



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The Director-General

To all Permanent Delegates and
Observers to UNESCO

Ref : DG/17/2119

10 3 MAR 2017

Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to inform you that a Policy on Access to Information for UNESCO has come into effect.

The Policy follows extensive consultation within UNESCO, as well as broad research and communication with sister Organizations within the United Nations system, who already have adopted similar systems. In particular, it draws on various inter-agency practices, notably those of UNDP and UNEP; the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling (ST/SGB/2007/6); and, the 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

Momentum towards increased information accessibility is already underway with our Transparency Portal. With this additional step, UNESCO now brings together and formalizes various existing modalities for information access across the Organization, and integrates them into a single reference document. It also creates an Access to Information Panel, which will assist me in monitoring implementation, and that will consider and review appeals relating to any request for information that may be denied under this new policy.

This initiative is beneficial to UNESCO in several ways. It brings the Organization within the ambit of a growing trend in the UN system. In addition, it follows the adoption, by the 38th Session of the General Conference, of a Resolution proclaiming an International Day of Universal Access to Information, as well as the General Conference endorsement of the concept of Internet Universality, which includes the principle of Openness. Finally, this initiative aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 16.10, which highlights the importance of public access to information to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and for which the UN Statistical Commission has designated UNESCO as custodian agency.

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The Policy will benefit UNESCO's work through enhanced transparency, in the belief that this can enable greater accountability, strengthen our reputation, and increase stakeholder participation. In addition, the Policy serves to address requests for an information disclosure policy, as discussed in a number of bilateral encounters with Member States and civil society groups. Further, the adoption of the Policy enables UNESCO to respond positively to a survey by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, who is compiling a report on progress within the UN system concerning access to information policies.

Comments on this Policy may be submitted throughout the following 12 months of implementation, that is until 28 February 2018, at the following e-mail address: Access-to-Information@unesco.org. They will be considered in terms of possible revisions to the Policy after this period.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "I".

Irina Bokova