

H.E. Mrs Zohour Alaoui  
President of the General  
Conference of UNESCO

5 September 2019

Ref.: SHS/BIO/2019/047

Your Excellency,

Referring to your letter (ref. GBS/SCG/18/045-C) of 22 November 2018, I'm pleased to report that efforts have been made by the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), with the support of the Secretariat, to ensure effective follow-up to the recommendations of the open-ended Working Group on governance, procedures and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO, as relevant to the mandate, function and context of COMEST.

In this regard, a detailed analysis of the implementation status of the recommendations was prepared by the Secretariat and transmitted to COMEST Members for further written feedback and suggestions in January 2019. The results of this written consultation provided a basis for further discussion during the 11<sup>th</sup> (Ordinary) Session of COMEST in July 2019. From that discussion, recommendations 56 to 58, 60 to 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78 to 81, and 86(a) were deemed to have been implemented. For recommendation 61, COMEST will further discuss with the IBC to explore how to further enhance the visibility and dissemination of the advisory bodies' work. Recommendations 71 and 74 were deemed as ongoing and are expected to be implemented by the end of 2020. Recommendations 65, 68 and 77 were also considered non applicable in the context of COMEST. Finally, COMEST felt that further reflection is needed on recommendations 59 and 86(b). In this regard, members stressed that the workload of the Commission has increased significantly over the last few years, and the Commission's size should not be reduced as this will adversely impact its ability to meet the increased workload.

I'm attaching in Annex 1 the detailed analysis of the implementation status of each recommendations for COMEST, together with the outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> (Ordinary) Session of COMEST whenever appropriate.

I look forward to presenting the status of COMEST's implementation of the governance recommendations during the meeting on 30 September 2019.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



**Peter-Paul Verbeek**  
Chairperson of COMEST

Encl. 1

**ANNEX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON GOVERNANCE, PROCEDURES AND WORKING METHODS OF THE GOVERNING BODIES OF UNESCO**

**PART 2. STRUCTURE, COMPOSITION AND METHODS OF WORK OF UNESCO’S INTERNATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES (IIBS)**

**ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION STATUS FOR THE WORLD COMMISSION ON THE ETHICS OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY (COMEST)**

General Recommendations for all International and Intergovernmental Bodies	Implementation status	Responses from COMEST Members
<b>Efficiency (mandate, composition, structure, rules of procedure, methods of work)</b>		
<p>56. IIBs are invited to update their mandates, as appropriate, including their objectives and programs to be more coherent with approved C/5 priorities and responsive to current global developments, such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p>The mandate of COMEST as outlined in <b>Article 2</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Article 2</b> The Commission shall be responsible for advising the Organization on its programme concerning the ethics of scientific knowledge and technology. It shall also be mandated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to be an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience;</li> <li>• to detect on that basis the early signs of risk situations;</li> <li>• to perform the role of adviser to decision-makers in this respect; and, lastly,</li> <li>• to promote dialogue between scientific communities, decision-makers and the public at large.</li> </ul> <p>The mandate of COMEST is also aligned with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">UNESCO’s Medium Term Strategy for 2014-2021</a> (37 C/4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategic Objective 6:</b> Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- [UNESCO's Programme and Budget for 2018-2019](#)  
(39 C/5)
  - **Major Programme III, MLA 1:** Mobilizing knowledge and embedding rights and ethics to foster and achieve social inclusion and equitable societies
    - **ER 1:** Public policy-making in Member States strengthened, based on scientific evidence, humanities-based knowledge, ethics and human rights frameworks
    - **ER 2:** National institutional and human capacities strengthened at all levels to generate, manage and apply knowledge for inclusive, equitable development that is based on ethical values and human rights
  - **Major Programme III, MLA 2:** Fostering intercultural dialogue and engaging young women and men for peaceful and participatory societies
    - **ER 4:** Member States' commitments to the global agendas in favor of inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies demonstrated through targeted advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives

Furthermore, as indicated in the 39 C/5, the work related to promoting ethical norms and standards has also been linked to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, specifically SDGs 3, 5, 13, 16 and 17.

**Observation:** The mandate of COMEST provides the necessary flexibility for the Commission to examine and address emerging issues related to ethics of scientific knowledge and technology, taking into consideration developing situations and priorities at the international level.

<p>57. To promote diversity and inclusivity, voluntary term-limits of two consecutive mandates are recommended for IIBs which currently do not have term limitations for membership.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Article 3.2</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Article 3</b> 3.2 The members shall be appointed for a four-year term, renewable once. (...)</p>	
<p>58. As a general rule, term-limits of two consecutive mandates for membership in all Bureaus are recommended.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Rule 9.2</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Rule 9 - Elections</b> 9.2 The Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur shall be immediately eligible for re-election only once.</p>	
<p>59. For cost-saving, coherence and harmonization, it is recommended that IIBs and the General Conference consider “right-sizing” the composition of the IIBs.</p>	<p><b>UNDER CONSIDERATION</b></p> <p><b>Article 3.1</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Article 3</b> 3.1 The Commission shall be composed of 18 members, appointed by the Director-General following consultation with the National Commissions and Academies of Science of the Member States, and serving in a personal capacity. It shall have an open-ended structure and may bring in specialists on specific subjects.</p> <p>Furthermore <b>Article 3.5</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a> also states that:</p> <p><b>Article 3</b> 3.5 The Presidents of UNESCO’s five intergovernmental scientific programmes (IOC, MAB, MOST, IGCP and IHP), of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and the Intergovernmental Committee, and those of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences (ICPHS), the International Council of Social Sciences (ICSS), the International Council of Scientific</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of COMEST:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members expressed satisfaction with the Commission’s current size.</li> <li>• The workload of COMEST has also increased significantly over the last few years, and the Commission’s size should not be reduced as this will adversely impact its ability to meet the increased workload.</li> <li>• The Commission and the Secretariat would require more time to reflect whether further action is needed on this recommendation.</li> </ul>

	<p>Unions (ICSU) and the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs shall be invited to participate in the work of the Commission.</p>	
<p>60. There is a need to reduce and manage politicization of nominations and decisions.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMEST is an independent advisory body, composed of members acting in their personal capacity. In accordance with <b>Article 2</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a>, COMEST produces advice and recommendations using a multicultural and multidisciplinary approach, building on the expertise and perspectives of its members.</li> <li>• In practice, the Commission has always adopted its advice and recommendations by consensus based on technical and ethical considerations.</li> </ul>	
<p>61. To enhance visibility and the effectiveness of the work of the IIBs, more effective information-dissemination is recommended through updating and enhancement of websites and outreach to all involved actors, including Member States and their National Commissions.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accordance with <b>Article 4</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a>, Member States, Associate Members, non-Member States with a permanent observer mission, the United Nations, other organizations of the UN system, international governmental and non-governmental organizations are invited to attend the public meetings of COMEST.</li> <li>• Furthermore, in accordance with <b>Rule 17</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a>, the meetings of COMEST are open to the public unless the Commission decides otherwise. In practice, ordinary and extraordinary sessions of COMEST always include the convening of public meetings.</li> <li>• Information regarding each COMEST session (jointly with the IBC and the IGBC) and related working documents are made available on the website for the session (e.g. <a href="#">website of the joint IBC-IGBC-COMEST public meetings</a>).</li> <li>• All reports adopted by COMEST are also made available online on a dedicated website (e.g. <a href="#">website</a></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of COMEST:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMEST has indicated that it would like to collaborate with the IBC sub-working group created to explore how to enhance the visibility and dissemination of the advisory bodies' work, and further discussion will be held between the respective Chairs and Bureaus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional suggestions from COMEST Members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination seems adequate, however should explore the possibility to increase COMEST's presentations at relevant World Conferences and Conventions etc.</li> <li>• Greater dissemination of the work of COMEST is required.</li> </ul>

	<p><a href="#">for COMEST reports</a>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes of the work of the IBC, the IGBC and COMEST are also shared with UNESCO field offices, national and regional partners, UNESCO Chairs in Bioethics, and UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations working in the area of bioethics and ethics of science (including but not only through the <a href="#">UN Interagency Committee on Bioethics</a>).</li> <li>• Press items are also prepared on the adopted reports of COMEST, as appropriate (e.g. <a href="#">press item on robotics ethics</a>).</li> <li>• In the recent joint public meeting of the IBC, the IGBC and COMEST in September 2018, the Chairperson of the IGBC also presented a number of <a href="#">proposals to strengthen the cooperation between the three bodies</a>. One of the objectives of these proposals is to promote the dissemination of the work of the three bodies.</li> </ul>	<p>Suggestions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Special Twitter account for COMEST, or at least a permanent hashtag; currently everything is posted through the general @UNESCO account.</li> <li>2. Short videos, for example of COMEST members giving highlights of a session or their bio.</li> <li>3. Enhance and remodel the website, visually more attractive and making it easier to find things in it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Info graphs</li> <li>• Fact sheet</li> <li>• One page summaries</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Promote the work of COMEST in the media (newspapers, magazines, tv, radio) for example through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Op ed of COMEST members.</li> <li>• Invite pundits and media to sessions.</li> <li>• Provide relevant information to reporters (press conferences or press releases).</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>In general, bring COMEST work closer to ordinary people.</p>
<p>62. Earlier preparation and dissemination of draft agendas and preliminary timetables, mainly by using the same template containing hyper-links to documents to be adopted/discussed in</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Rules 3.2 and 3.3</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a> state that:</p>	<p><b>Additional suggestions from COMEST Members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyperlinks to substantial reports might be helpful to allow perusal beforehand and may therefore</li> </ul>

<p>sessions.</p>	<p><b>Rule 3 – Convening of sessions of the Commission (Article 5 of the Statutes of the Commission)</b></p> <p>3.2 The Director-General shall inform the members of the Commission of the date, venue and provisional agenda of each regular session at least 60 days before the opening of the session; in the case of an extraordinary session, members shall be informed, if possible, at least 30 days before the opening of the session.</p> <p>3.3 The Director-General shall, at the same time, inform the States and organizations mentioned in Article 4 of the Statutes of the Commission, of the date, venue and agenda of each session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current practice of the Secretariat is in line with the Rules indicated above.</li> <li>• At this stage, hyperlinks have not been included in the provisional agendas and timetables of the sessions since documentation for the meetings are usually not fragmented, and the number of items are normally very manageable. Some examples are as follow: agenda of the <a href="#">10<sup>th</sup> COMEST Extraordinary Session</a>; <a href="#">timetable of the recent joint IBC-IGBC-COMEST public meetings</a>.</li> <li>• Documents are also made available on the sessions' website as soon as they are ready (e.g. <a href="#">website of the joint IBC-IGBC-COMEST public meetings</a>).</li> <li>• The Secretariat could also include hyperlinks in the provisional agendas and timetables for future sessions if this is preferred by COMEST Members. It should be noted that hyperlinks would be added only when documents are ready (due to the time needed to finalize translation of documents in English and French, this is usually 30 to 45 days and not 60 days prior to the meeting when the provisional agendas and timetables are first transmitted). This means that the provisional agendas and timetables would have to be updated on the website of the meeting accordingly, requiring the Secretariat to devote some additional time for this process.</li> </ul>	<p>assist in making comments/suggestions more efficiently, at the meeting. I appreciate the secretariat's need for additional time to re-send the agenda, therefore it might be useful to carry out a survey of members to find out for how many this would be desirable. Thirty days prior to the meeting should be adequate for preparing for the meeting. An alternative would be to alert members when reports are uploaded on the website which would also require additional time.</p>
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	<p><b><u>Note from the Secretariat:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the outcome of the 11th Session of the IGBC, in order to harmonize the format of the documents for the IGBC, the IBC and COMEST, the Secretariat will introduce hyperlinks in the draft agendas and timetables as appropriate for all three bodies.</li> </ul>	
<p>63. The Secretariat is invited to promote a harmonized virtual working environment for all IIBs and to revisit UNESCO's "Strategy on Knowledge Management and Information &amp; Communication Technology". Simple, more user-friendly documentation (i.e. less fragmented reporting and easier document tracking; annotated agenda with hyper-links to reports and draft decisions).</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each joint COMEST-IBC session and each joint IGBC-IBC-COMEST session has a dedicated website, on which documents for the respective meetings are made available (e.g. <a href="#">website of the joint IBC-IGBC-COMEST public meetings</a>)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Additional suggestions from COMEST Members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include a Press Release or Briefing Note highlighting the main topics of the session involved (ideally in UN languages or at least in English) and future work.</li> <li>Agenda with hyperlinks to documents (right now it is only in pdf).</li> <li>Track previous sessions easily in the same website.</li> <li>Assess the possibility of sharing videos of the meetings (ex post).</li> </ul>
<p>64. Open-ended informal consultations on draft decisions to promote inclusive and effective decision-making.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COMEST is an independent advisory body, composed of members acting in their personal capacity. In accordance with <b>Article 2</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a>, COMEST produces advice and recommendations on selected ethics of science and technology topics in the form of reports (<a href="#">reports of COMEST</a>).</li> <li>At the start of its work on new topics, COMEST, as per usual practice, will form Working Groups to prepare the draft text of the new reports. These Working Groups work through email exchanges and meetings (when funds or potential host(s) are available) between plenary sessions of the Commission. The drafts</li> </ul>	



	<p>prepared by the Working Groups are also sent to the Commission as a whole for comments and feedback throughout the process. When appropriate, these drafts are also sent to partners on the <a href="#">UN Interagency Committee on Bioethics</a> for comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These drafts are also discussed at the public meetings organized during the joint sessions of the IBC, the IGBC and COMEST (in accordance with <b>Rule 17</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a>).</li> <li>• In accordance with <b>Article 4</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a>, Member States, Associate Members, non-Member States with a permanent observer mission, the United Nations, other organizations of the UN system, international governmental and non-governmental organizations are invited to attend these public meetings.</li> <li>• During these public meetings, IBC and COMEST Members, IGBC and other Member States, observers from the United Nations, other organizations of the UN system, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the general public comment on the draft reports under preparation by COMEST. COMEST would then consider these comments as it further refines its draft reports before final adoption.</li> </ul>	
<p>65. It is recommended that the Rules of Procedure of the IIBs be amended, when relevant, to advance the deadline for submission of candidatures to their subsidiary bodies from 48 hours to seven days before elections.</p>	<p><b>NON APPLICABLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMEST forms Working Groups to prepare the draft text of new reports. COMEST Members join these Working Groups on a voluntary basis, depending on their expertise, interest and availability. Furthermore, members of the Working Groups also volunteer to be coordinators for the drafting process depending on their availability.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Harmonization (role of Bureaus, transparency)</b></p>		

<p>66. The role, composition and procedures of Bureaus and their members should be clarified and harmonized through codification in rules of procedure/ statutes or development of general guidelines for all IIBs, in close cooperation with the Secretariat.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Rules 9.1, 10 and 11</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a> state that:</p> <p><b>Rule 9 – Elections (Article 6 of the Statutes of the Commission)</b></p> <p>9.1 At each of its regular sessions, the Commission shall elect a Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, who, assisted by the Executive Secretary, shall constitute the Bureau of the Commission and shall remain in office until the opening of the regular session thereafter, provided that they remain members of the Commission.</p> <p><b>Rule 10 – Functions of the Bureau (Article 6 of the Statutes of the Commission)</b></p> <p>The Bureau shall be responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Commission and setting the date, time and agenda of meetings. It shall perform any other function entrusted to it by the Commission.</p> <p><b>Rule 11 – Duties of the Chairperson</b></p> <p>11.1 The Chairperson shall declare the opening and closure of sessions, direct the discussions, ensure observance of these Rules and accord the right to speak. He/she shall discharge any other duties entrusted to him/her by the Commission.</p> <p>11.2 A Vice-Chairperson acting as Chairperson shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairperson.</p>	
<p>67. It is suggested that Bureaus' composition be set, as much as compatible with individual IIBs' mandates, at a maximum of six members (Chair, Rapporteur, and four Vice-Presidents from the six Electoral Groups).</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Rule 9.1</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Rule 9 – Elections (Article 6 of the Statutes of the Commission)</b></p> <p>9.1 At each of its regular sessions, the Commission shall</p>	

	<p>elect a Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur, who, assisted by the Executive Secretary, shall constitute the Bureau of the Commission and shall remain in office until the opening of the regular session thereafter, provided that they remain members of the Commission.</p>	
<p>68. The intergovernmental nature of Bureaus should be reaffirmed while maintaining expert engagement. In this regard, the attached guidelines on responsibilities of Bureau members are recommended for dissemination to all Governing Bodies and IIBs (appendix 2).</p>	<p><b>NON APPLICABLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMEST is an independent advisory body, composed of members acting in their personal capacity. Therefore, COMEST and its Bureau are not intergovernmental in nature.</li> </ul>	
<p>69. Documents related to Bureau meetings should appear online before meetings take place; outcomes, including reports of Bureau meetings, should be communicated to all members, and as appropriate, all Permanent Delegations, in a timely manner.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COMEST Bureau conducts email consultations as needed, between ordinary and extraordinary sessions. The outcomes of email consultations of the Bureau are shared with all COMEST Members.</li> <li>• The COMEST Bureau also meets during its ordinary sessions as needed, especially to finalize the text concerning its work programme for the following biennium. In practice, this text is drafted by the Secretariat during the session based on the discussion and agreement of COMEST. This draft is then presented to the Bureau for review and adoption. The adopted language of the work programme is then published on the <a href="#">website</a>, and transmitted to COMEST in a document of the Bureau. At this stage, COMEST Members can also suggest changes to the language of the work programme, which will then be further considered by the Bureau.</li> </ul>	
<p>70. Elections of Bureaus should be held, as much as possible, soon after elections for seats on the IIBs conducted at the General Conference, to avoid having Bureau members from Member States,</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accordance with <b>Article 3.1</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a>, COMEST Members are appointed by the Director-General as independent experts in their</li> </ul>	

<p>which are no longer members of the IIBs concerned.</p>	<p>personal capacity, and not elected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furthermore, in accordance with <b>Rule 9.1</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a>, the Bureau “shall remain in office until the opening of the second regular session thereafter, provided that they remain members of the Commission”.</li> <li>• In practice, the Bureau is elected during the ordinary session held in the second year of a programme biennium, while COMEST Members are appointed at the beginning of the first year of the following programme biennium.</li> <li>• In the case that a Bureau member that has come to the end of his/her first term at the end a programme biennium is not re-appointed for a second term the following programme biennium, the seat on the Bureau will become vacant. If this should happen, the practice is to hold an election during the extraordinary session held in the first year of a programme biennium to fill the vacant seat.</li> </ul>	
<p>71. As much as feasible, Bureau meetings should be open to observers and working methods made more transparent.</p>	<p><b>ONGOING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See recommendation 69 above.</li> <li>• In practice, the COMEST Bureau meetings during the ordinary sessions are currently convened with the participation of Bureau members and the Secretariat only. This practice is to facilitate an easier drafting process of the language of the work programme to reflect the discussion and agreement of COMEST.</li> <li>• However, nothing in the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a> prevents these Bureau meetings from being open to observers from amongst COMEST Members.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of COMEST:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMEST has decided that Bureau meetings held during the Commission’s plenary sessions will be open to observers from amongst COMEST members.</li> <li>• An amendment of its Rules of Procedure to this effect will be proposed for adoption at its next plenary session in 2020.</li> </ul>
<p>72. Strengthen information-sharing, communication and collaboration between Bureaus, Intergovernmental Councils and Committees and Member States.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chairpersons of the IGBC, the IBC and COMEST meets virtually at least once a year to coordinate and share information on the progress of the work of the three bodies, as well as to explore opportunities for</li> </ul>	

	<p>collaboration and synergies. Joint meetings are held in accordance with the respective work calendars of the three bodies to improve synergies among them, and other meetings are now planned to avoid overlap.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2014, the three bodies have been served by a single consolidated Secretariat. This has also facilitated better information sharing, coordination and collaboration among the three bodies.</li> </ul>	
73. Gender-neutral language be adopted throughout all UNESCO documents.	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretariat provides editorial assistance to ensure that gender-neutral language is used in all COMEST documents.</li> </ul>	
<b>Alignment with overarching priorities of UNESCO</b>		
74. All IIBs should have the opportunity to submit formal inputs to the mid-term strategy C/4 and the draft Programme and Budget C/5 documents of UNESCO.	<p><b>ONGOING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bureau of Strategic Planning has published “Working with UNESCO: Guidebook for Members of UNESCO’s International and Intergovernmental Bodies”.</li> <li>• The Secretariat will support the Commission to implement this recommendation based on this guidebook, as appropriate and in accordance with its mandate.</li> </ul>	
75. A feedback mechanism can be envisaged for substantive dialogue between Member States and IIBs, beyond the limited reporting to the General Conference. This could be through information meetings or briefings. Reporting to the General Conference should be enhanced through a new more strategic and results-oriented reporting format to be followed by debate and General Conference resolutions to provide feedback to IIBs.	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The draft reports of COMEST are discussed at the public meetings organized during the joint sessions of the IBC, the IGBC and COMEST (in accordance with <b>Rule 17</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a>).</li> <li>• In accordance with <b>Article 4</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a>, Member States, Associate Members, non-Member States with a permanent observer mission, the United Nations, other organizations of the UN system, international governmental and non-governmental organizations are invited to attend these public</li> </ul>	

	<p>meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During these public meetings, IBC and COMEST Members, IGBC and other Member States, observers from the United Nations, other organizations of the UN system, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the general public comment on the draft reports under preparation by COMEST. COMEST would then consider these comments as it further refines its draft reports before final adoption.</li> <li>• The Secretariat will also take on board the suggestion of Member States to hold information meetings on the Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology Programme as a whole.</li> <li>• The outcomes of the work of COMEST are included into the results-oriented reporting of the C/5, in addition to a separate report by the Director-General to the General Conference on the work of COMEST (e.g. <a href="#">39 C/REP/18</a>). The manner in which such reports are to be examined by the General Conference is under the prerogative of the General Conference itself.</li> </ul>	
<p>76. Orientation sessions for new members of all IIBs, especially for Chairpersons and Bureau members, should be institutionalized and include introduction to the C/4 and C/5 frameworks. To that end, a short user-friendly guidebook including good practices and acronyms could be produced to familiarize members with working methods and C/4 and C/5 mechanisms.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A training and orientation session for new and returning COMEST Members is held at every extraordinary session during the first year of a programme biennium.</li> <li>• The Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP) is currently working on a guidebook for all IIBs introducing the C/4 and C/5 frameworks, including good practices and acronyms. The Secretariat would be ready to share this guidebook once it is available.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Coherence, coordination and synergies</b></p>		
<p>77. Balanced resource allocation is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of all IIBs.</p>	<p><b>NON APPLICABLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since resource allocation for COMEST is decided by</li> </ul>	

	the General Conference through the C/5, the implementation of this recommendation lies with Member States.	
78. Use of languages for inclusivity and effectiveness remains an important objective.	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Rule 18</b> of the <a href="#">Rules of Procedure of COMEST</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Rule 18 – Working languages</b></p> <p>18.1 The working languages of the Commission shall be English and French. Statements made during meetings of the Commission in one of these two languages shall be interpreted into the other language.</p> <p>18.2 The documents of the Commission shall be issued in English and in French.</p> <p><b>Observation:</b> Due to the budgetary situation of UNESCO over the past few years, this rule is applied for ordinary and extraordinary sessions of COMEST only. It is currently financially impossible to apply this rule for the meetings of the Working Groups held in between plenary sessions.</p>	
79. IIBs and their Secretariats are requested to enhance coordination in scheduling of meetings to avoid overlap.	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See recommendation 72 above.</li> </ul>	
<b>Best practices</b>		
80. Best practices should be shared and replicated or, if necessary, adjusted to reflect specificities with the aim to promote governance mechanisms that facilitate strategies and action plans anchored on the C/4 and C/5. Attached, in this regard, is a non-exhaustive list of best practices identified by the Working Group (Appendix 3).	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bureau of Strategic Planning has published “Working with UNESCO: Guidebook for Members of UNESCO’s International and Intergovernmental Bodies”.</li> <li>• The Secretariat has shared information with the Commission about this publication.</li> </ul>	

Specific recommendations for the intergovernmental councils and committees	Implementation status	Feedback from the Commission
<b>Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC), International Bioethics Committee (IBC), World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)</b>		
<p>86.a. In reviewing the three IIBs as a related cluster, IGBC, IBC and COMEST are invited to continue adjusting and/or updating their mandates, roles and working relations in a holistic manner, looking at other models of UNESCO expert bodies reporting to intergovernmental bodies.</p>	<p><b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p>The mandate of the IGBC as outlined in <b>Article 11.2</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of the IBC</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Article 11 – Intergovernmental Committee</b></p> <p>11.2 The Intergovernmental Committee shall examine the advice and recommendations of the IBC, including those concerned with the follow-up of the Universal Declaration. The Intergovernmental Committee shall inform the IBC of its opinions. It shall submit its opinions to the Director-General for transmission, together with the advice and recommendations of the IBC, to the Member States, the Executive Board and the General Conference. It may transmit any proposals for the follow-up of the advice and recommendations of the IBC.</p> <p>The mandate of the IBC as outlined in <b>Article 2</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of the IBC</a> states that:</p> <p><b>Article 2 – Functions</b></p> <p>1. The Committee shall have the following functions:</p> <p>(a) it shall promote reflection on the ethical and legal issues raised by research in the life sciences and their applications, as well as encourage the exchange of ideas and information, particularly through education;</p> <p>(b) it shall encourage action to heighten awareness among the general public, specialized groups and public and</p>	



	<p>private decision-makers involved in bioethics;</p> <p>(c) it shall co-operate with the international governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned by the issues raised in the field of bioethics as well as with the national and regional bioethics committees and similar bodies;</p> <p>(d) in accordance with Article 24 of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, hereafter referred to as 'the Declaration':</p> <p>(i) it shall contribute to the dissemination of the principles set out in the Declaration and to the further examination of issues raised by their applications and by the evolution of the technologies in question;</p> <p>(ii) it shall organize appropriate consultations with parties concerned, such as vulnerable groups;</p> <p>(iii) it shall make recommendations, in accordance with UNESCO's statutory procedures, addressed to the General Conference and give advice concerning the follow-up of the Declaration, and it shall identify practices that could be contrary to human dignity.</p> <p>2. The IBC shall determine its programme of work which shall be made public. The IBC shall include in that programme any item so requested by the Director-General or the Executive Board. It shall take into account the views of the Intergovernmental Committee, hereafter provided under Article 11, concerning its programme.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> In summary, the IGBC and the IBC pursue the following objectives in their respective functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to keep abreast of progress in genetics, whilst at the same time taking care to ensure respect for the values of human dignity and freedom in view of the potential risks of irresponsible attitudes in biomedical research;</li> <li>• to promote reflection on the ethical and legal issues raised by research in the life sciences and their applications;</li> <li>• to encourage action to heighten awareness among the general public, specialized groups and public and private decision-makers involved in bioethics.</li> </ul>	
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Furthermore, in addition to its role set out in Article 11.2 of the [Statutes of the IBC](#), the IGBC can take the initiative to open a dialogue with the latter on matters of common interest, including adopting new or amending existing international instruments of UNESCO in the field of bioethics (Article 11.7). The IGBC Chair is also an ex-officio member of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST). In general, the IGBC contributes, together with the IBC and COMEST, to improving UNESCO's governance role and functioning in the field of bioethics and ethics of science and technology.

The mandate of COMEST as outlined in **Article 2** of the [Statutes of COMEST](#) states that:

**Article 2**

The Commission shall be responsible for advising the Organization on its programme concerning the ethics of scientific knowledge and technology. It shall also be mandated:

- to be an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience;
- to detect on that basis the early signs of risk situations;
- to perform the role of adviser to decision-makers in this respect; and, lastly,
- to promote dialogue between scientific communities, decision-makers and the public at large.

**Observation:** Based on the mandates stated above, the IBC (providing independent expert advice and recommendations) and the IGBC (providing governmental opinions on the IBC's advice and recommendations) focus their work on ethical reflection related to the life sciences ([reports of the IBC](#)), while COMEST focuses its work on ethical reflection on areas of scientific knowledge and technology outside of the life sciences ([reports of COMEST](#)). Therefore, the three bodies have distinct mandates and roles. Since 2014, measures have been implemented to improve the working methods of the three

	<p>bodies that have enhanced synergy, collaboration, and substantive consultation among them, as well as the overall cost-effectiveness of their collective operation. These measures include the creation of a consolidated Secretariat for the three bodies, convening of information sharing and coordination meetings of the three Chairpersons, convening of joint meetings of the bodies whenever feasible, etc. The mandates of the IBC, the IGBC and COMEST also provide the necessary flexibility for the three bodies to examine and address emerging issues related to bioethics, taking into consideration developing situations and priorities at the international level.</p>	
<p>86.b. Consider adjusting, as appropriate, the number of members in each IIB in view of avoiding duplication of efforts and achieving cost efficiencies.</p>	<p><b>UNDER CONSIDERATION</b></p> <p>The composition of the IGBC is defined in <b>Article 11.3</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of the IBC</a> which states that:</p> <p><b>Article 11 – Intergovernmental Committee</b>  11.3 The Intergovernmental Committee shall be composed of 36 representatives of the Member States elected by the General Conference. (...)</p> <p>The composition of the IBC is defined in <b>Article 3.1</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of the IBC</a> which states that:</p> <p><b>Article 3 – Membership</b>  3.1 The IBC shall be composed of 36 members appointed by the Director-General. The members shall be independent and shall act in their personal capacity. (...)</p> <p>The composition of COMEST is defined in <b>Article 3.1</b> of the <a href="#">Statutes of COMEST</a> which states that:</p> <p><b>Article 3</b>  3.1 The Commission shall be composed of 18 members, appointed by the Director-General following consultation with the National Commissions and Academies of Science of the Member States, and serving in a personal capacity.</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of COMEST:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members expressed satisfaction with the Commission’s current size.</li> <li>• The workload of COMEST has also increased significantly over the last few years, and the Commission’s size should not be reduced as this will adversely impact its ability to meet the increased workload.</li> <li>• The Commission and the Secretariat would require more time to reflect whether further action is needed on this recommendation.</li> </ul>

It shall have an open-ended structure and may bring in specialists on specific subjects.

Furthermore **Article 3.5** of the [Statutes of COMEST](#) also states that:

**Article 3**

3.5 The Presidents of UNESCO's five intergovernmental scientific programmes (IOC, MAB, MOST, IGCP and IHP), of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and the Intergovernmental Committee, and those of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences (ICPHS), the International Council of Social Sciences (ICSS), the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs shall be invited to participate in the work of the Commission.

**Observation:** As indicated in recommendation 86.a above, the three bodies have distinct mandates and roles. Measures have also been taken to improve their overall synergy, collaboration and cost effectiveness. The current compositions have also ensured multicultural and multidisciplinary representation in the work of the three bodies.