethics and human rights," said the Director-General. "To move forward, we must combine progress with high standards of responsible research, with scientific integrity, with risk management for societies and nature. This calls for well-informed leaders and public opinion, where all are included in making decisions on vital issues for human life and for enlightened scientists and scientific educators, working and communicating in a transparent way" declared Ms Bokova, speaking at the Award ceremony.

Professor Shinwari said the Prize did not only honour him, "but all those throughout the world who work in the face of hostile environments, but never compromise on matters of principle. We cannot confront bioterrorism physically but through ethical education we can strive for the requisite character-building of our future generations, who will be the flag bearers for peace, security and tranquility."

The laureate went on to insist on the need for critical examination and open dialogue in science and said this implied tackling a wide range of ethical issues, notably eliminating gender inequalities.

The award to Professor Shinwari comes in recognition of his scientific and educational work in biotechnology, biosafety and biosecurity. It also rewards his contribution to advancing the social responsibility of science and his work to promote the participation of indigenous peoples and women in science, including his defense of the intellectual property rights of indigenous groups.

Professor Shinwari, Secretary-General of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences and Chair of the Biotechnology Department of the Quaid-i-Azam University of Islamabad, is a specialist in plant biotechnology and ethnobotany, the interaction between plants and humans.

The award includes the Gold Medal of Avicenna, a diploma, a financial award of US\$ 10,000 and an invitation to conduct an academic visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Established in 2002 by the Executive Board of UNESCO on the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UNESCO Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science is awarded every two years. The purpose of the Prize is to reward the activities of individuals and groups in the field of ethics in science. The Prize encourages ethical reflection on questions raised by scientific and technological advances. It is named after the Persian physician and philosopher known in Europe as Avicenna (980-1038CE), who developed a holistic approach towards an ethical behaviour of scientists.

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Communication and Information

UNESCO Afghanistan launches Mobile Application Development Training for Youth



Within the UNESCO Global YouthMobile Initiative, the project kicked off in Kabul, Afghanistan, to help build capacities of young Afghan graduates and University students to develop mobile based software solutions to resolve local issues.

With the support from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Office in Kabul, the project is implemented by TechNation, a Kabul-based technology firm, TechDera, a community technology center, in collaboration with TechWomen Afghanistan, a network of women in technology, and TechLabs, a software development house.

A Project Opening Ceremony was held in Nov 4, 2015 at TechNation headquarters, in Kabul, attended about 50 guests including 70% of female trainees. Speakers included Mr. Sayed Habibullah, UNESCO Programme Officer for Communication and Information, TechNation top management, program participants, partners and mentors.

Omar Mansoor Ansari, TechNation's President, introduced the program and discussed the importance of the program. "Mobile applications market is not only revolutionizing the software industry, but it also has a profound impact on the national economy, this program is a great learning opportunity addressing challenges arising from shortage of qualified mobile apps developers in Afghanistan." Ansari said.

[Click here to read more](#)

UNESCO attends the opening of Parvaz Film Festival in Tehran

On 15 December 2015, the Parvaz International Film Festival opened in Tehran. The purpose of this film festival was to raise public awareness on the issue of disability and to dispel negative stereotypes, myths, misconceptions and prejudices around people with disabilities.

This festival was being held following the [We Care International Festival](#) supported by UNESCO.

During the opening ceremony, Ms. Esther Kuisch Laroche, Director and Representative of UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office was honored by the organizers for her commitment to social integration of persons with disabilities in Iran. During her speech, Ms. Kuisch Laroche emphasized the importance of fully integrating the needs and experiences of people with disabilities in the design and implementation of all government policies, development programmes, social services and business models to ensure that women and men, and boys and girls with disabilities can reach their full potential.

At the end of her speech, the UNESCO Representative addressed the young disabled persons in the room, and said: "Disability is part of the human condition. All of us either are or will become disabled to one degree or another during the course of our lives. That's reality. So never let anyone discourage you. Never allow anyone to think of yourself as any less. Never give up on your dreams. It may require a little creativity to get there; it may require determination and you may well face a number of challenges, obstacles and barriers along your way. But you

can make it. And you can change the way people look at you or think of you, by making them focus on your abilities."

The Parvaz film festival ran from 15 to 17 December 2015 in the landmark Azadi Tower of Tehran.

For more information about the Festival please see: www.parvazfilmfestival.com.



Communication and Information

UNESCO organizes National Consultative Meeting on the Role of ICTs for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in Iran



The 5th of December 2015 marked the opening of a two-day “National Consultative Meeting on the Role of ICTs for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities” in Tehran. The meeting was jointly organized by UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and aimed to promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities and to encourage all stakeholders to take concrete measures for the empowerment of persons with disabilities through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

The Consultative Meeting was a national follow-up to UNESCO’s international conference in entitled “From Exclusion to Empowerment: The Role of Information and Communication Technologies for Persons with Disabilities” held earlier in 2014 in New Delhi, India, and aimed to examine the practical means of implementing the recommendations of the New Delhi Outcome Document in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It brought together a wide range of national stakeholders and beneficiaries who shared their knowledge, insights and practical experience during the two-day event.

Ms. Esther Kuisch Laroche, Director and Representative of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, said in her opening remarks: “This Meeting is an important first-step in contextualising the recommendations of the New Delhi Outcome Document, and I am very pleased to see that we have so many different stakeholders here today: from Government officials to NGOs, and from UN agencies to the private sector.” She added, “I believe there is an important need for dialogue on how to increase the choices and opportunities available to people with disabilities, how to improve their access to education, information and knowledge, and how to extend their capabilities, especially in poor and rural areas.”

The event was meant to promote further dialogues among key stakeholders involved in issues related to empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the Information and Communication Technologies, in order to lay the foundations for development of a National Plan of Action that will include practical recommendations on

specific actions for enhancing the role of ICTs in increasing access to education, public information, social services, and job opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

The discussions were enriched by contributions from two resource persons from UNESCO HQ in Paris who shared some of UNESCO’s guidelines and providing a global perspective to the discussions. Dr. Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, a Programme Specialist in the Communication and Information Sector in UNESCO Paris, introduced UNESCO’s “Guidelines for Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning using Open Solutions”; while Dr. Kenneth Eklindh, a former Head of the Section for Inclusion and Quality Learning Enhancement in the Education Sector, presented UNESCO’s “Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs and Assistive Technologies in Support of Inclusive Education”.

The two-day meeting was concluded by agreeing on a number of key steps and areas as the focus of the National Plan of Action, mainly including: to establish a National Advisory Council consisting of expert groups from key national partners to develop the draft National Plan of Action on using ICTs for Empowering Persons with Disabilities; design and conduct research and field studies on the role of ICTs and ATs (Assistive Technologies) in enhancing the quality of education for children and students with disabilities; organize educational webinars at national level with support and technical supervision of UNESCO, for empowering teacher educators of disability and rehabilitation universities, as well as the disabled athletes; promote, support and establish media networks for advocacy and awareness raising on the importance of social integration of the Persons with Disabilities; foster partnerships with the private sector aimed at inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and implementing accessibility standards; translate and promote the use of UNESCO’s Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities; create a dedicated portal to provide open, free and accessible information and knowledge for Persons with Disabilities.