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9.30 a.m. -12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m.-5.30 p.m.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Activities of the IFAP Council and its subsidiary bodies during the 2016-2020 period:

- (a) 15th Anniversary of IFAP
- (b) IFAP's contribution to the preparation of the 39C/5
- (c) Renewed vision and new commitments: IFAP's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
- (d) International Day for Universal Access to Information (28 September)
- (e) Future projects, initiatives and conferences

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Preamble

This document provides an overview of an IFAP proposal for the celebration of the first international day for Universal Access to Information. The document highlights the relevance of this day to IFAP's mandate, identifies a number of activities that could be used to commemorate the day and highlights their expected contributions to the SDGs, capacity-building of Member States and the implementation of UNESCO's programme. Consideration is also given to obtaining the financial and human resources necessary for the celebration of this day.

IFAP and the International Day for Universal Access to Information

At the 38th session of UNESCO's General Conference, Member States adopted a resolution proclaiming 28 September as a UNESCO International day for Universal Access to Information. This proposal was initially submitted to the 197th session of the Executive Board by Angola, Morocco and Nigeria. IFAP was instrumental in the negotiation process which resulted in the consensual adoption of this new UNESCO Day.

The adoption of this international day is well aligned with UNESCO's ongoing efforts to advance freedom of expression and the right to information. Furthermore, it gives additional visibility and impetus to IFAP's global actions aimed at ensuring universal access to information and knowledge. Access to information is essential to individual human rights and dignity and to laying the foundations for more inclusive, knowledge-based societies – goals that guide all of UNESCO's work in these areas. The adoption of this day also resonates with UNESCO's and IFAP's commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 16.10, on "public access to information and fundamental freedoms", which UNESCO is committed to support Member States in taking forward. The proposed Day would provide an opportunity for UNESCO to further promote its work on these issues – in ways that would complement existing work on World Press Freedom Day.

As an intergovernmental body and with an extensive global network of multi-stakeholder partners, IFAP with its six priority areas of information accessibility, information for development, information ethics, information literacy, information preservation multilingualism in cyberspace is uniquely placed to contribute and lead UNESCO's activities for the celebration of this day.

Leveraging Resources to Effectively Celebrate this Day

Leading the organization of this day, would require financial and human resources which are currently not provided for under the Approved Programme and Budget for 2016-2017 (38 C/5) and are beyond the scope of the IFAP Special Account and the IFAP Secretariat. It is imperative that adequate extra-budgetary resources and partnerships be mobilized

in order to give adequate visibility and effectively harness the potential of this day. IFAP recognizes the important contribution made by the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the importance of this day for the IPDC mandate. IFAP would therefore work closely with its sister intergovernmental programme in the planning and implementation of activities related to this day.

As a first step, all Council Members and countries with National IFAP Structures should seek to organize commemorative activities at the national, regional and/or international level. Similarly, IPDC Member States and projects being implemented under this programme could also organize special commemorative activities. Member States are also requested to consider providing financial contributions to the IFAP Special Account to support the organization of high visibility regional or international events.

Possible Activities for Commemorating this International Day

For the celebration of the first International Day for Universal Access to Information priority would be given to international and regional events organized at UNESCO Headquarters, in small island developing states (SIDS), developing countries and in Africa. These events could take the form of:

1. Convening discussion forums and debates where representatives of states, civil society, academia – including UNESCO Chairs, Institutes and Centers - media and information professionals, can discuss universal access to information in relation to the SDGs and the six IFAP strategic priorities.
2. Convening of experts meeting aimed at developing methodologies for monitoring and reporting on the development of indicators for assessing universal access to information. This work could, for example, be focused on SDG 16.10 which is concerned with public access to information. Potentially this could be a prelude to the launching of an annual monitoring report that could be presented each year on this day to monitor progress on the realization of universal access to information.
3. Organizing events for policy-makers which support awareness of various UNESCO standard setting instruments, guidelines as well as the outcomes of conferences and consultative processes related to universal access to information. These events could support the capacity of Member States to meet reporting requirements and integration of these standards into national policies and practices. By way of example, this work could focus on documents such as:
 - The Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace,
 - The Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage including in Digital Form,
 - The Code of Ethics for the Information Society Proposed by IFAP
 - UNESCO's Comprehensive Internet Related Study, Keystones to Foster Inclusive Knowledge Societies: Access to Information and Knowledge, Freedom of Expression, Privacy, and Ethics on a Global Internet.
4. Capacity building and visibility activities targeted to specific stakeholder groups – by way of example, young women and men, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities,

refugee - addressing thematic areas such as developing media and information literacy skills, accessing information on public services, organization of hackathons and other problem solving activities that contribute to development of skills to access and use information.

5. Field offices and UNESCO National Commissions could consider partnerships, inter-sectoral activities, and collaboration with UN Country Teams to raise awareness, catalyse or contribute to specific local activities such as:
 - Improving the development and implementation of policies on Freedom of Information,
 - Enhancing access to information for development – climate change adaptation, health, agriculture information required for the realization of the SDGs,
 - Access to Information and proactive disclosure of public information,
 - Development of policies that support open solutions (Open Data, Open Standards, Open Governments, Open Access) and which promote the development of information in the public domain,
 - Creating enabling environment to support the information needs of marginalized communities,
 - Promoting Universal Access to Information through the preservation of, and access to documentary heritage, including digital heritage and use of library and archives.

Expected Results for UNESCO

The celebration of this international day is expected to contribute to:

- Increased global awareness of this International Day and the vital role of universal access to information in the realization of international targets,
- Greater impetus to initiatives aimed at developing, reforming and implementing right to information laws and policies,
- Enhance understanding of the right to information and its complementary and enabling role in the realization of other human rights.
- Development of indicators, tools, mechanisms and reporting framework on access to information and its contribution to the SDGs e.g. SDG 16.10
- The development / strengthening of new and existing networks and partnerships.

Ensuring Visibility for this International Day

Visibility of this day could be enhanced through a comprehensive communication strategy that leverages UNESCO global media channels and networks. Specific visibility efforts could include:

- Promulgation of a message by the Director-General,
- The involvement of Goodwill Ambassadors, thought leaders and other high-visibility individuals who could serve as champions and promoters of this day,
- Development of a dedicated webpage which aggregates related content, social media, visual identity, press kits and other communication tools,
- Partners could be encouraged to optimize communications about the Day.

SUSTAINABILITY

The above as well as other innovative approaches linked to the celebration of 28 September should become a permanent feature of the IFAP Calendar. Accordingly, specific fund-raising and partnership building activities particularly aimed at enhancing the visibility and impact of this day could be developed.



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38 C

38 C/70

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PROCLAMATION OF 28 SEPTEMBER AS THE “INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION”

OUTLINE

Source : 197 EX/Decision 35

Background: This item was examined by the Executive Board at its 197th session at the request of Angola, Morocco and Nigeria. This request was accompanied by an explanatory note.

Purpose: The present document transmits to the General Conference the recommendation made by the Executive Board at its 197th session and contains in annex the explanatory note.

Decision required: Paragraph 2.

BACKGROUND

1. After having examined this item, the Executive Board recommended that the General Conference, at its 38th session adopt a resolution for the proclamation of 28 September as the “International Day for the Universal Access to Information”.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

2. In light of the above, the General Conference may wish to adopt the following draft resolution:

The General Conference,

Having examined document 38 C/70,

Recalling that the right to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression, as recognized by Resolution 59 of the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 1946, and defined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Also recalling that freedom of information is also central in the context of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which reaffirmed freedom of expression and universal access to information as cornerstones of inclusive knowledge societies,

Bearing in mind the efforts of UNESCO to highlight the relevance and importance of the right to information in the Brisbane Declaration on “Freedom of Information: the Right to Know” (2010), the Maputo Declaration on “Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People” (2008), and the Dakar Declaration on “Media and Good Governance”, among others,

Taking note of the declaration by the African Platform on Access to Information, adopted at the Pan-African Conference on Access to Information, organized by the Windhoek+20 Campaign on Access to Information in Africa in partnership with UNESCO, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, in Cape Town, South Africa, from 17 to 19 September, 2011,

Taking into account the fact that access to information is one of the main priorities of UNESCO’s activities,

Considering that several civil society organizations and government bodies in the world have adopted and currently celebrate 28 September as “International Right to Know Day”,

Taking note of the principles established in the declaration by the African Platform on Access to Information and recognizing that these principles can play a crucial role in development, democracy, equality and the delivery of public services,

1. *Decides* to proclaim 28 September of each year as the “International Day for the Universal Access to Information”;
2. *Invites* all Member States, United Nations system organizations, and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental

organizations and individuals, to celebrate the Day in a manner which each considers most appropriate and without financial implications for the regular budget of UNESCO;

3. *Requests* the Director-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the United Nations Secretary-General so that “International Day for the Universal Access to Information” may also be endorsed by the General Assembly.

ANNEX

EXPLANATORY NOTE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The universal right to information is essential for societies to function democratically and for the well-being of each individual. Freedom of information or the right to information is an integral part of the fundamental right to freedom of expression. It is established as a right in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1966, which stipulates that the fundamental right to freedom of expression encompasses the freedom “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.

2. Realizing the importance of the right to information worldwide – based on the declaration of the African Platform on Access to Information of September 2011, which enjoyed the participation of several governmental and parliamentary bodies, regional and international professional organizations and civil society partners – the Africa Group defends the initiative of the establishment, by UNESCO, of 28 September as “International Access to Information Day”.

II. JUSTIFICATION FOR AN INTERNATIONAL DAY DEDICATED TO THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

3. An open and transparent government is a fundamental component of a democratic and developed State. As stipulated by the declaration of the African Platform on Access to Information: “... access to information (ATI) is the right of all natural and legal persons, which consists of the right to seek, access and receive information from public bodies and private bodies performing a public function and the duty of the State to provide such information”.

4. Despite the fundamental importance of this right in the facilitation of all other rights and the creation of a fair and equitable society, there are still countries that do not have national legislation on access to information as a specific expression of the law.

5. People around the world are increasingly demanding greater civil participation in public affairs and seeking transparency. In this context, international law targeting an access to information day is necessary to promote the right to information. The establishment of a specific date provides a coherent message at the international level and facilitates coordination of joint initiatives on public awareness and elucidation by organizations in the coherence of a universally recognized day.

6. While the promotion of information and transparency is clearly an ongoing activity throughout the year, a day marked by collaboration is important for advocacy, thus giving a consolidated message on the need for greater access to information so as to raise public awareness.

III. DESIGNATION OF THE DATE OF 28 SEPTEMBER

7. The date of 28 September was chosen as a day to raise awareness on the importance of the right to information throughout the world. Since its establishment, the historical significance and the profound influence of the annual celebration have marked 28 September as one of the most important dates in the calendars of freedom of information advocates worldwide.

8. The day was originally proposed as the “Right to Know Day” in Sofia, Bulgaria, where a number of freedom of expression advocates from 15 countries gathered to promote the transparency and accountability of governments during a conference held from 26 to 28 September 2002. The countries participating at the event were Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, India, Latvia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa and the United States of America. The event led to the establishment of an international coalition of lawyers, known as the freedom of information lawyers network, which has agreed to undertake international initiatives to improve the standards of access to information worldwide. It was also agreed that the closing day of the conference, 28 September, should be designated as the Right to Know Day and celebrated as such each year.

9. The importance of this day in Africa was also officially recognized by Resolution 222 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights at its 50th ordinary session. The date of 28 September is currently vacant on the calendar of events of the United Nations and UNESCO.

IV. HOW THE CELEBRATION WILL TAKE PLACE

10. There is already a strong association of organizations currently working in the field of access to information. This strong association of organizations regularly coordinates series of activities on access to information. The proclamation of the Day will nonetheless draw greater attention to the issue of the right to information and its fundamental importance for human existence. The day will also give greater authority, visibility and acknowledgement to the issue of access to information and will make sure that it is taken more seriously by the stakeholders concerned, particularly national governments.

11. The date of 28 September is already marked by a series of activities, including conferences, workshops, marches, concerts, publications on access to information and petitions calling on governments to adopt and implement laws on access to information. These targeted and widespread activities, regularly held on an officially recognized day, will ensure that the day of 28 September is used to engage and educate citizens and public authorities as to the importance of access to information as a fundamental human right and also to take advantage of raising public awareness for its importance, particularly through access to information interventions through media literacy.