

International Commission on the Futures of Education
Minutes of First Meeting
January 28-29, 2020 – UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

Tuesday 28 January 2020

Welcome and introductions

On behalf of Ms. Audrey Azoulay UNESCO Director-General, Ms. Stefania Giannini ADG/ED welcomed members of the International Commission to UNESCO and thanked for their willingness to join this initiative. H.E. Ms Sahle-Work Zewde offered opening remarks detailing the importance of the committee's work. Each commissioner briefly introduced themselves and their motivations for joining the Commission.

Discussion and adoption of mandate of International Commission

The mandate of the Commission was presented by Ms. Giannini and discussed. All proposed terms were agreed to, however the Commission decided to additionally highlight UNESCO's commitment to pluralism and to include a line specifying that as an integral part of the process of developing the report and engaging with relevant stakeholders from around the globe, the Commission shall consider how best to maximize the ongoing impact of the report beyond its release.

Adoption of meeting agenda

The Commission ratified the revised meeting agenda.

Presentation on UNESCO core principles

Ms. Giannini briefly presented on UNESCO's founding vision including its commitments to constructing the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women and to the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind. She also detailed UNESCO's humanistic approach to education.

Presentation on Secretariat work-to-date

Mr. Sobhi Tawil of UNESCO's Education Research and Foresight programme presented, and together with Ms. Giannini, fielded questions and suggestions from International Commission members on the timeline for the project; the relation of the Advisory Board to the International Commission; a landscape review of existing work on the future of education; the initiative's public engagement strategy; the initiative's futuring strategy; and the materials that have been prepared to-date, such as the briefing notes included in the meeting reference documents and the just-released UNESCO Chairs publication *Humanistic Futures of Learning*.

Lunch

Adoption of Commission working procedures

H.E. Sahle-Work led the commission through a discussion of its working procedures. It was agreed that members would attempt to keep comments short, that meetings would continue to be closed-door, and that in the interests of transparency after each meeting an outcome document will be publicly released. The Secretariat was requested to produce concise summarizing minutes of each meeting. After careful discussion, the Commission also agreed to commit to making decisions by consensus and to work towards consensus on the finalized report.

Setting the contexts, challenges and opportunities (Looking to 2050 and beyond)

International Commission members offered remarks on what they viewed as the challenges and opportunities confronting societies around the globe, both now and foreseen over the next thirty years. (Written statements will be collected for posting on the UNESCO Futures of Education

website.) Key themes raised include: the need to not lose ambition; the importance of education for acquiring human purpose; threats to democracy; challenges raised by digitalization; global inequality; cross-generational responsibility; the need for a dramatic reorientation of the evolution of human collective activities; the reorganization of the world of work; and, the importance of education, knowledge and learning as global common goods.

Futuring exercise – uncertainty, complexity and adaptability

UNESCO's Mr. Riel Miller led a workshop-type of activity designed to help the commission to collectively articulate beliefs and assumptions about the future. A futures triangle exercise was used to examine the pull of the future (what compelling images and aspirations are pulling us towards particular futures), the push of the present (what trends are pushing us towards particular futures), and the weight of history (both structures that hold us back and act as barriers to change as well as the heritage and wisdom that we want to carry into the future). In closing Mr. Miller noted the transformative, transitional nature of our current moment and the opportunity in front of the Commission to move beyond traditional strategies and think creatively and expansively about the creation and use of human knowledge.

Reception

Wednesday 29 January 2020

Synthesis and review of day one

Ms. Giannini presented a review of day one prepared by the Secretariat. She noted that UNESCO shared the high ambition of the Commission for the impact of the report and discussed the consultation and engagement activities and the importance of ensuring that this track of work and the International Commission work intersect and amplify one another. She summarized the context of disruption outlined by the Commission as consisting of existential, multidimensional challenges marked by complexity, uncertainty, acceleration and fragmentation. Global disparities between and within countries, climate change and climate adaptation, and governance and participation are key concerns of the Commission and of UNESCO. She also discussed the deficit of purpose and meaning and the inadequacy of existing models for addressing learning crises.

Initial organization of report and identification of core elements

Using the draft document prepared by the Secretariat the Commission discussed context and framing; vision, principles and definitions; as well as analytical lenses and core areas to explore. Proposed changes were collected by the Secretariat and will be included in a proposed outcome document to be circulated to the Commission for a week's worth of comment prior to its public release later in February.

Organization of Work and Way Forward

The Secretariat presented its plan for the organization of work and committed to organizing video calls at approximately 6 week intervals to update on activities and engage with the Commission. Proposed dates and locations for the September 2020 meeting were discussed (tentatively 17-18 September 2020 in New York City) with the third and final meeting envisioned for Addis Ababa in March 2021.

Lunch

Closing Session

Members of the commission offered concluding reflections on work accomplished, lingering open questions, and ambitions for the initiative.