



Working Group on the governance, procedures, and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO

TERMS OF REFERENCE

At its 38th session, the General Conference decided to establish an open-ended working group on governance, procedures and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO (38 C/Resolution 101), building on the recommendations of the Executive Board (197 EX/Decision 28 and 44).

At previous sessions (28th, 32nd, 34th) the General Conference established similar inter-sessional ad hoc working groups, which examined governance matters and made recommendations to improve the decision-making process of the Organization, the working methods of the governing bodies, and the relations between the three constitutional organs of UNESCO. The Working Group will thus reflect on such past experiences, while taking into account recent debates at the Executive Board and the Conference itself.

COMPOSITION

According to the terms of 38 C/Resolution 101 the Working Group will be open to the participation of all Member States. It will elect a Chairperson and six Vice-Chairpersons (one per Electoral Group).

PRINCIPLES

In accordance with 38 C/Resolution 101, there is a need for a holistic and comprehensive reform of UNESCO, particularly its governing bodies, in order to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency in governance and to improve strategic decision making in the Organization. Reform shall be Member State-driven and reaffirm the intergovernmental nature of UNESCO, pursuant to the mandate contained in its constitution. To this end, all Member States shall be requested to provide their views and proposals on governance, procedures and working methods. Governance reform should enable UNESCO to address, inter alia, strategic matters arising from the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

MANDATE

Pursuant to 38 C/Resolution 101, the Working Group will examine the governance, procedures and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO on the basis of the views and proposals received from Member States, the External Auditor's *Report on the Governance of UNESCO and dependent Funds, Programmes and entities*, relevant evaluations and audits by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS), as well as previous decisions and resolutions related to governance.

The open-ended Working Group on Governance will develop concrete follow-up proposals to be examined by the General Conference at its 39th session in the following areas:

1. Optimizing the efficiency of the decision-making process, procedures and working methods within the Governing Bodies of UNESCO.

The Working Group will also examine a document, prepared by the Secretariat, containing comparative data on the governance systems of other similar institutions of the United Nations system (structures, composition, length and frequency), together with any proposals put forward by Member States.

2. Follow up on the recommendations of the External Audit on the Governance, procedures and working methods of the governing bodies UNESCO, and relevant evaluations and audits by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS), as well as previous decisions and resolutions related to governance.

3. Relations between the General Conference, the Executive Board and the Secretariat of UNESCO.

On the basis of the results of previous working groups and past resolutions and decisions¹, the Working Group will examine the relations between the General Conference, the Executive Board and the Secretariat and make recommendations aiming at enhancing the roles and responsibilities of each of the three organs as defined by their respective constitutional mandates.

METHODS OF WORK, WORKING DOCUMENTS AND TIMETABLE

The Working Group may, if necessary, establish open-ended subgroups headed by the vice-presidents to meet regularly on designated thematic topics decided by the Working Group. The subgroups shall formulate non-binding recommendations to be prepared for the Working Group's consideration during its formal meetings.

The Working Group will also examine a document, prepared by the Secretariat, containing comparative data on the governance systems of other similar institutions of the United Nations system (structures, composition, length and frequency).

The Working Group on Governance will hold a minimum of four meetings during the period 2016-2017 in order to address the main topics of its mandate.

With a view to optimizing the cost-effectiveness of the organization of its meetings, it is proposed that these be organized next to other statutory meetings. Tentative dates could thus be identified at the following periods:

Second meeting:	01 April 2016
Third meeting:	October 2016
Fourth meeting:	February 2017
Fifth meeting:	April 2017
Sixth meeting:	June 2017

¹ 29 C/Resolution 87 (Structure and functioning of the General Conference)
33 C/Resolution 92 (Relations between the three organs of UNESCO);
35 C/Resolution 99 (Report by the President of the 34th session on the organization of the General Conference);
35 C/Resolution 100 (Relations between the three organs of UNESCO);
36 C/Resolution 104 (Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO);
186 EX/Decision 17 (I) (Recommendations of the Executive Board's Ad Hoc Working Group on the Independent External Evaluation of UNESCO).

Intergovernmental Committees and Programs shall be requested to submit views and recommendations by December 2016 if feasible. These shall be compiled and distributed to all Member States by the Secretariat.

OUTCOME

In line with Resolution 38 C/Res.101, the Working Group will aim at providing a set of recommendations, along with their likely impact and financial implications, to be examined by the General Conference at its 39th session. In accordance with the terms of 38 C/Resolution 101, these recommendations will be submitted to the Executive Board at its 202nd session, and will be transmitted by the Board - with its own comments - to the General Conference.