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Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029

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Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029

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List of acronyms

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
GEM Report	Global Education Monitoring Report
IBSP	International Basic Science Programme
ICTP	Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics
IFAP	Information for All Programme
IGGP	International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme
IHP	Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IPDC	International Programme for the Development of Communication
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
MAB	Programme on Man and the Biosphere
MOST	Management of Social Transformations Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing States
TWAS	The World Academy of Science
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WWAP	World Water Assessment Programme

I. Our mission

UNESCO's renewed relevance in the face of major global challenges

1. At a time when the United Nations system as a whole must mobilize at all levels during the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 aims at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Organization's fields of competence by 2030. Through the mobilization of international cooperation and support to Member States, this Strategy will also contribute to the realization of the international frameworks for action such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.[1] It also aims to contribute to a sustainable international recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in order to "build back better" within the framework of strengthened, universal and inclusive multilateralism and generate synergies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while pursuing win-win cooperation which can bring huge gains to all countries and all parts of the world, as stated in United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 on the 2030 Agenda.[2]

2. There are many significant contemporary global opportunities and challenges. They include the opportunities created by globalization, advancement in science, technology and innovation, enhanced awareness and consensus on climate change and sustainable development, progress achieved in the field of education, and a growing interest in promoting the richness of cultural diversity and conservation of cultural heritage. At the same time, we are aware of extreme poverty and growing inequalities, including: gender inequality, unequal access to quality education and to sustained learning opportunities; effects of climate change on the environment and society at large, as well as the degradation of biodiversity; destruction of the marine environment, depletion of ocean resources and access to water; impact of frontier technologies in all areas of life and the digital divide; the rise of racism, exclusionary discourse and forms of discrimination; disinformation and violations of press freedom; threats to the integrity of cultural heritage; and fragility of support systems for creativity and the diversity of cultural expressions.

3. To embrace these opportunities and meet these contemporary challenges, UNESCO will draw on its convening power, expertise and experience in its fields of competence, strengthening both interdisciplinary approaches and unity of action. As we approach the 2030 deadline, UNESCO will promote innovative thinking and action in the face of the new divides in the world and will resolutely pursue through its mandate its transformative action to build peace and promote sustainable development.

4. In addition, UNESCO will contribute to advancing towards an inclusive, equitable and sustainable recovery from the impact of the global COVID-19 crisis. This crisis has highlighted the vulnerabilities of our societies and economies,

1 Paris Agreement on climate change, 2015
Agenda 2063: The African We Want, 2015
Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313).
SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (A/RES/69/15)

2 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)

with asymmetrical impacts, particularly on women and young people. It has revealed the pressures on nature and biodiversity systems and shed new light on the need to bolster humanity's capacity to tackle global shocks. School closures have resulted in heightened marginalization and exclusion, especially of vulnerable groups, disrupting sustained learning for all children and adolescents and undermining the basic human right of access to education. Artists and cultural professionals, as well as teachers on temporary contracts, scientists and independent media workers, have found themselves in precarious circumstances threatening their livelihoods, especially women, who make up the majority of temporary workers. The protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms affected by the crisis, the fight against racism, discrimination and the risks of misinformation are of increased importance in this context.

5. The COVID-19 crisis has also accelerated the digitization of social interaction and has thus reshaped the economic and social fabric. It has focused unprecedented global attention and awareness on the potential contribution of major technological advances to humankind as well as their risks and potential consequences including the emergence of artificial intelligence for the elevation of human conditions, freedom of expression and creation, access to knowledge and information, respect for equality, and thus for social cohesion.

6. The Organization's two global priorities – Africa and gender equality – will be maintained and fully integrated into the Organization's programmes, with reinforced monitoring. UNESCO's unique multidisciplinary mandate must enable the Organization to pursue gender-transformative action to support States and their societies in overcoming these challenges in innovative ways, with a renewed and strengthened focus on Africa, and affirm the need for solidarity with the most vulnerable and most affected by crisis and emergency situations.

7. The issues that UNESCO is dealing with are at the heart of the decade of reconstruction that is beginning, and should help to formulate an ambitious political project entailing international cooperation. Together with its Member States, networks and partners, both public and private, UNESCO now has the opportunity to mobilize the international community around these issues and advance long-term structural commitments. This Medium-Term Strategy, by identifying priority challenges – in education, the environment, social cohesion and technological transformation in the digital age – intends to provide concrete solutions for the accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, and thus lay the foundations for a shared ambition to meet the demands of the present and the future.

Mission statement, functions and comparative advantage

Mission Statement

"As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO – pursuant to its Constitution – contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information."

8. UNESCO's mission statement for the period 2022-2029 is designed to facilitate international cooperation and collaboration, harnessing the Organization's unique comparative advantage to address the challenges and seize the opportunities facing the world today.

9. UNESCO's functions for the period covered by the Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2029) define how the Organization can deliver on its mandate. They are closely linked to UNESCO's status as a specialized agency of the United Nations system, its added value to the public concerned, and its unique comparative advantage in the way the Organization works and in what it delivers to Member States.

10. The period leading to 2030 will see a strengthening of synergies and linkages between these functions and between the three levels of action (global, regional and national) with a focus on enhancing impact on the ground; thus, standard-setting activity must be designed in the light of needs and lessons drawn from field experience, just as operational activity must be guided by coherent normative frameworks. Harnessing these functions will allow the Organization to act coherently to seize opportunities, to address the complexity of today's challenges and, building on the strategic transformation process launched in 2018, to propose integrated and more appropriate solutions.

UNESCO's 5 functions

- **Laboratory of ideas:** serving as a laboratory of ideas, generating innovative proposals and policy advice in its fields of competence
- **Clearing house:** developing and reinforcing the global agenda in its fields of competence through policy analysis, monitoring and benchmarking and the development and analysis of benchmark data and statistics
- **Standard-setter:** setting norms and standards in its fields of competence and supporting their implementation
- **Catalyst and motor for international cooperation:** strengthening international and regional cooperation in its fields of competence, and fostering alliances, intellectual, financial and technical cooperation, knowledge-sharing, mobilizing resources and operational partnerships
- **Capacity-builder:** providing advice for policy development and implementation, and developing institutional and human capacities

11. This balanced and interlinked approach to functions will guide the work of UNESCO, allowing it to work in close partnership with Member States to support the development and implementation of relevant operational capacities and solutions, while also paving the way for programme adaptation in a more balanced and innovative way, particularly in response to crises and emergencies. This will make it possible to strengthen UNESCO's action at the regional level through its field network, which is of paramount importance in implementing the mandate of the Organization, in accordance with the specific characteristics and needs of each region and subregion and with UNESCO's global priorities and priority groups, and including in collaboration with the regional mechanisms of the United Nations development system, and at the national level in the context of United Nations country teams. It will also take into account the importance of partnerships at the national level, including through UNESCO networks and taking fully into consideration the involvement of National Commissions for UNESCO which contribute to the Organization's work at the country level.

Achieving the vision of the 2030 Agenda: strategic role and contributions

12. The COVID-19 crisis has undermined progress towards the SDGs and made the achievement of the 2030 Agenda all the more urgent. For this, acceleration and scaled-up efforts are required. In the United Nations Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy is fully aligned with the international community's transformative ambition and commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

13. In order to optimize UNESCO's action, greater priority will be given to a limited number of areas where the Organization has a clear comparative advantage and unique role, in particular where it fulfills strategic coordination, leadership and expert roles under the 2030 Agenda and other international mandates.

14. While the 17 SDGs are indivisible and interdependent, UNESCO will place emphasis on those where the Organization has a strategic contribution to make, and in fields where its unique comparative advantages are recognized: SDG 4 (quality education); SDG 5 (gender equality), particularly targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 5.b and 5.c; SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), particularly targets 6.1, 6.3 to 6.6, 6.a and 6.b; SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), particularly targets 11.3 to 11.5 and 11.b; SDG 13 (action to combat climate change), particularly targets 13.1 to 13.3 and 13.b; SDG 14 (life below water), particularly targets 14.1 to 14.5, 14.7 and 14.a; SDG 15 (life on land), particularly targets 15.1 to 15.5 and 15.9; SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), particularly targets 16.1, 16.2,

16.4, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.a and 16.b; and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), particularly targets 17.6 to 17.9, 17.17 and 17.18.

15. The cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Agenda and the links between the various dimensions of sustainable development will also require maintaining the interlinkages with some other key SDGs, helping to address, for example, strong links between education, culture and science systems and the labour markets, in terms of innovation, inclusion, equity and fair remuneration. UNESCO will also continue to contribute to the implementation of SDG 1 (end poverty) and SDG 10 (reduce inequalities).

16. Beyond the all-encompassing mandate for the full scope of SDG 4, UNESCO will pursue its strategic oversight role to monitor the implementation and delivery of other relevant targets and indicators.

Measuring progress towards 2030: UNESCO's role in data collection, analysis and dissemination

Drawing lessons from the COVID-19 crisis, UNESCO has placed "development, collection and analysis of benchmark data and statistics" at the heart of its clearing house function. This will mean producing quality information and data to help Member States monitor progress towards 2030.

UNESCO will build on its flagship publication, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, and on the full range of other global monitoring reports – such as the "Re|Shaping Cultural Policies" global report, "UNESCO Science Report", and "World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development" report.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has been recognized as the official source of cross-nationally comparable data on education and will work with its partners to collect and disseminate data and develop the indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools needed to achieve SDG 4 as well as key targets in science and innovation, culture, communication and information.

UNESCO will also ensure that its new methodological framework of thematic indicators for culture in the 2030 Agenda ("Culture|2030 Indicators") supports investment in building dynamic and inclusive cultural and creative sectors.

In partnership with other United Nations agencies, UNESCO is responsible for monitoring the following SDG indicators: *

> Quality education (SDG 4) - all indicators in partnership with UNICEF, ILO, UN-Women, UNEP and ITU; UNESCO is a partner agency for the monitoring of indicators 4.2.1 and 4.b.1

> Global citizenship education and education for sustainable development (indicators 12.8.1 and 13.3.1, which are almost identical to indicator 4.7.1) in partnership with UNEP;

> Transboundary water cooperation (indicator 6.5.2) in partnership with ECE;

> Innovation and research and development (indicators 9.5.1 and 9.5.2) in partnership with ECE;

> Cultural and natural heritage (indicator 11.4.1) in partnership with IUCN;

> Ocean acidification (indicator 14.3.1) and capacity for marine scientific research (indicator 14.a.1) in partnership with UNEP;

> Safety of journalists and access to information (indicator 16.10.2) in partnership with the World Bank and UNEP.

UNESCO also contributes, as a partner agency, to the monitoring of other targets and indicators such as indicator 1.a.2, in partnership with the ILO and WHO, with regard to expenditure on education.

* Source: United Nations Statistical Commission, Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, as of 29 March 2021.

Key principles guiding UNESCO's action

17. The central promise of the 2030 Agenda – Leave No One Behind – is more vital today than ever and calls on UNESCO to mobilize international cooperation in its fields of competence, to support the most vulnerable countries, especially least developed countries.

18. The decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals must be one of solidarity, to turn the tide on structural inequalities and all forms of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. UNESCO will work to intensify action to fight poverty and to reduce inequalities within and between countries and focus on the needs of vulnerable populations and groups whose rights continue to be unfulfilled. This will involve combating all forms of discrimination and racism, exclusion, marginalization and prejudice, as well as fighting their underlying root causes, in order to build more just and peaceful societies. In this context, UNESCO will strengthen its substantive contribution to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including incitement to racial hatred and racial hate crimes.[3] Special attention should also be paid to indigenous peoples throughout the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032).[4]

19. In addressing the new educational, scientific, cultural, social and digital divides, UNESCO will contribute to furthering universal respect for justice, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms in all its fields of competence and will apply a human rights-, peace- and sustainable development-based approach to all its programmes. It will strengthen its support for the rights and freedoms for which the Organization has a special mandate: the right to education (Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), the right to participate freely in the

3 In line with 210 EX/Decision 22 of the Executive Board

4 Rights of indigenous peoples (A/RES/74/135)

cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits (Article 27), including access to, and enjoyment of cultural heritage, the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19), and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18), and the right to water and sanitation (recognized as a human right by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2010), and recalling that everyone has duties to the community for the free and full development of their personality (Article 29).[5]

20. As new risks emerge, new actions must be taken, and new opportunities that arise should be seized. This Medium-Term Strategy provides a framework for fostering commitments to long-term investments in key sectors of relevance to UNESCO's mandate, ensuring that education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information are recognized internationally as global public goods for all humanity. This will be a matter of, for example, ensuring that everyone has access to quality education; reaffirming the value of global environmental common goods in order to sustainably manage resources and ecosystems on a global scale; promoting open solutions, particularly in science, and protecting access to information in the digital age; ensuring that scientific innovations and the digital revolution are developed on an ethical basis ensuring inclusive participation in the discussion about the social impact and ethical challenges related to science and technology, and helping individuals to acquire relevant knowledge and abilities; and ensuring that cultural diversity is recognized as essential for the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Support should be given to the status and recognition of professions in UNESCO's fields of competence. UNESCO also undertakes to establish unprecedented and innovative forms of cooperation and partnership, which are more relevant to the diversity of actors and partners involved. In working towards a strengthened, universal and inclusive multilateralism, UNESCO will also reinforce its role and actions in South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as international cooperation in all formats in partnership with all relevant stakeholders as a means to implement the Organization´s strategic objectives, with special attention to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its multidimensional conception of development as well as to the restated commitments in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing sustainable development including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of providing 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA) and 0.15-0.20% of GNI as ODA to least developed countries.

Action for global priorities and priority groups

21. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the depth of structural inequalities in societies and has led the international community to question the sustainability of the progress made in achieving gender equality. In Africa, the pandemic has also unearthed major enduring challenges, which include sustainable development and economic growth, population growth, social transformation, and democratic governance, in addition to new vulnerable areas, regarding in particular access to education, digital transformation and scientific and technological advances. By adopting a cross-cutting approach, UNESCO will reaffirm its commitment to its two global priorities – gender equality and Africa – thus helping to shape a dynamic framework for action in line with its mandate.

5 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217(III))

22. A gender-transformative approach for the full and complete realization of human rights, as required under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,[6] will stand at the heart of the programmes implemented. A thematic framework of priorities for action, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, has been designed to address the following issues: gender equality in and through education; universal access to sexual health and related rights; action for climate justice; the elimination of gender-based violence, discrimination and censorship; women's economic empowerment through income security and decent work; leadership, equitable representation and gender-responsive systems of governance; and participation in scientific and technological developments, including frontier technologies.

23. This Medium-Term Strategy is also an opportunity to define a new vision that can create synergies and enhance coordination to achieve the objectives set in the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, as well as those of other regional development frameworks, through a broader interdisciplinary and integrated approach to sustainable development, peace and security in Africa. This calls for innovative thinking and a greater investment in young people and women in Africa, notably in areas of relevance to UNESCO's mandate, such as e-learning and e-teaching strategies, supported by free educational resources, and media and information literacy programmes; and skills related to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), engineering, mathematics and science, and technology and innovation. Emphasis will be placed on: the development of "green" skills, crucial for sustainable development and for mitigating climate change and combating biodiversity loss; digital transformation and inclusive participation in artificial intelligence developments; support for the development of intercultural competences; educational and cultural policies on the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage, and support for various creative sectors; civic education for sustainable water resource management; and freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and artists, including in the digital environment.

24. UNESCO will strengthen these two global priorities, in particular the strategy and coordination function to ensure the coherence of its actions and to foster interdisciplinary approaches that favour Africa and gender-transformative actions in all its fields of competence. In this regard, the production of new knowledge will be critical to innovate and launch flagship initiatives that can address Africa's needs and inform debates and awareness-raising and outreach campaigns at the global, regional and national level. At the same time, the Organization will equip staff with the competences and skills they need to fully implement these global priorities. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be introduced to report on programme implementation.

25. The growing inequalities with regard to income and opportunities around the world, poverty, the climate emergency and the digital divide further increase or aggravate existential and systemic challenges. UNESCO's future actions will need to take into account that youth and small island developing States (SIDS), as priority groups in the Organization, are disproportionally affected and have specific needs.

26. Youth have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in their schooling, mental health, career prospects, and confidence in institutions. UNESCO will pursue a strategic programme in all areas of its mandate and at all

6 United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women: focusing on results and impact (CEB/2006/2)

levels of action that will not only address young people as beneficiaries but will also engage with them as change-makers, knowledge-holders, and partners. This strategy, set within the context of the United Nations Youth Strategy – Youth 2030,[7] will be structured around four building blocks that will be adapted to different regions, in order to support knowledge brokering, youth-related policy solutions, youth-led action and capacity building. This will involve mainstreaming youth issues and needs across all programmes, paying particular attention to gender inequalities and Africa, where the average age of the population is below 20 years. Support will be given to policies on social transformation that promote furthering youth competences, skills and rights, and which foster openness, inclusion and diversity.

27. Small island developing States often face specific vulnerabilities resulting from disasters and the impact of climate change, which threaten island livelihoods, resources, cultures and societies, and even the very existence of low-lying island countries. Given the potentially devastating social and economic impacts, especially in key areas such as education, gender equality, global migration and sustainable tourism, efforts will need to be enhanced and resources mobilized for the relevant strategic and programmatic areas, in order to join the efforts of the international community in pursuing the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. This enhanced support will contribute to UNESCO's engagement in the implementation of the priorities identified during the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030),[8] the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)[9] and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

28. In close cooperation with its priority groups, UNESCO will launch analytical and research initiatives supporting policies and innovative programmes of action. These initiatives will also inform global debates and advocacy campaigns, and support awareness-raising activities, involving State actors and civil society.

Priority action for countries facing crises or in fragile situations

29. The level of global risks and the intensity of emergencies caused by armed conflict and instability, natural disasters and hazards, and the effects of global climate change, require innovative approaches from UNESCO. A strengthened strategic framework will be implemented for crisis preparedness and response, a priority cross-cutting theme involving all UNESCO programmes. It will contribute to the development of more integrated and interdisciplinary approaches.

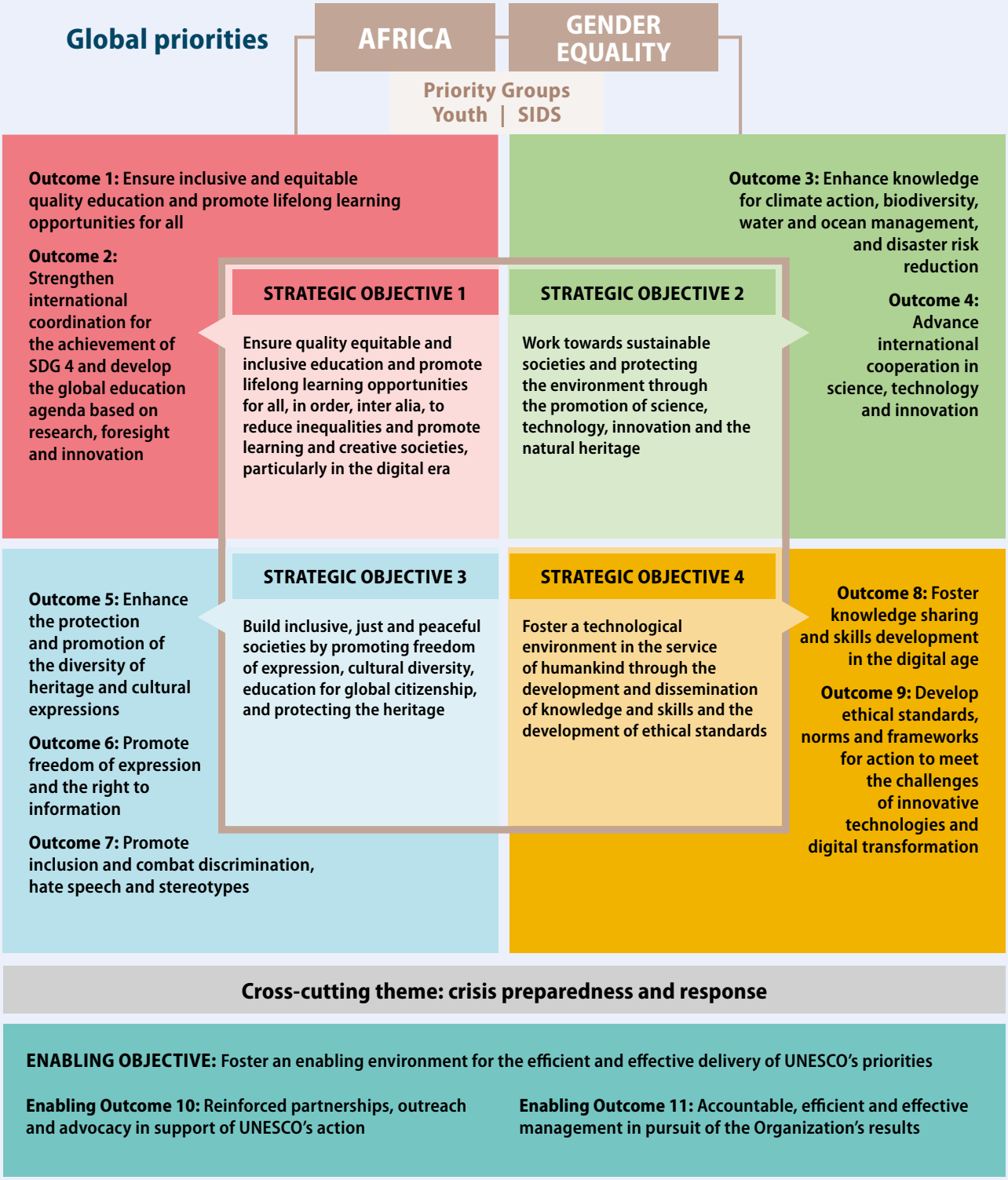
30. The Organization must remain an active and responsive player in this area, especially in the field, to participate in rapid initial assessments, post-disaster needs assessments, recovery and peacebuilding needs assessments, United Nations flash appeals, and country-level coordination mechanisms. UNESCO will adapt its strategy both to contribute to emergency actions and to engage in long-term recovery and development processes aimed at: supporting integrated policies and operational actions for recovery and/or reconstruction within UNESCO's mandate; strengthening national capacities for risk prevention, reduction and response; fostering intercultural dialogue; empowering vulnerable communities; and, as appropriate, encouraging the creation of global coalitions in consultation and in cooperation with the governing bodies.

7 Youth 2030: working with and for young people, United Nations Youth Strategy, 2018
8 Oceans and the law of the sea (A/RES/72/73)
9 United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) (A/RES/73/284)

31. These initiatives will also involve, for example, building back better the resilience of sectors emerging from the COVID-19 crisis; addressing new data and policy gaps related to inclusion and intercultural dialogue, notably with regard to the education of crisis-affected people on the move; integrating culture into recovery and reconstruction programmes; assisting creative sectors and protecting cultural heritage against destruction, looting and illicit trafficking, which has now been recognized by the United Nations Security Council as an issue of international peace and security; and promoting the development of free, independent and pluralistic media, as well as digital innovations, which play an essential role in times of crisis.

32. This strengthened systemic approach to crisis preparedness and response will open up opportunities for action, awareness-raising and innovative partnerships with new actors.

UNESCO's strategic objectives, enabling objectives and their corresponding outcomes



II. Our strategic objectives: a common and cross-cutting framework for action

33. Four interlinked and cross-cutting strategic objectives, corresponding to the challenges and opportunities of our time, and in line with the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals, will provide the structure of this Medium-Term Strategy. They represent the Organization's contribution to the resolution of major global issues within its specific mandate and across its fields of competence, through action where it has a unique comparative advantage.

34. These objectives will allow for synergies and multi-sectoral approaches throughout the Organization. They translate into a limited number of outcomes, which will constitute the basis for the first quadrennial Programme and Budget (2022-2025) (41 C/5) and the second quadrennial Programme and Budget (2026-2029) (43 C/5), reflecting the contribution of UNESCO in all the relevant areas of work. This strategic results framework provides a better view of the relationship between UNESCO's quadrennial results and the Organization's longer-term objectives and impact.

35. This new framework for action, designed to allow the Organization to provide an integrated response to complex issues, will, in the first quadrennium, and in order to reinforce synergies and common programming, in support of extensively united action, translate into a pooling of skills and resources in cross-cutting thematic areas, such as: scientific and environmental education; media and information literacy and digital competencies; artificial intelligence, digital ethics and innovation; learning for diversity; and indigenous knowledge, cultures and languages – in order to strengthen synergies and joint programming, in the service of in-depth unity of action.

36. Education is the most powerful catalytic force to advance the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. In the last decade leading to 2030, taking advantage of the technological innovations and developments which have the potential to improve access to education and to promote quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, building on increased international educational cooperation and learning mobility, and exploiting the role of education in poverty alleviation, UNESCO is positioned to strengthen the resilience of education systems and address the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused severe education disruption and exacerbation of existing inequalities.

Meeting the educational challenges and embracing the opportunities

Strategic Objective 1: Ensure quality equitable and inclusive education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, in order, *inter alia*, to reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies, particularly in the digital era		**41 C/4 (2022-2029)**
Outcome 1: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	**Outcome 2:** Strengthen international coordination for the achievement of SDG 4 and develop the global education agenda based on research, foresight and innovation	**41 C/5 (2022-2025) and, where applicable, 43 C/5 (2026-2029)**

37. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest disruption to education in history, depriving some 1.6 billion learners of access to education at its peak, and has jeopardized what was already a fragile trajectory towards achieving SDG 4 by 2030. It is exacerbating existing inequalities, marginalization and exclusion and threatens to create a "generational catastrophe" in terms of learning loss and the risk of the dropout of some 24 million learners. The pandemic has left one third of students, the most vulnerable students in particular, without access to remote learning and risks pushing 72 million primary-school-aged children into learning poverty. The consequences, which can stretch out for decades, add to the learning crisis which the world was already battling, with more than 50% of students not acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, a deficit of 69 million teachers, 258 million children and young people out of school, and fewer than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa completing lower secondary school. In the context of these major issues, international efforts still reflect a degree of fragmentation.

38. It is within this global context that UNESCO's mandate to ensure girls', boys', women's and men's universal access to inclusive quality education at all levels and to lifelong learning opportunities becomes even more critical to ensuring that hard-won gains for equality and inclusion in education are not reversed. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, limited resources with which to finance competing development priorities will further increase the need for innovation and coordination to protect and promote education and accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 4.

39. From data collection to policy planning, UNESCO can help national education authorities to develop and implement evidence-based policies which mainstream SDG 4 and enforce the right to education, even in crisis situations, where continuity of learning and inclusion of vulnerable populations, and youth in particular, becomes crucial for building resilience and social cohesion and ensuring sustainable reconstruction. The dissemination of best teaching and learning practices intended to empower learners will help to establish resilient education and learning systems. In this context, UNESCO will help Member States to improve policies which support teachers, who work on the front lines to ensure quality education.

40. Diversifying learning pathways is key to building dynamic and inclusive knowledge societies. UNESCO will strengthen skills development for young people and adults, particularly new knowledge and digital competences and skills, with a stronger emphasis on: literacy; technical and vocational education and training (TVET); science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education; the professionalization of cultural

and creative industries; and higher education. The objective of this is to ensure empowerment and employability, especially in new fields related to digital transformation and ecological transition. In education, attention should be paid to an interdisciplinary approach for increased understanding of the complexity and inter-relatedness of nature, human beings and society as well as the balanced development of sciences, humanities and arts. UNESCO will endeavour to help learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours they need for greener and more sustainable societies through education for sustainable development. Within this framework, the integration of culture and the arts into policies, teaching programmes and formal and non-formal education programmes will help with artistic and cultural education, nurturing talents required for diversified economies, and find imaginative and more effective solutions with regard to development. The role of vehicles for knowledge and social integration played by non-formal education environments, such as science centres, designated sites, elements and items (world heritage sites, intangible heritage elements, Memory of the World items, biosphere reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks), cultural institutes and museums, will be highlighted. There will also be a focus on quality physical education, as a vehicle for human development and social inclusion, as well as for the transmission of values, in order to achieve these objectives.

41. Technological breakthroughs in education can provide an opportunity to improve access to education and promote quality education and learning opportunities for all. Innovative digital solutions should be encouraged for global and local challenges, particularly in respect of the populations most in need and the most vulnerable groups. UNESCO will build the capacities of education stakeholders, especially teachers moving towards blended learning, by developing quality digital learning material and by helping teachers to master distance and hybrid teaching techniques, and will support the efforts to develop policies and strategies for artificial intelligence in education to help Member States expand access to education for all, and improve the quality and effectiveness of learning.

42. The pursuit of equitable solutions and universal access in order to achieve SDG 4 will require a rethinking of future education frameworks, including research and foresight concerning new technologies' impact on education. Building on its role as a laboratory of ideas, UNESCO will lead forward-looking debates about the future of education and will inspire creative thinking about how knowledge and learning can make it possible to respond to new global issues and encourage open and creative societies.

43. UNESCO can steer global progress towards achieving the ambitions and targets of SDG 4 by mobilizing partners in a coordinated effort, ensuring that education remains high on development and political agendas, and advocating for increased and more equitably distributed national investment in education. This will also include making the current mechanisms for global education coordination more effective and repositioning the UNESCO-led SDG–Education 2030 Steering Committee as a unique space for multi-stakeholder dialogue among Member States and various stakeholders, while preserving its intergovernmental nature and strategic decision-making regarding policy, in order to steer alignment and joint actions around an agreed set of priorities. UNESCO will continue to amply fulfil its leadership role in the monitoring of SDG 4, through data collection and production, the development of adapted methodologies, and country capacity-building.

44. UNESCO will pursue two outcomes associated with this strategic objective in order to ensure that the next decade is one of accelerated results. The first relates to advancing quality inclusive and equitable education, as well as

lifelong learning opportunities for all, through the provision of capacity development, policy advice and technical support to Member States, while also including creativity and promoting diversity in teaching and learning processes. The second aims to strengthen international coordination and partnerships, shaping the global education programme and ensuring that education remains an essential part of political and development agendas.

Mainstreaming global priorities under Strategic Objective 1

As part of its responsibility for SDG 4, UNESCO will lead an agenda which is transformative from the perspective of gender issues in education. It will foster the transformation of education systems in order to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, as well as targeted interventions to overcome the persistent inequalities faced by girls and women. There will be a sharp focus on Africa, where girls' education, particularly in disadvantaged areas, remains a major challenge.

Responding to the critical issue of universal access, UNESCO will promote the design and implementation of gender-responsive national education plans, policies and curricula which advance rights and tackle key gender-related barriers preventing access to quality learning, and promote safe, inclusive and healthy learning environments, for both girls and boys, in order to deal with school-related gender-based violence. This will include better sex-disaggregated data, research and the use of other material for analysis to inform strategic action. Support will be provided for the leveraging of skills necessary to daily and professional life, including digital skills and literacy, particularly for women and girls in countries where the adult literacy rate is below 50%.

In Africa, where the reinforcement of teachers' professional development and the reduction of the acute shortage of qualified and motivated teachers are critical, gender-sensitive teacher policies must be supported. Sub-Saharan Africa alone is expected to account for 25% of the school-age population by 2030. Strengthening the resilience and equity of education systems can be supported by the setting up of a mechanism for coordination and sharing of experiences for the five sub-regions of Africa in the implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action, and its connection to the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025.

Embracing the full scope of SDG 4 and the centrality of knowledge and education for creative and learning societies, UNESCO will also advance the participation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, as well as in technical and vocational education. Young women researchers' participation in international scientific, cultural and media research platforms and networks will be enhanced. The integration of the General History of Africa into African education systems will also be key in diversifying learning pathways, going hand in hand, from a broader perspective, with curricula development and reform integrating gender perspectives and the fight against stereotypes.

Meeting the environmental challenges and embracing the opportunities

Strategic Objective 2: Work towards sustainable societies and protecting the environment through the promotion of science, technology, innovation and the natural heritage		**41 C/4 (2022-2029)**
Outcome 3: Enhance knowledge for climate action, biodiversity, water and ocean management, and disaster risk reduction	**Outcome 4:** Advance international cooperation in science, technology and innovation	**41 C/5 (2022-2025) and, where applicable, 43 C/5 (2026-2029)**

45. Among the biggest risks which threaten the planet are the inability to battle climate change and to prevent the loss of biodiversity, extreme weather events, natural hazards or man-made environmental disasters, as well as the magnitude and complexities of water crises. The impending collapse of diverse components of our ecosystem disproportionally affects the most vulnerable communities and countries, thus exacerbating inequalities. Protection of natural ecosystems and climate action call for effective solutions, based on ethical principles and the values of sustainability, transparency, accountability, diversity and equality. UNESCO's multidisciplinary mandate and the specialized expertise of its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and its international and intergovernmental scientific programmes[10] offer a unique opportunity for it to mobilize the international community and help reverse the decline in the natural environment and build a resilient future to achieve goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Together, integrated and systemic solutions can be established in order to mitigate the effects which these risks have in terms of increased poverty, social inequalities, mass migration, pandemics and the impact on well-being.

46. Within the framework of all its conventions for the protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity, as well as flagship programmes, such as its Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST), UNESCO must not only deliver diagnostics of existing or emerging problems, but also offer effective innovative solutions to make environments and communities more resilient. The results will make it possible to raise awareness of climate change's impact on biodiversity and on the diversity of the world's natural, geological and cultural heritage. The social impact of climate change, as well as the resulting societal transformations, should also be taken into account, and crisis situations that require the implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies in the face of increasing natural hazards should be addressed. In this context, UNESCO will develop comprehensive and integrated actions with its unique global networks of designated sites, elements and cities (within the framework of the UNESCO Cities Platform, notably, learning cities, creative cities, and inclusive and sustainable cities) in order to experiment, enhance and disseminate interdisciplinary approaches, local and indigenous knowledge and good practices in respect of the safeguarding of cultural heritage. These networks, including youth networks,

10 Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP), International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP), Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), The World Academy of Sciences for the advancement of science in developing countries (TWAS)

will be mobilized to work together on climate change adaptation and mitigation, terrestrial and underwater ecosystem restoration, and the creation of green economies, thereby providing employment and training opportunities to empower young people.

47. Access to reliable information about climate change and related environmental, ethical and social issues is essential for citizens to understand and respond to these challenges. This will be achieved by integrating environmental issues into education policies, curricula and teacher education, and by mobilizing the media and, through the training of journalists, by strengthening journalists' ability to work with scientists and ensure well-informed and comprehensive coverage of climate change and natural disasters. UNESCO will foster evidence-based, interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder discussions and constant reviews to promote the use of reliable information in response to environmental challenges by bringing together policymakers, scientists, journalists, civil society organizations and citizens.

48. The transition to inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic and social development will be based on an even more resolute commitment to STI (science, technology and innovation) as one of the main drivers of the global socioeconomic transformation. As confirmed by the COVID-19 pandemic, international scientific cooperation is urgently needed to leverage the latest advances in scientific research, new data and technological solutions, as well as communication methods targeting all audiences. The development and implementation of transdisciplinary science frameworks will constitute an essential driver of knowledge in order to achieve inclusive and environmentally sustainable development. Open science as well as the engagement of the general public in environmentally and socially sustainable development research will contribute to more accessible, effective and transparent scientific information, data and outputs, and as well as to bridging the science, technology and innovation gaps between and within countries.

49. Guided by the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, UNESCO will specifically mobilize its programmes within the framework of this objective to reinforce the capacity for resilience in small island developing States (SIDS), given their extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. Through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), UNESCO will continue to carry out actions related to tsunami early warning systems, SIDS capacity development in the field of marine science and technology, and the reinforcement of cooperation to address the specific challenges posed by sea-level rise, ocean pollution and acidification, loss of marine biodiversity, and coastal erosion. UNESCO will also endeavour to advance sustainable development and social cohesion in SIDS by promoting indigenous knowledge, practices and cultural and linguistic expressions, which constitute a rich living heritage, and by and underscoring the deep connections which exist between people, culture, knowledge and the natural environment.

50. Within the framework of this strategic objective, UNESCO will aim to support the achievement of two outcomes which should enable systemic transformations with regard to the relationship between individuals and nature and their physical environment. The first aims to reverse the deterioration of the natural environment by reinforcing knowledge which enables concerted action on climate-related issues. The second aims to strengthen the interdisciplinary knowledge base at the science-policy interface through international cooperation in science, technology and innovation.

Mainstreaming global priorities under Strategic Objective 2

In accordance with SDGs 5 and 13, UNESCO will work to ensure that women and girls lead resolute action to tackle the climate challenge, advance in the fields of science, technology and innovation, and contribute their knowledge on the use of natural resources in order to overcome the inequalities encountered, especially in the management and governance of water resources and biosphere reserves. We must enable their access to leadership and decision-making positions and to quality employment in all areas of science, such as biodiversity and geodiversity conservation or activities related to the green economy.

Africa's sustainable development is being severely tested by growing water stress and climate change, and requires that increased efforts be made to preserve the continent's rich ecosystems and natural heritage and to help conserve its biodiversity, in support of goal 7 of Agenda 2063, on environmental sustainability.

Strategic policy support will be extended to capacity-building within the national committees of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), training in water resources management and governance, the sustainable use of the ocean and coastal areas, and the development of biosphere reserves and geoparks. These efforts will go hand in hand with the reinforcement of legal frameworks and the development of people skills to ensure the protection and sustainable management of African cultural and natural heritage. In all these areas, proactive support for African engagement, through international scientific cooperation and the exchange of scientific knowledge, especially in the area of open science, should increase Africa's potential for innovation and thus be in harmony with the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024). This calls for integrated, gender-responsive approaches, aimed at: increasing women scientists' access to global scientific platforms and communities; integrating indigenous knowledge and intangible cultural heritage practices, (particularly the kind transmitted by women) into management systems to halt biodiversity loss and restore terrestrial and marine ecosystems; ensuring that early warning systems, post-disaster needs assessments, and risk management assessments concerning physical environments and cultures affected by natural disasters have a transformational effect as regards gender issues. These approaches should also be aimed at collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated environmental data in order to inform national and regional policies.

Meeting the challenges of social cohesion and embracing the opportunities

Strategic Objective 3: Build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage			**41 C/4 (2022-2029))**
Outcome 5: Enhance the protection and promotion of the diversity of heritage and cultural expressions	**Outcome 6:** Promote freedom of expression and the right to information	**Outcome 7:** Promote inclusion and combat discrimination, hate speech and stereotypes	**41 C/5 (2022-2025) and, where applicable, 43 C/5 (2026-2029)**

51. The world has gone through profound social transformations that have made our societies both interconnected and fractured, and have brought about immense needs for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. As a United Nations agency mandated with promoting intercultural understanding and cultural diversity, UNESCO will continue to provide enhanced global leadership in building inclusive, just and peaceful knowledge societies, as well as ensuring diversity and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

52. Rising inequalities around income and opportunities and discrimination based on race, gender, language, ethnicity, origin, religion, age, disability or any other status, remain a defining social and cultural challenge of our time. The result is fractured societies, with unequal economic and social outcomes and the concentration of wealth, income and opportunity in the hands of a few. Those furthest behind not only see their opportunities and outcomes worsen, but risk getting trapped in a vicious circle of extreme poverty while becoming even more exposed to serious violations of their fundamental freedoms and rights. All of these developments are in direct contradiction with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.

53. Realizing UNESCO's mission of building open and peaceful knowledge societies depends on the mobilization of all the areas of its mandate. More specifically, as the only United Nations agency responsible for culture, it must work more than ever to promote, safeguard and protect diverse cultural expressions and types of heritage (built, moveable, underwater, documentary and intangible). Entrusted with a wide normative responsibility, UNESCO provides standards that can be reflected in national legislative and policy frameworks, be used as platforms for cooperation and to build institutional and human capacities in countries, as well as contribute to rebuilding and revitalizing cultural life in countries hit by natural disasters and conflicts. As inequalities between and within countries become further exacerbated, UNESCO's work will promote the diversity of cultural expressions on the basis of States' right to take measures to support the creation of and access to cultural goods and services. Moreover, UNESCO will raise awareness about the economic potential of culture, and advise and support Member States in the field of the creative economy.

54. Yet these policies will be rendered ineffective if the basic principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms are not secured, especially in crisis situations that affect and threaten pluralism. Protected under international law, such freedoms are defended

through UNESCO's work for academic, artistic and scientific freedoms, and for freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as their social role, addressing the threats to the most vulnerable, including in the digital environment. Ensuring access to diverse sources of information and cultural expressions and activities to protect multilingualism in general and indigenous languages, in particular through the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), remains a priority.

55. The COVID-19 crisis increased the world's dependence on connectivity, technological infrastructure and access to mobile devices. Coupled with recent technological innovations, the digitization of social interactions has been accelerated to unprecedented degrees and is in the midst of creating new forms of exclusion. The development of databases and algorithms in particular can contribute to discrimination, social stereotypes and gender bias. While new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and social platforms and networks offer new opportunities for advocacy and expression, they also contribute to the spread of disinformation and hate speech, in their most dangerous form leading to the incitement of discrimination, hostility and violence against all sectors of society, particularly women and girls. UNESCO will harness its multidisciplinary expertise to conduct monitoring and analysis, build citizenship, transparency and solidarity in the digital environment, all the while protecting the right to freedom of expression and creation, bearing in mind resolution 73/328 of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech",[11] and taking note of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, as well as resolution 71/195 of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief".[12]

56. Overcoming these social inequalities and weaknesses will require creating enabling environments for independent, pluralistic, viable media, their social role, and their role in informing the public, including through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), as well as guaranteeing the accountability and transparency of the players contributing to public debate within our societies. UNESCO will also address the challenges faced by journalists in the digital age, including online threats, digital security, surveillance and breaches of the right to privacy and the right to information.

57. Enabling youth to better understand the changes brought about by digital and intelligent technologies in information dissemination is of primary importance. UNESCO will continue to promote media and information literacy (MIL) skills, which are essential to enabling citizens, especially young persons, to find their bearings and interpret the different sources of information in the digital age. In enhancing intercultural understanding through processes that shape digital society, these skills will be necessary for a new generation to address the challenges of misinformation and disinformation, hate speech and online and offline discrimination, and to put an end to violent extremism and radicalization.

58. Socially responsible citizenship and intercultural dialogue competencies will provide new prospects for action. Particular efforts will be made in the area of global citizenship education, encouraging quality education systems to lay the foundations to enhance, uphold and apply rights and develop the knowledge, skills,

11 Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech (A/RES/73/328)

12 Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief (A/RES/71/195)

values, attitudes and behaviours that learners need to become responsible citizens. Global citizenship education can also help learners – in formal, non-formal and informal settings and throughout their lives – to address inequalities, social, economic and environmental injustices and the causes of violent extremism and radicalization. Through its Management of Social Transformations Programme, and particularly the future annual report to be prepared on emerging global issues relating to inequality and equity, UNESCO will also contribute to research and the production of data and knowledge, integrating issues of well-being in the field of economic and social inclusion policies. In addition, UNESCO will encourage development of digital competencies and promote equal and inclusive socio-economic development.

59. Intercultural dialogue is at the core of UNESCO's mission. Building on the common histories and shared memories, including those around the General History of Africa, the General History of the Caribbean, the Slave Route and the Silk Roads, UNESCO will pursue a holistic approach that promotes intercultural dialogue, non-discrimination, equality, respect and tolerance, bearing in mind the valuable contribution that interreligious and intercultural dialogue can make to an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind (United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/26), so as to foster peaceful and harmonious co-existence within societies.

60. UNESCO will pursue three outcomes under this strategic objective. The first aims to support the promotion of cultural content in all its diversity, but also universal participation in cultural life. The second will strengthen free, independent and pluralistic media landscapes. The third will lead to policy frameworks contributing to the fight against inequalities and all forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

Mainstreaming global priorities under Strategic Objective 3

Ensuring that gender-based violence, discrimination and censorship are eliminated, including in the digital environment, is required for peaceful and inclusive societies based on mutual rights that promote socially responsible citizenship, freedom of expression and cultural diversity. It involves the active participation of men and boys in efforts to restore equal rights and opportunities to change mindsets and behaviours, as well as targeted measures to address the social and economic rights of women and girls. The latter can be achieved through targeted policies and protection measures for independent journalists, in particular women journalists, as well as scientists and researchers, self-employed artists and entrepreneurs working in different sectors of the creative economy, particularly in Africa. It also means supporting the emergence of gender-inclusive and responsive systems of governance and institutions, in which women can enjoy leadership positions, participate and be represented equally.

Both women and men should have equal rights and opportunities to fully and actively participate in all spheres of media and cultural life. Efforts to address the specific risks faced by women journalists will be strengthened under the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Similarly, work to assist in media and information literacy (MIL) and the fight against misinformation and disinformation will be stepped up, including against the proliferation of online and offline harassment targeting women in the media.

More support should be given to health education, physical activity and sport to enable girls and women, boys and men to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. In sport, women have the right to equality. UNESCO will promote specific programmes to reduce the pay gap, encourage the representation of women and men in sports associations and committees and combat violence and harassment against women and men in sport. It will also facilitate inter-ministerial and intersectoral cooperation and promote pertinent education programmes, which are essential for realizing the right to education.

In addition, and in response to the rise in illicit trafficking of cultural property in Africa, which exacerbates tensions and fuels criminal activity, activities will be undertaken to build institutional, legal and operational capacities and encourage inter-State cooperation through the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP) with a view to fostering a culture of peace and reconciliation. Support for Africa's participation in UNESCO conventions will also respond to the growing need to ensure heritage conservation and sustainable development through dialogue and cooperation. Likewise, ensuring a more balanced exchange in cultural goods and services, both among African countries and between African countries and the other regions of the world, is key. Leveraging dialogue to achieve key development and peace outcomes will help to create the conditions necessary for the full implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).[13]

13 Proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent (A/RES/68/237)

Meeting the technological challenges and embracing the opportunities

Strategic Objective 4: Foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards		**41 C/4 (2022-2029)**
Outcome 8: Foster knowledge sharing and skills development in the digital age	**Outcome 9:** Develop ethical standards, norms and frameworks for action to meet the challenges of innovative technologies and digital transformation	**41 C/5 (2022-2025) and, where applicable, 43 C/5 (2026-2029)**

61. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data technology, the Internet of things and blockchain have brought about unprecedented challenges as well as new opportunities to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The digital transformation has created new spaces for human invention, imagination and expression, as well as growing digital divides, including digital gender divides, cyber threats, including unethical behaviour, and human rights violations. The prevalence of digital technologies and platforms facilitates the rapid spread of information and knowledge as well as disinformation and hate speech. Cultural and artistic productions are being shared massively online to the general public, but sometimes to the detriment of artists' social and economic rights, including their fair remuneration. Technologies have set a stage where the quest for equality, social justice and respect for human rights takes on entirely new dimensions, especially in crisis situations. Governments at all levels will need to be supported to ensure that data gathering and the development of frontier technologies, such as artificial intelligence, are used for the common good and that rights are guaranteed and respected.

62. Technological change and the resulting new possibilities must be accompanied by equality in access to such technologies, which goes beyond having a computer, a smartphone or a connection. Equality also means having the digital skills and media and information literacy competencies to ensure that every person can fully participate in and benefit from the digital transformation. Equality is also a core principle that underpins content development, delivery and discoverability and is far from being achieved in the digital economy.

63. Under the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+10 Statement on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes and the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015,[14] and taking note of the United Nations Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation,[15] UNESCO will have a central role to play to ensure a multi-stakeholder and inclusive approach to the digital transformation, whereby all actors can not only benefit from the opportunities brought about by emerging technologies, but also actively contribute to shaping this new digital environment. UNESCO will strengthen access to information and knowledge, especially for marginalized groups and persons with

14 WSIS+10 Statement on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes and WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015
15 United Nations Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation

disabilities, through the development of digital skills, the promotion of open access to scientific information, the promotion of multilingualism and the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage, including through the Information for All Programme (IFAP).

64. Building on its experience in international cooperation, the Organization will be uniquely positioned to facilitate knowledge sharing, access to open educational resources (OER) and the design and use of open-source solutions and open data. These are critical to addressing inequalities and bridging the technology, innovation and knowledge divides. UNESCO will work to ensure that countries in the developing world are not mere users of these technologies, but are also equipped to actively participate in their design and development so as to benefit from the economic, social and cultural opportunities they offer. New digital transformation technologies (satellite imagery, 3D modeling by drones to safeguard heritage, artificial intelligence tools for the management of natural hazards, etc.) should also be harnessed to help the most fragile countries to respond to crisis situations.

65. Current and new forms of exclusion in the digital world need, however, to be addressed forcefully. To reduce the inequalities resulting therefrom, UNESCO will assist in the development of policies aimed at adapting legislation and policy frameworks to ensure a more diverse digital ecosystem and to foster the availability, discovery and delivery of diverse content. UNESCO will also explore innovative ways to enrich knowledge, in line with the concept of Internet Universality with an Internet that is human rights-based, open, accessible to all and nurtured by the participation of multiple stakeholders (ROAM principles). Within the framework of its cultural work, UNESCO will consider the impact of digital technologies on cultural creation and expression so as to foster a diverse digital cultural ecosystem, enriched by the active participation of all.

66. Identifying and addressing the ethical questions raised by the rapid development and the convergence of technologies, especially digital technologies, determine the way people live together and the societal choices that will shape humanity's future. UNESCO will therefore take the lead within the United Nations system with regard to the ethics of artificial intelligence, both by setting global standards and norms through the promotion of a recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, and by supporting future policy and capacity-development activities in Member States interested in its implementation. In view of the possible ethical impact of artificial intelligence, UNESCO will facilitate dialogue and encourage extensive participation of governments and the public in the implementation of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and timely feedback thereon.

67. The importance of science, technology and innovation for achieving the SDGs underlines the crucial need to promote stronger systematic links between the human rights-, peace- and sustainable development-based approach and developments in the new digital environment. At a time when data collection techniques and platforms are proliferating, the implementation and monitoring of standards are needed, in particular in the sphere of education, to safeguard individuals' rights and strengthen ethical, transparent and accountable practices regarding the use of cutting-edge technologies, in particular to avoid excessive collection of personal data.

68. By mobilizing the international community and reinforcing links among scientists, ethicists, policy-makers, judges, journalists, creative industry professionals and civil society, UNESCO

has an important role to play in setting a global agenda to ensure that frontier technologies function within a human rights-, peace- and sustainable development-based framework and that their development and use are compatible with ethical standards and imbued with the core values of equality, diversity, inclusion, transparency and accountability, thus fostering development and sustainability.

69. UNESCO will pursue two outcomes under this strategic objective. The first will serve to enhance the respect for human rights, openness, inclusivity and ethics to shape the new digital environment. The second will enhance strategic and legal tools that can identify and address the ethical questions raised by the development of digital technologies.

Mainstreaming global priorities under Strategic Objective 4

The digital divide, especially the digital gender divide, that is growing and threatens to leave millions of women and girls behind, particularly in Africa, can be reduced namely by the inclusive and comprehensive development and application of digital technologies. Ensuring that they have access to and fully participate in technological developments, including frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence, that are free of gender bias and that they have equal opportunities to improve their digital competencies and skills is essential to the achievement of gender equality (SDG 5).

UNESCO will continue to work, including through media and information literacy (MIL) and through dialogue with the operators of digital platforms, to ensure that all women and girls have equal access to the production and use of information, digital solutions and technology. UNESCO will raise awareness of the importance of ensuring that new technologies are developed in an inclusive manner with the full participation of women, and that they are not developed with gender biases. Women artists and cultural professionals will be actively supported to ensure their participation as creators, producers and users of content that is developed or distributed through frontier technologies. They will also be directly involved in policymaking processes and systems of governance for education, science, culture and communication in the digital environment.

Addressing the structural causes of digital inequalities in Africa will place specific emphasis not only on digital skills and competencies, but also on capacity-building and policy implementation for innovation and digital transformation, with a view to fostering open solutions (open access, open educational resources, open data, open software). Strengthening national capacity and infrastructure in the areas of bioethics and the ethics of science and technology in African countries will also be a priority to ensure inclusiveness and diversity in the development of digital technologies.

III. Our commitment: strengthening impact and partnerships

70. UNESCO is committed to a series of reform measures and corporate actions that are instrumental to implementing the Organization's mandate. The principles and measures set out below form the "enabling environment" objective for the optimal implementation of UNESCO's mandate from 2022 to 2029, in a fast-changing environment, with two related outcomes that will ensure the Organization's responsiveness, preparedness and adaptability.

Deepening and diversifying partnerships

Enabling objective: Foster an enabling environment for the efficient and effective delivery of UNESCO's priorities		**41 C/4 (2022-2029)**
Enabling Outcome 10: Reinforced partnerships, outreach and advocacy in support of UNESCO's action	**Enabling Outcome 11:** Accountable, efficient and effective management in pursuit of the Organization's results	**41 C/5 (2022-2025) and, where applicable, 43 C/5 (2026-2029)**

71. In order to successfully coordinate and implement the Medium-Term Strategy, and capitalize on its unique and manifold networks, UNESCO will promote, through its updated comprehensive partnership strategy, a sharpened focus on the 2030 Agenda and its financing, drawing lessons from the COVID-19 response, notably regarding the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships and coalitions (such as the Global Education Coalition), and responding to the need for innovative public-private partnerships in emerging areas such as digital transformation.

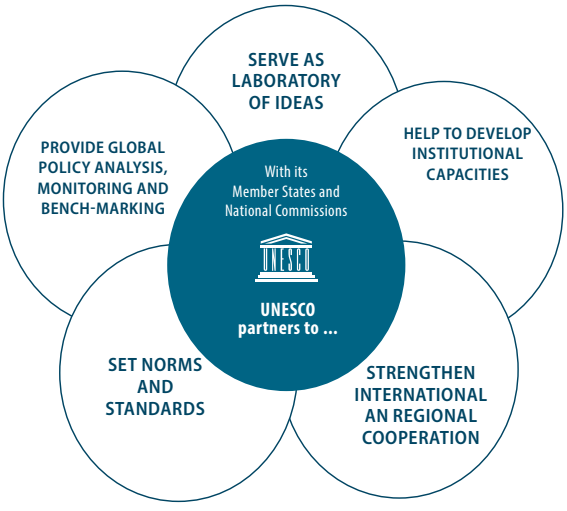
72. UNESCO will forge alliances and multi-stakeholder partnerships with all relevant interested parties for the pursuit of its strategic objectives and will harness partners' different comparative advantages to create synergies, develop innovative approaches and solutions, and add value. It will leverage both financial and non-financial, public and private resources geared towards this objective (financial support, advocacy, access and outreach, expertise and data, implementation support and in-kind contributions, for example).

73. National Commissions, as a constitutional part of UNESCO, need to be fully involved as key coordinating bodies at the national level. Cooperation with the National Commissions for UNESCO will be consolidated to ensure their involvement in the effective planning and implementation of UNESCO's programmes, with

a view to, among other things, strengthening intersectoral collaboration and partnerships, and supporting universal and inclusive multilateralism through cooperation between them at the international level. At the country level, they remain uniquely placed to be the main agents for change at that level to accelerate UNESCO's response to global challenges and maintain the relevance of UNESCO's mandate, and for outreach, engagement, mobilizing local actors and amplifying messages about UNESCO's vision and mission, and to contribute where possible to the implementation and evaluation of the Organization's programmes through a human rights-, peace- and sustainable development-based approach. They secure UNESCO's presence and visibility within Member States, in the long term and across programmes, including at States' different territorial levels, with national institutions, umbrella associations, academia, NGOs and civil society. Member States will be encouraged to strengthen the capacity of their National Commissions for UNESCO.

74. The Organization will seek to establish new and strengthened forms of engagement with key constituencies such as young people, cities and businesses in the private sector. NGOs, with their specific knowledge and capacity to act swiftly at global, regional and local levels and to offer platforms for strong civil engagement, will be critically important partners for UNESCO. To support the National Commissions, UNESCO must also continue to energize, involve and mobilize its unique networks of "UNESCO family partners", including UNESCO Clubs, the Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, the network of the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC), category 2 institutes and centres and UNESCO intergovernmental programmes and their membership.

Delivering upon UNESCO's mandate in a global environment



Partners	Resource Mobilization and financing	Programme implementation	Knowledge exchange and shared learning including HR partnerships	Influence and advocacy	Facilitation and coordination
UN Development System	●	●	●	●	●
Donors	●		●	●	●
Non-governmental organizations		●	●	●	●
Intergovernmental organizations including regional organizations and regional development banks	●	●	●	●	●
Businesses	●	●	●	●	
Young people		●	●	●	●
Cities	●	●	●	●	
UNESCO Clubs				●	
UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks		●	●	●	
UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors			●	●	
UNEVOC Network		●	●	●	
UNESCO category 2 institutes and centres		●	●	●	
UNESCO ASP Net		●	●	●	
UNESCO Intergovernmental programmes and their membership	●		●	●	●

75. UNESCO donors are stakeholders and partners in the delivery of the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy. It is essential to set up new innovative modalities for mobilizing resources. Guided by the main principles of predictability, flexibility, diversified donor base and transparency, UNESCO will focus particularly on strengthening exchanges with donors, including through structured financing dialogues and partners' forums, and implementing an operational road map for strengthening UNESCO's engagement with the private sector.

76. Resource mobilization efforts will be further focused on programmes and projects for global priorities Africa and gender equality, and for priority groups youth and SIDS, thus responding effectively to emerging needs and priorities at national and sub-regional levels.

77. Strengthening UNESCO programme funding will also be achieved by consolidating and expanding measures to foster decentralization and strengthen the capacities of field offices by equipping each office with dedicated resource mobilization expertise and by building capacities in project design and management, resource mobilization and communication.

Reinforcing collaboration with the United Nations system

78. To support countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO must continue to work towards optimizing a responsive, sustainable field network architecture that can better address Member States' needs at global, regional and national levels, while ensuring the relevance and added value of its mandate.

79. This commitment shall ensure that UNESCO can fully contribute to the results of the common operational activities of the United Nations system, including the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) and other United Nations system-wide mechanisms.

80. In line with United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, and taking into account relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, UNESCO will systematically engage with other United Nations organizations in a system-wide effort to maximize the strength and delivery capacity of the United Nations system at large and make the entire range of expertise residing therein available to Member States in a coherent and coordinated manner.

81. To this end, the Organization will be committed to ensuring an effective leadership and coordination role in UNESCO's priority areas within the United Nations system and its intergovernmental bodies, and to assuming the leadership role conferred on UNESCO by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Shaping new narratives

82. High-quality and more assertive communication, with a strong narrative about UNESCO's contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the delivery of its priorities, is a fundamental condition for building a more open, engaging and outward-looking UNESCO. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting reliance on e-content and online communication have also demonstrated the key importance of rapidly accessible content and innovative digital platforms for communicating and interacting directly with new audiences and partners.

83. Going forward, UNESCO will continue transforming its strategic approach to communication, viewed as an important means

to help achieve the Organization's strategic objectives, such as by making reference data available, highlighting results and impact achieved, launching public campaigns, enhancing the quality and visibility of its flagship publications such as the *UNESCO Courier* and a series of milestone reports in the fields of its mandate, and enabling long-term strategic partnerships that can amplify messages.

84. In this process, the creation of an integrated digital platform, allowing for a more fluid and transversal circulation of content between the various UNESCO sub-sites, will serve to unify UNESCO's brand at the global level and highlight how the Organization's new interlinked strategic objectives can address the complexity of contemporary global challenges.

85. Finally, UNESCO will continue its efforts to promote the work of National Commissions for UNESCO in order to raise public awareness of the Organization's mandate and to communicate on its actions through governmental and non-governmental partners. The National Commissions will also be called upon to continue ensuring the translation of the major publications and reports produced by the Organization, which remains an essential exercise not only to increase the Organization's visibility but also to strengthen the link between UNESCO and its partners at the national level, for which the National Commissions remain indispensable levers.

Building an agile, accountable and proactive Organization

86. Investing in staff is key to ensuring the excellence, responsiveness and flexibility required to deliver on UNESCO's work. The Organization will strengthen performance management, and further develop workforce planning and the alignment of human resources policies with organizational priorities and needs. The aim of attracting a young and diverse staff, ensuring equitable geographical representation, while enabling more staff members to benefit from an international and diversified career through mobility, will be further advanced.

87. Transversal and agile working methods (including telecommuting) provide a flexible working environment that can accommodate new working methods, including elements such as cross functionality of teams, self-organization and collaboration with diverse teams. These modalities will be strengthened and contribute to an environment that promotes well-being and motivation.

88. Going forward, UNESCO is committed to providing efficient and business-focused support for programme implementation. UNESCO will therefore develop and implement sustainable financing models for corporate needs, to allow for the delivery of essential long-term financial investments. This will include investments to integrate environmental and social sustainability considerations across work, operational models, facilities and management practices.

89. UNESCO will further champion the implementation of risk management, organizational resilience and business continuity, by pursuing a risk-informed approach and decision-making throughout its work and operations, improved reporting on risks and related opportunities, and enabling a better quantification and qualification of achievements.

90. The strategic transformative vision for the Organization rests with responsible administration of resources, improved programme performance and a culture of accountability, learning and transparency. This will be achieved by the Secretariat, ensuring the necessary independence of the competent services, through: internal audits of increased frequency, which provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and governance processes of the Organization; investigations,

which promote accountability across UNESCO through training activities and by responding to allegations of misconduct and irregularities (e.g. fraud, sexual harassment, abuse of authority or other misconduct); and evaluations, which will inform senior management and governing bodies, staff and partners on actions that need to be undertaken to improve the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of UNESCO's action. The recommendations of the External Auditor and the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system (JIU) will complete the monitoring framework and provide the basis, as appropriate, for future decision-making by Member States on the measures to be pursued.

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