

## GRULAC Speech 210<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board

Mr. President of the Executive Board,  
Mr. President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,

The World is struggling again, against a new wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, without having had the time to recover from the first one.

UNESCO has demonstrated during the first wave, its capacity to mobilize and the value of its comparative advantages within the United Nations system, in contributing to face global challenges. *Will be read in spanish*

The Organization undertook a large mapping of the needs of Member States and mobilized its partners to contribute to the UN response, namely, with the support of its field network, that largely contributed to UNESCO's presence and visibility during this pandemic.

What were the lessons learned?

What were the shortcomings of the first response to this global crisis?

What can be improved? How do we answer to urgent and immediate needs without jeopardizing all the rest?

How do we preserve the future?

These are questions we should keep in mind while we look at UNESCO's new Medium-Term Strategy.

UNESCO must recalibrate its action. It needs to preserve its humanist vocation, without however forgetting its constitutional mandate, which is to contribute to peace, security and development as stipulated in Article 1 of its Constitution. In this regard, the strategic objectives of document 41 C / 4 should be more closely linked to the global objectives of the Organization as laid out in the Constitution of UNESCO.

GRULAC recognizes the necessity to focus the Organization's work by reducing the number of crosscutting strategic objectives. There is however a need to review the adequacy of the links between certain thematic areas and within some of them, for more clarity, inclusiveness, and strategic coherence.

How to prioritize and respond to the strategic outcomes, in a cross-sectorial and more effective manner, remains a key question. We must face the new challenges posed by technological advances. However we must also confront persistent structural inequalities, institutional capacity limitations, and failures to fully achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind.

For the preparation of the next C/4, GRULAC welcomes an inter-sectorial cooperation approach, where appropriate, underlining the importance of maintaining for each Program Sector its specialization and expertise. The budget, the responsibility for monitoring as well as the lines of accountability have to be clearly identified in each Program Sector and for each transversal outcome.

The Medium-Term Strategy offers a unique opportunity to present a strategic vision for the Organization, so that it can meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The new Strategy should allow UNESCO to play a leading role in its areas of competence, and to contribute in a concrete visible and effective manner to peace, to development and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as to the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Samoa Plan of Action, and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2032).

While backing the two Global Priorities; Africa and Gender Equality, GRULAC supports SIDS to become a Global Priority for UNESCO taking into account the results of the consultations with National Commissions within our region, considering that the Organization needs to give adequate attention and support to these countries, in an identifiable manner, in the 41 C/4 and 41 C/5, ensuring that the proposed human and financial resources reinforce and clearly illustrate UNESCO's actions for SIDS.

Furthermore, also in line with the results of the aforementioned regional consultations, GRULAC suggests including indigenous peoples as a Priority Group taking into account UNESCO's current inter-sectorial activities on indigenous peoples, and particularly the Organization's responsibility to lead the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2020-2032), and recommends a reflection on strengthening UNESCO's work on the thematic of People of African Descent taking into account the International Decade For People of African Descent (2015-2024).

It is important that the medium-term strategy contributes to the repositioning of UNESCO within the United Nations system and the targeting of its mandate to achieve greater impact. We recognize the importance of the intellectual role of the Organization but we also firmly believe that the Organization should reinforce its operational role and make better use of its unique positioning on the ground with its field network.

UNESCO must achieve a balance reinforcing its position as a **“Think-Do-Tank”**.

To achieve this balance, it is necessary to strengthen the presence in the field and to reinforce coordination between offices as well as with Headquarters. Field offices should have adequate human and financial resources to be able to respond to the diverse needs of Member States particularly in policy advise, capacity building and technical assistance, requiring a highly specialized staff from all regions. The Field review therefore needs to be done in consultation with the Member States, taking into account the specificities of the regions and of the sub regions.

It is important for the Organization to stress the need for cooperation and agility in all its actions, and in its interaction at regional, sub-regional and national levels. UNESCO should also draw on the expertise of its category 1 and 2 Institutes and Centers, on its international intergovernmental programs, on all relevant stakeholders, and should take advantage of the experience of National Commissions in order to create more synergies and maximize impact on the ground.

GRULAC believes that the Integrated Budget is the right way forward, if the allocation of resources respects the priorities decided by the Governing Bodies to preserve the intergovernmental character of the Organization. Therefore, a clear and transparent accountability is a key factor.

We encourage the Secretariat to strengthen the diversification of partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, so that UNESCO can optimize its resources and achieve more effective results. It is always necessary to ensure that the partners in their functions respect and promote the values and principles of UNESCO.

We look forward to receiving, during this session, more information about the model foreseen for the next Program and Budget, with concrete examples about the proposed improvements to the presentation and techniques to be applied in the preparation and presentation of the next draft 41 C/5 while ensuring clarity, transparency and accountability.

The UN and UNESCO are celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary amid a global pandemic and a difficult social, economic, and political context.

However, it is precisely in responding to such global challenges that UNESCO as a specialized agency finds its relevance and its full meaning within its mandate. The Organization must have a Medium-Term Strategy that confirms its place and stature in the areas of its core competencies.

UNESCO has to give populations around the world hope for a better future,  
IN PEACE.