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Agenda item for discussion: GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION

INFORMATION NOTE

SUMMARY CONTENT OF DOCUMENT

This document presents the emergent Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education, an organizing framework for UNESCO's work in the area of journalism education. The Global Initiative was presented to the 58th IPDC Bureau which expressed encouragement and proposed that the Council consider whether to endorse the framework as one of IPDC Special Initiatives. It represents a scaling-up of the *Potential Centres of Excellence/Reference in Journalism Education in Africa* project which in turn was a Special Initiative of the IPDC that the Bureau concluded in 2013.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION

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1. BACKGROUND

This is an outline of the *Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education*, presented to the 58th IPDC Bureau in March 2014. It follows from the *Potential Centres of Excellence/Reference in Journalism Education in Africa* project which was concluded as a special initiative by the 57th IPDC Bureau. The *Potential Centres* project was the subject of an internal review. Its findings are available at:

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/review_centres_excellence_rev.pdf. This present initiative is an outcome of that study – representing a strategic upscaling of work under the *Potential*

Centres project, to provide an internationally recognised framework for implementing UNESCO's interventions in defining and promoting globally shared excellence in journalism education.

2. PURPOSE

The Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education has been developed with a view to UNESCO's strategic approach towards supporting journalism education in the 2014-2018 C4 planning period. It builds upon the recent past in which selected African journalism schools were recognised by UNESCO as potential centres of excellence or reference. Using the lessons of the past five years to promote globally shared excellence in journalism education, the Initiative seeks to place the success stories amongst the African centres at the heart of promoting international collegial discussion, definition and sharing of perspectives of excellence in teaching, research and professional outreach for schools of journalism. This aligns with UNESCO's Priority Africa, and it facilitates international sharing of good practices in journalism education.

As part of the Global Initiative, UNESCO has partnered with Orbicom – the Montreal-based network of UNESCO chairs in communication – to take forward the dialogue and debate. Conceived as a set of critical-thinking skills and practices, journalism education has potential to raise awareness of contemporary development challenges and the role of the world's journalism schools in it, thereby helping to produce questioning, independent and internationally-informed journalism graduates worldwide who, through their journalistic outputs, can disseminate quality knowledge for peace, development and democracy.

As a key part of this global strategy, this unfolding new phase will see UNESCO supporting African schools of journalism to become more integrated, as a dynamic force, into the global mainstream of journalism education such as through strategic partnerships facilitated by the Organization's convening power. As a first step, UNESCO and Orbicom have invited the 12 African centres which took part in the review to become founding members of the Global Initiative. More specifically, through this initiative, UNESCO, notwithstanding its financial constraints, will aim to:

- **Provide** opportunities and advice where journalism schools, especially African schools, seek to establish a UNESCO chair in a particular specialisation where they are on course to excel (e.g. Entrepreneurial Journalism, Science Journalism, etc.).
- **Expand** access to other schools of journalism in the network by encouraging and actively supporting participation in key international networks of journalism educators (Orbicom, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication [AEJMC], etc.).
- **Support** efforts to access the funding grants that are decided by the Bureau of UNESCO's IPDC.
- **Facilitate** with funding partners active participation in national/regional/international conferences such as the World Journalism Education Congress [WJEC]).
- **Encourage** institutions to contribute to and actively use UNESCO-commissioned curricula resources, including specialized syllabi such as those recently published and available on our website.
- **Invite** schools to participate in research into and discussions of media development data related to the IPDC-endorsed Knowledge-Driven Media Development initiative as well as other similar activities within UNESCO and its partner organisations.

3. ACTIVITIES

Several programmatic activities are envisaged and being implemented. For example:

- Under this initiative, UNESCO will take advantage of the International Institute for Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting (IIDCSR) – a UNESCO Category 2 institute at Oregon

University in the USA – to collaborate with the latter’s “Global Oregon initiatives”, which will include supporting work started by the University of Ghana and Oregon University’s School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC) to set up a center in Gabon dedicated to initiating and sharing educational resources and research outputs in conflict-sensitive journalism. Through collaboration with the category 2 institute, UNESCO also envisages to better collaborate with SOJC’s efforts in producing a series of documentaries based on World Press Freedom Day experiences globally. Such documentaries are useful resources for students and also provide training ground for them. In addition, UNESCO, through this Global Initiative, will further liaise with SOJC in its capacity as the North American bureau of the European Journalism Observatory (EJO) to reach out to more European journalism educators (to join with other regions) as key experts for UNESCO’s efforts to develop specialized syllabi on emerging issues in journalistic teaching, practice and research. Similar partnerships with the European Journalism Training Association are envisaged as a possible source of information and collaboration.

- Through this Initiative, greater partnerships will be sought to support the production of new, and possible translation of existing, UNESCO specialized journalism syllabi. To this end, UNESCO, through its Beijing office, has initiated discussions with the Communication University of China (CUC) to use its “International League of Higher Education in Media and Communication” – set up in 2009 with a membership of 58 universities from 23 countries – to facilitate greater cooperation in support of specialized journalistic literacies. Through the Global Initiative, UNESCO could work with the International League as an important platform for promoting greater teaching, research and professional synergies between Chinese schools of journalism and those in developing countries, especially in Africa and Latin America. As a key part of this cooperation, CUC has already agreed to translate UNESCO’s *Model Curricula for Journalism Education: A Compendium of New Syllabi* into Chinese, following which it will organize a workshop to discuss how best to adapt the specialized syllabi within China.
- The Global Initiative could become a key and permanent feature of Orbicom’s annual review meetings, providing a forum for greater international discussion of and collaboration on projects of pedagogical value for the members of the network. To this end, an inaugural meeting is scheduled in Bordeaux for November this year to encourage greater and more structured educational cooperation between African schools of journalism and their counterparts from Latin America, North America (including Canada), Europe and other parts of the world.
- Discussions are under way with Canada’s Carleton University’s School of Journalism and Communication which could result in UNESCO supporting efforts by that university to design an international competition that recognizes achievements in journalism teaching and curriculum development. As part of that process, the university is seeking to cooperate with the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO in administering the contest. In this way, Carleton has an opportunity to position itself at the global centre of innovation in journalism curricula, linked to the UNESCO brand. In building a relationship with the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO, Carleton could increase the appeal of the educational contest.

4. PROMOTION

Although the Initiative is still in its early stages, UNESCO will continue to shape it in the most cost-effective and efficient manner that will better respond to the institutional needs of its participants. Consultations have included (i) discussions with African schools of journalism; (ii) public lectures in Paris under the *Public Lecture* series of the CI Sector; and (iii) presentations during the 1st edition of the World Journalism Education Congress (WJEC) in Mechelen, Belgium, and during the International Communication Division (ICD) Business Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) in Washington, DC, USA.

Further promotion of the Initiative has involved engagement with journalism educators during the Colloquium on Communication and Social Change in Africa, held from 10 to 12 April 2014 in Douala, Cameroon. The Initiative will have also been an important item during the upcoming French Conférence Nationale des métiers

du Journalisme (CNMJ), scheduled for 2 and 3 October 2014 at the UNESCO HQ in Paris, bringing together European journalism educators and media professionals. Furthermore, at Orbicom's annual meeting, scheduled for 6 to 7 November in Bordeaux, France, the Initiative will have provided a forum for exchange between key African journalism educators and their counterparts from Latin America and other parts of the world.

5. CONCLUSION

IPDC has a powerful track record of supporting journalism education, and the proposed Global Initiative provides a holistic framework within which all related activities can be conceptualised and interlinked. There is no financial obligation on the part of the IPDC Bureau/Council. Symbolic support by the Council of this initiative will enhance this trajectory of work, and periodic reporting on it. Such recognition will also assist in mobilising the kinds of international partnerships envisaged to carry out the work of the initiative. This includes providing a coherent programmatic framework for regional and inter-regional project proposals for IPDC Bureau's consideration, and focus these on defining and promoting globally shared excellence in journalism education.

6. COUNCIL ACTION

The Council, having discussed this document and any amendments, may wish to:

- *Endorse* the Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education as a Special Initiative within the IPDC.