

39th Session of the General Conference

30 October - 14 November 2017

Welcome to the 39th Session of the General Conference

This guide contains information on the structure and work of the General Conference which we hope you will find useful.

Here you can find the maps of the venues where meetings are taking place.

The *Delegates' Information Bureau* is at your disposal for guidance and update on the work of the General Conference.

■ The 39th General Conference Website

All information concerning the official proceedings of the session, as well as side events, is or will be available on the Internet:

<http://www.unesco.org/en/general-conference>

You are welcome to visit the webpage of the General Conference every day to get updated information on the agenda, the schedule of the meetings, the special events and their location.

The Secretariat of the 39th session of the General Conference wishes you a fruitful and pleasant session.

What you need to know on arrival

The General Conference

Key dates during the General Conference

Documents and Information

Events during the General Conference

Practical Guide

Maps & Rooms

The 39th session of the General Conference is held at UNESCO Headquarters, in Paris, from **10 a.m.** on Monday **30 October** to **Tuesday, 14 November 2017**.

We recommend that you arrive in Paris before the opening of the session in order to accomplish the relevant formalities without rushing.

■ Registration

Registration for **Member States'** and **Associate Members' delegations** at the 39th session of the General Conference is available online. Each **Permanent Delegation** is kindly requested to register online all its members participating in the session, using the Permanent Delegation generic network account, at the following address: <https://en.unesco.org/general-conference/registration>

All members of national delegations have to be registered online to confirm their participation.

Badges will be delivered to participants at the **Delegates' Reception**, opposite **Room I** (Fontenoy building).

Staff of the Permanent Delegations will use their regular UNESCO badge.

NB: Badge must be shown at the entrances of all buildings and at security checks.

Observers from **intergovernmental** and **non-governmental organizations** and foundations are requested to register at the **IGO/NGO Reception** (Fontenoy building, Pavillon Suffren, 125, Avenue de Suffren).

■ Credentials

Credentials must be sent one week before the opening date of the session (**Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference**).

Delegations whose credentials have not been presented to the Director-General in advance, are requested to hand them directly to the **Secretariat of the Credentials Committee**, which is responsible for checking the credentials of all delegations (Office S-375; basement of the Conference building).

■ Information to Delegates

The **Delegates' Information Bureau** will provide information on the conduct of meetings (**Salle des Actes**) through:

- **Screens**

The daily schedule of meetings and information related to side events will be displayed on closed-circuit television screens.

- **MAG**

This magazine offers an overview of the special meetings and the side events taking place during the session. The **MAG** will be available online in English and French.

- **e-journal**

The **e-journal** of the General Conference, only available online, will provide a regularly updated overview of the work of the session. It will include the agenda of the proceedings of the day and report on the debates of the previous day. You will find updated information on the side events such as special meetings and official visits. <http://www.unesco.org/en/general-conference>

■ Basic Texts

Detailed information on the General Conference and its workings, in particular the [Constitution and Rules of Procedure](#), can be found in the **Basic Texts**, which are available, with other basic documents for the Conference, on request at the Document Distribution Service at the Mall.

■ Documents

To indicate which documents your delegation would like to receive during the General Conference (one copy in one language per delegation), all you need to do is fill in GC form 18 which can be obtained from the [Documents Distribution Service](#), in the *basement* of the [Conference Building](#). You will find your documents every day in your pigeonhole at the [Documents Distribution Service](#).

In each meeting room there will be a limited number of documents related to the work of the body which is using the room.

All UNESCO's General Conference documents are accessible on the Internet.

Two documents must be read: documents **39 C/1** (Agenda) and **39 C/2** (Organization of the work of the session), so that you can decide which commissions and meetings you will attend.

This also applies to the **e-journal** of the General Conference, which will be posted throughout the session and regularly updated.

■ Working languages

The working languages are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Simultaneous interpretation is provided in these **six** languages; all documents which require a decision by the General Conference are also published in these languages. Information documents (**39 C/INF**) and Reports (**39 C/REP**) are available in English and French only.

■ General policy debate (national statements)

Delegations are invited to address any question related to the general policy debate to [Ms Martha Milanzi Nguni](#) (Tel.: **80967**, Offices **C.029**).

■ Seating arrangements for delegates

In the plenary meeting rooms and in the commissions, one seat is allocated to Member States in French alphabetical order, starting with Angola as drawn by lot at the 201st session of the Executive Board. The number of seats per delegation varies according to the room. Places will be set aside for observers.

The **General Conference** meets every two years. The participants are all the Member States and Associate Members; non-Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other official partners are invited as observers.

The General Conference determines UNESCO's work, regular budget and policies by:

- **discussing** all issues concerning the general policy of the Organization;
- **adopting** a programme for the next four years and a budget for the next two years, the draft

of which is submitted to the General Conference after consultations between Member States and the Secretariat;

- **electing** the Members of the Executive Board for a four-year term (renewed by half at each session);
- **electing** the Director-General for a term of four years; and every eight years,
- **adopting** the Medium-Term Strategy of the Organization.

■ How the system works

The work of the General Conference is conducted in plenary sessions, commissions, committees and working groups, which sometimes meet simultaneously.

■ Plenary

The heads of delegation attend plenary sessions and take part in the general policy debate. All decisions of the General Conference are adopted in plenary.

■ Commissions and committees

At each session, the General Conference sets up such commissions and committees it deems necessary. It has been recommended that the General Conference establish six commissions at its 39th session.

Each commission consists of an elected bureau, which numbers a chairperson, four vice-chairpersons and a rapporteur assisted by a secretariat composed of UNESCO staff seconded to the commission for the duration of the session. The agendas of the commissions are organized around one of the main themes of UNESCO's programme:

ED Commission: Education (Room II)

SC Commission: Natural sciences and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (Room II)

SHS Commission: Social and human sciences (Room XI)

CLT Commission: Culture (Room II)

CI Commission: Communication (Room XII)

APX Commission: Finance, administration and general questions, programme support and external relations (Room XI)

In each debate, **delegations** normally only take the floor once. Delegates who have a **draft resolution (DR)** to present should, if possible, do so during their statement. Nevertheless, each commission can also decide to examine **DRs** at the end of the debate.

The **APX** will start work on Tuesday **31 October** at **10 a.m.**, followed by the other commissions.

The following four statutory committees are also established:

■ **The Credentials Committee (Room VIII)**, in charge of checking the credentials of participants, consists of **nine members** elected at the first plenary meeting of the General Conference on the proposal of the Temporary President.

■ **The Legal Committee (Room VI)**, responsible for considering draft amendments to the **Constitution or Rules of Procedure** of the General Conference, and legal matters that are submitted to it, consists of **24 members elected** by halves during the two previous sessions.

■ **The Nominations Committee (Room IV)** examines and submits to the General Conference proposals concerning the composition of commissions and committees and other bodies whose members must be elected by the General Conference (**Rules 34 and 35 of the Rules of Procedure**). It consists of the heads of all the delegations with voting rights at the General Conference.

■ **The Bureau** of the General Conference (**Room X**) steers and coordinates the work of commissions and committees. Its members are the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Conference and the chairpersons of the subsidiary organs. It sets the agenda of plenary meetings and examines requests for the inclusion of new items on the agenda. Each commission and committee chairperson reports regularly to the Bureau on the progress of its work.

■ Taking the floor

All the speakers responsible for national statements within the general policy debate must limit their statements to six minutes. Observers have three minutes.

Delegations are requested to send the text of their statements (both on paper and electronically) in advance to

Ms Martha Milanzi Nguni (tel.: **80967**, Office **C.029**; email: GPD@unesco.org).

The statements will be handed to the interpreters, and made available to the press.

In the commissions, the time limit on speeches is set by the chairperson. In order to take the floor in commission, please contact the secretariat of the commission before or during the meeting, but in any event before the list of speakers is closed. To be sure of accurate interpretation and a reliable report, it is useful to hand a copy of your text in advance to the secretary and to the rapporteur of the commission, even if it is not typed. The conference room clerks are at speakers' disposal to make photocopies.

Normally, speakers take the floor from their seats; however, during the **general policy debate** in **Room I** (national statements), heads of delegation speak from the rostrum.

■ Draft resolutions

A **draft resolution**, or **DR**, is a proposal submitted by one or more delegations with a view to having it adopted as a decision of the General Conference. Most DRs aim to modify guidelines laid down in the **draft programme** and **budget** and are examined initially in commission; some, concerning agenda items only scheduled to be examined in plenary, go directly to the plenary.

■ Voting procedures

Each Member State has one vote, unless its credentials have not been accepted as fully valid by the Credentials Committee or it has not satisfied the provisions of [paragraph 2 of Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure](#) concerning arrears in contributions.

Voting is conducted in one of three ways: by show of hands (the most common); by secret ballot (for elections); or by roll-call (in exceptional cases). To vote by show of hands, raise your country's nameplate.

Decisions are taken by a simple majority of members present and voting except in cases where a two-thirds majority is required, for instance for the admission of new members ([Rules 84 and 85 of the Rules of Procedure](#)).

Often, when there is general agreement, decisions are taken without a vote by consensus.

■ Elections

The Nominations Committee organizes many elections during the General Conference:

- **Bureau** of the General Conference, which takes place, on the proposal of the Executive Board, at the beginning of the plenary;
- **Members of the Executive Board**, in accordance with the distribution of Member States by electoral group (**Group I: 9 seats; Group II: 7 seats; Group III: 10 seats; Group IV: 12 seats; Group V: 20 seats**); candidacies must be transmitted to the Director-General if possible at least six weeks before the session and in any event at least 48 hours before the election;
- the **bureaux of the commissions and committees** of the General Conference;
- **intergovernmental committees and councils** associated with UNESCO's programme; and
- the **External Auditor** (appointment every six years).

The appointment of the Director-General takes place every four years during a special plenary meeting.

The dates of elections are shown in the timetable of work and reflected in the e-journal and in announcements displayed on screens.

The election of members of the Executive Board will take place on Wednesday, 8 November. A voting bureau is set up in Room V from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the day of the election; delegates may vote there at their convenience without any break in the discussions (see document 39 C/2). A special Plenary meeting will be convened during the afternoon to announce the results of the election.

The election of members of the International Bureau of Education and all other organs whose members are elected by the General Conference, as well as that of the External Auditor, will take place during a meeting of the Nominations Committee in the morning of Thursday, 9 November.

The appointment of the Director-General will take place on Friday, 10 November. The General Conference shall consider the nomination submitted by the Executive Board at a private meeting and shall then come to a decision by secret ballot.

The plenary meetings:

Monday, 30 October 10 a.m.

The General Conference begins with an opening ceremony in plenary, temporarily presided by the President elected at the previous session who proposes to the General Conference the **nine members** of the **Credentials Committee**, who meet on the same day, and the establishment of the **Nominations Committee**.

The General Conference then approves the agenda of its work, prepared by the Executive Board.

Monday, 30 October, 3 p.m.

The General Conference elects its President and Vice-Presidents, on the proposal of the **Nominations Committee**. The latter, consisting of all heads of delegation, will have met that morning to consider the Executive Board's recommendations on the issue. The **Credentials Committee** then submits its first report to plenary. Then, the Chairperson of the Executive Board will introduce the Report of the Director-General on the activities of the Organization in 2014-2015 (**39 C/3**) and the Reports by the Executive Board on its own activities (**39 C/9**).

Afterwards, the Director-General introduces the **general policy debate** by presenting the **draft programme** and **budget**. On that occasion she reviews UNESCO's actions since the last session of the General Conference (her statement is published in document **39 C/INF.2**). The general policy debate concludes with the Director-General's reply.

Tuesday, 31 October

The morning of Tuesday, 31 October will begin with the opening of the General Policy Debate in the form of the Leaders' Forum, with the participation of invited Heads of State and/or Government. The Forum will continue on the afternoon of 31 October and the morning of Wednesday 1 November.

Wednesday, 1 November pm

The fifth Plenary meeting will begin with consideration of the General Committee's recommendations on the organization of work (**39 C/2**). The National Statements part of the **general policy debate** will then begin and will continue until the morning of **Monday, 6 November**.

Monday, 6 November, 10 a.m.

Last Statements and reply by the Director-General to the general policy debate.

Saturday 11 - Tuesday 14 Novembre

The plenary resumes its work in order to consider and adopt the reports of the commissions presented by their chairpersons and the budget lines of UNESCO's major programme sectors. Once approved in plenary, the drafts prepared by the commissions become decisions (called

resolutions) of the General Conference.

A **Youth Forum** will be held on Wednesday, 25 and Thursday, 26 October. The report of the Forum will be an item on the agenda of the session. Details on the Forum are contained in Annex II to document 39 C/2

All the documents' names start with **39 C**, which corresponds to the 39th session of the General Conference. Many General Conference documents are often referred to by their number, symbol or series.

■ Documents

39 C/ (number): documents requiring a decision by the General Conference; they constitute the main series of documents.

39 C/1 Prov. Rev.: Revised provisional agenda of the session

39 C/2: Organization of work

39 C/3: Report by the Director-General on the activities of the Organization (2014-2015)

39 C/5: Draft Programme and Budget for 2018-2021

39 C/6: Recommendations by the Executive Board on the Draft Programme and Budget for 2018-2021

39 C/INF: documents bring information to the attention of the General Conference but do not require a decision :

39 C/INF.1: Invitation to the 39th session

39 C/INF.2: Opening of the general policy debate by the Director-General

39 C/REP: series of statutory reports to the General Conference by the international and intergovernmental committees and councils, organs of UNESCO Conventions and international or regional conferences organized by UNESCO.

39 C/NOM: documents containing information on the elections to be held by the General Conference (names of outgoing countries, number of seats to be filled, etc.)

39 C/DR: draft resolutions submitted by Member States.

■ Records

Pursuant to **186 EX/Decision 22(II)**, unrevised provisional verbatim records of the plenary proceedings will be posted online during the 39th session.

The recorded sound in the six working languages of all plenary meetings will be available on the General Conference website: <http://www.unesco.org/en/general-conference>, where it will be possible to listen live to plenaries. The recordings of all meetings are kept in the Organization's archives, where they may be consulted.

Other side-events and Information meetings

NB: The information below is indicative and should be checked during the session, especially at:
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/general-conference-side-events/>