

## **Sub-Group 2 on “Structure, composition and methods of work of UNESCO’s International and Intergovernmental Bodies”**

### **Informal Summary** **28 February 2017**

#### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The Co-Chairs opened the meeting and recalled 38 C/Resolution 101, which stressed the need to harness opportunities for greater synergy, harmonization, efficiency and impact, taking into account the mandates of the various intergovernmental programmes, committees and conventions. The Terms of Reference of the Working Group emphasized that comprehensive Member State-driven reform was required to improve governance and strategic decision-making in UNESCO, including in relation to Agenda 2030. The Co-Chairs noted one of the reasons for the creation of the Working Group was in response to the report of the External Auditor. While Member States did not agree with most of its recommendations, some of the analyses could still be relevant.

The Co-Chairs informed that the meeting, originally scheduled in January 2017, was postponed following a decision of the Bureau to give more time for the translation of documents into the two working languages, since most bodies submitted responses only in English. The Co-Chairs stated the initial draft agenda and programme of work were amended, following requests of delegations during consultations with all Electoral Groups. Examining the International and Intergovernmental Bodies (IIBs) by their function and type would lead to a more coherent and streamlined approach. The draft agenda was adopted.

#### **2. Programme of Work**

The Co-Chairs presented the schedule of meetings of the Sub-Group. During each meeting, a different group of IIBs would be considered: First, the intergovernmental councils and committees, then the conventions, followed by the international programmes, expert bodies, and category I institutes. Items 3f, 3g and 3h would be examined during the meeting on 31 March. They noted the request of the Social and Human Science Sector, and suggested that items 7d and 7e be taken up in conjunction with item 3e. The programme of work was adopted.

The Co-Chairs explained the “tools” they prepared to facilitate discussions. They thanked delegations that helped compile the Co-Chairs’ matrix based on the responses of the IIBs, which allowed for easier comparison between relevant IIBs. Also, the Co-Chairs’ Note listed cross-cutting issues identified during the General Debate of the Working Group held in April 2016; namely, efficiency; harmonization; alignment with C/5 and overarching priorities of UNESCO; coherence and synergies; and best practices and cost reductions. Delegates were encouraged to focus on these themes. Due to limited time, there would be one round of interventions per sub-item of the agenda. Representatives of the Secretariats of the IIBs would be present in the room to respond to any questions. The Co-Chairs would give a brief introduction before opening the floor on each sub-item.

One Member State requested that the meeting foreseen for 9 May 2017 be re-scheduled. The Co-Chairs replied the Bureau and Secretariat would consult on the matter, noting many other meetings were taking place during the same period.

Some Member States took the floor to make brief general statements. They recognized the work conducted by the Co-Chairs. Intensive consultations with all Electoral groups and preparation of the very practical matrixes were useful references for discussions. Delegates recalled the need to address inconsistencies, increase transparency, and reduce overlap, stemming from paragraph 5 of 38 C/Resolution 101. Some noted the process could be viewed as a stock-taking exercise and the overall goal was to improve the coherence of the “UNESCO Universe.” The importance of ensuring that mandates and work of the IIBs remain in line with the C/5 was highlighted. Good practices should also be identified and shared across the system.

### **3. Intergovernmental Councils and Committees – natural sciences and social and human sciences (items 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 7d and 7e of the Agenda)**

The Co-Chairs shared their preliminary analysis of inputs compiled in the matrix, identifying areas in which harmonization among the intergovernmental councils and committees could be considered. These included updating of mandates, composition (“right-sizing”), the role of experts, working methods, role and composition of Bureaus, decision-making procedures, frequency of meetings, and use of languages. An imbalance in terms of resources and budgets was also observed.

In their comments on the co-Chairs’ matrix, many Member States stressed the importance of closer alignment of the IIBs with the C/5, C/4 and the 2030 Agenda. More involvement of the IIBs in the preparation and implementation of the C/5, and regular reporting of their inputs and results to the General Conference were suggested. IIBs could be given the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire for the draft C/5. It was pointed out that the General Conference only took note of the reports of IIBs. Reporting to the General Conference could be enhanced to include a strategic results framework. Some suggested that each body could develop an action plan to ensure closer alignment. One Member State proposed that the General Conference conduct performance evaluations of the IIBs. Member States needed to exert greater ownership and IIBs more accountability.

Some Member States suggested that relevant recommendations of Sub-Group 1 should be applied to the IIBs, such as better documentation, annotated agendas, open-ended informal consultations on draft decisions, and minutes of Bureau meetings. Member States strongly emphasized the intergovernmental nature of the IIBs. At the same time, the role of experts remained valuable. Hence, it was important to ensure high quality of expertise in the IIBs.

Equitable geographical representation and inclusiveness remained very important principles. In this regard, limits should be set for mandates of members on IIBs: two consecutive terms, as a general rule. According to some delegates, the six UN languages should be used as much as possible. The option to decrease the overall number of IIBs and languages used in meetings was also raised by one Member State.

Member States addressed the role, composition and procedures of the Bureaus of the IIBs. It was noted there was no harmonization across the IIBs. Compared to other UN entities, Bureaus often made strategic decisions, including on use of funds. In terms of composition, some IIBs' Bureaus had intergovernmental representation, while others had experts, or a mix of the two. In terms of harmonization, respect for the intergovernmental nature of IIBs, equitable geographic representation, and transparency were called for.

Some delegates suggested that increased competence-building for new members of IIBs be conducted. A general governance code could also be prepared for the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference. Moreover, enhanced use of web documents, digital working methods, web-streaming, and template for all agendas with user-friendly hyperlinks, was suggested.

The Co-Chairs summarized the discussion on the co-Chairs' matrix for intergovernmental councils and committees into eight areas:

1. Desire for a more integrated, aligned and united system (possible synchronization in terms of preparation of C/5, review of C/4, calendar, reporting, capacity-building)
2. Reinforcement of intergovernmental nature of IIBs (issues: selection of experts, conflicts of interest)
3. Updating of mandates (vis-à-vis 2030 Agenda, international developments)
4. General term-limits to promote diversity and inclusiveness
5. Review of role, composition and procedures of Bureaus
6. Efficiency (best practices in working methods, strategies/action plans)
7. Transparency, accountability and visibility
8. Dialogue between Member States, IIBs, and Secretariat

The Sub-Group started consideration of individual Intergovernmental Councils and Committees. The Co-Chairs highlighted common issues that could be addressed, such as:

- Composition
- Geographical balance
- Term limits
- Periodicity of sessions
- Languages
- Linkages with C/5, C/4, C/3 and 2030 Agenda
- How the Programmes interact with other UNESCO or UN or international entities
- How different components work together (Advisory Committee, Bureau, Council, etc.)
- Information dissemination mechanisms

#### **a. International Hydrographical Programme (IHP) Intergovernmental Council**

After the Co-Chairs' introduction, some Member States stressed that IHP was the only intergovernmental programme in its field. It was noted during the debate that current composition of the Bureau could be modified to reflect intergovernmental nature of IHP. Previous comments on the role and procedures of the Bureau also applied. In addition, there were no limits for re-election. The use of languages was an issue for reflection. It was likewise noted that documents were often available in English only.

While use of IT was praised, delegates stated it could not replace intergovernmental decision-making processes. It was recommended that venue of meetings of the Council be kept at UNESCO's Headquarters. Moreover, the practice of discussing and approving resolutions immediately after the debate on each item (and not at the end of the session) was encouraged. The possibility of the Council meeting every two years and having a dialogue mechanism between the sessions (e.g. MAB's International Support Group) was raised. Lack of communication between Field Offices and Headquarters on sharing results and reporting to Member States in connection with IHP's operational activities was mentioned.

The IHP Secretary confirmed that the programmatic cycle of IHP was adapted to the C/5 to ensure alignment in programmes and priorities. Members of IHP, as well as large network of Chairs in the field of water, Category II Centres, and other partners contributed to the C/5. In reply to questions on the Drafting Committee, she explained it was composed of two Member States and one member of the Bureau, and its task was to ensure proposed draft decisions were in full alignment with the C/4 and C/5, as well as UNESCO's rules and procedures.

For some Member States, IHP had several good practices:

- Public availability of Bureau meetings minutes (on the internet), which are action-oriented
- Good preparation of meetings thanks to informal consultation to facilitate decision-making process.
- The use of social media and ITs.
- Mechanism for introduction of Draft Resolutions with the Drafting Committee.
- Video on the functioning of IHP for new members.
- [Outgoing Chair representing his/her region as Vice-Chair ex-officio in Bureau.]

#### **b. Man and Biosphere International Coordinating Council (MAB-ICC)**

Some Member States expressed general satisfaction with the functioning of the MAB-ICC. The relationship between its Bureau and the Council was raised, emphasizing need to ensure greater decision-making power of the latter. Enhancing communication and dialogue between the Council and the International Advisory Committee was suggested to strengthen implementation of decisions at the national level. Practices in other UNESCO IIBs could be studied in this regard.

Limitation to two consecutive mandates in the Council and its Bureau was recommended. All Bureau members should likewise be from countries who remain on the Council. It was suggested that decisions be better highlighted in reports and possibility of preparing separate draft decisions in advance for each item be considered (as done in other IIBs). Moreover, some advocated for having meetings in six languages of the Organization. Finally, Member States recognised the importance of further enhancing the visibility of the programme.

One delegation asked whether instead of holding a meeting, the information discussed at the International Support Group could just be disseminated on the web. The possibility of the Council meeting every two years was also mentioned as a means to reduce costs.

Some delegates noted the following as good practices:

- efforts to align with the C/4 and C/5
- International Support Group
- Strategic planning, including the good use of regional networks

The MAB Secretary highlighted the effective functioning of regional networks. He stated there was cooperation between the MAB programme, Global Geoparks, and the World Heritage Centre, which was reflected in the Lima Action Plan. He clarified that the Bureau had no decision-making power and that minutes of Bureau meetings could be shared regularly on the MAB website. He also reassured that efforts would be put in promoting appropriate dialogue between different organs of MAB.

#### **c. Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme Intergovernmental Council**

A number of delegates recognized the importance of the MOST Programme. During the debate, it was noted that composition of the MOST Bureau differed from other IIBs (eight as opposed to six in general). Moreover, it would be beneficial to receive minutes of Bureau meetings. Some expressed preference for meetings to always be held at UNESCO Headquarters. It was suggested that cooperation with MAB and IFAP be enhanced. Member States inquired about revision of the MOST Statutes and consideration of proposed amendments.

Some delegates noted the following as best practices:

- Elections of the Bureau take place immediately after the General Conference, before the meeting of the Council
- Comprehensive MOST Strategy (to be further aligned with the new C/5)
- Participation of observers in last Bureau meeting
- Close work between Bureau and the Council

MOST's Secretary informed that the new MOST Strategy was adopted at the 199<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board. The MOST Action Plan will be discussed by the Council at its next session in Malaysia. The Council mandated its Bureau to prepare revisions to the Statutes. The Bureau's Working Group prepared a report which shall be considered by the Council also in Kuala Lumpur, taking into account discussions in the Working Group on Governance. Thereafter, revisions to the Statutes needed to be considered by the General Conference.

#### **d. Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS)**

Only two Member States took the floor, calling for greater synergies with the Education Sector to avoid duplication. It was noted that CIGEPS makes good use of consultations among Members between sessions, benefiting from their expertise. This practice could be done by other Bodies.

#### **e. Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC), International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)**

It was noted that the three entities and Secretariat have been active in looking for improvements to governance, such as having joint meetings. It was pointed out that together, IGBC and IBC have 72 members, which may be excessive for a rather limited mandate. Some delegates supported having a code of conduct/ signing of declarations of public interest of experts. One delegate deemed that annual meetings were necessary to ensure in-depth discussions and responsiveness. Possibility of adjusting mandates of the three bodies in a holistic manner, and examining existing UNESCO models of expert bodies reporting to intergovernmental bodies was suggested.

Some delegations noted the following best practices:

- Joint meetings that build synergies and reduce costs
- Management of agenda of joint meetings to leave time for discussions
- Joint meetings between Chairs

The IGBC/IBC/COMEST Secretariat expressed the opinion that, even if the C/4 and C/5 are not mentioned directly in these bodies' documents, the bioethics programme is discussed at the General Conference, hence aligning it with the programmatic document of UNESCO. Notions such as laboratory of ideas, policy advice, as well as flagging emerging issues are linked with UNESCO's targets and objectives. Concerning the public declaration of interest, there was no consensus after an intense debate related to the issue of sovereignty. Widening the mandate of IGBC would require careful consideration, as it was created under the statutes of the IBC and had a very specific mandate.

#### **4. Headquarters Committee (item 4 of the Agenda)**

Three Member States took the floor and noted the positive evolution of the Headquarters Committee, especially concerning transparency between Member States and the Secretariat, and responsiveness to requests made by Member States. Nevertheless, non-Members of the Committee should be better informed about decisions of the Committee before implementation.

#### **5. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) (item 5 the Agenda)**

Delegates noted the IOC's special functional autonomy and generally inclusive and efficient working methods. Clearly defined procedures, high quality of documents especially the Action Paper, open-ended sessional and inter-sessional Working Groups, detailed tasks for each Vice-Chair with dedicated staff support, were all worth highlighting.

One area for improvement was balance between the two working languages, especially for availability of technical documents in French. In addition, term limits for the Executive Council was suggested to avoid having "permanent members." It was also recommended that Bureau meetings be open to observers. A question was raised on composition of the Bureau and Electoral Groups in IOC, which differed from the six electoral groups in UNESCO.

The following were put forward as best practices by delegations which took the floor:

- Action paper which outlines key issues and expectations
- Annotated agenda

- Use of information and technology (i.e., all resolutions are immediately placed online, as well as amendments in a timely manner)
- Priority-setting exercise
- Extensive cooperation with other international organizations
- Information meetings to communicate regularly with Member States
- [Former Chair is ex-officio a member of the Bureau to ensure continuity]

IOC's Executive Secretary took note of and appreciated all comments. He stated that he would bring back Member States' feedback to the IOC Chair and Governing Bodies, especially regarding translation. He explained that electoral groups in IOC were based on the oceans. IOC has not received any proposal to divide its Group V for the moment.

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The Head of the GBS Secretariat provided additional elements on the eight areas identified by the Co-Chairs. Concerning terms limits, rotation was desirable but should go hand-in-hand with better mobilisation for participation since during elections at the General Conference some seats remain vacant. This was the case at the 38<sup>th</sup> session for LEG, UIS, MOST and the Headquarters Committee. The use of six official working languages is normally statutory according to the General Conference's rules of procedures. However, since the current exercise aims to reduce overall governance costs, cost-effective measures should be opted for to the extent of possible.

The change in periodicity of meetings would be possible only if conference and interpretation services are able to accommodate an increased schedule. With regard to the C/4 and C/5 documents, the IIBs are mentioned in the latter but could gain more visibility probably with a specific section in the biennial C/3 (DG report on activities). Finally, "one size does not fit all" when also taking into account the various mandates of the IIBs.

The Co-Chairs thanked the Secretariat for its views and emphasized the need to strike a balance between the specificities of the IIBs on the one hand, and the call of Member States for a more integrated, effective and coherent system of governance on the other. They also expressed appreciation to all delegates for the rich discussions and stated that an informal summary would be prepared and distributed in due course. The meeting was adjourned.

**Participants: 82** Member States and one intergovernmental organization