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FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS

PART III

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

UNESCO'S STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

ADDENDUM 2

COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

Pursuant to Item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues.

1. ISAU notes that the document it received actually contains two documents: the document provided in June, and a corrigendum seeking to take into account the discussions of Member States thereon. The practice of adding a corrigendum frankly undermines the strategic value of a document that should be easy to read in a linear fashion. The Secretariat had ample time to produce a single document. In that regard, let us quote Nicolas Boileau, according to who "whate'er well conceived is clearly said, and the words to say it flow with ease".

2. ISAU stresses the fact that it has not been involved in UNESCO's strategic transformation process, contrary to what is stated in paragraphs 9 and 12, which imply that the recommendations of representative staff associations were taken into consideration. ISAU has only very recently been invited to one last-minute informal information meeting, the day before the newsletter was published. It is essential that ISAU be involved in the project, in particular regarding the objective of "enhancing UNESCO's efficiency and effectiveness", which directly impacts staff members and, by extension, fully concerns ISAU. The involvement of representative staff associations is not mentioned in the newsletter on strategic transformation. Without this participation, ISAU considers that the objectives cannot be said to have been reached by means of transparency, as stated in paragraph 5.



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3. In a broader sense, while the ambition of a strategic transformation is commendable, we must not skimp on the process of reflecting on the strategy that we intend to implement. In that respect, the document leaves a number of essential questions pending. Indeed, it is difficult to clearly grasp the issues motivating the proposed transformation. Our Organization has spent two years, following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, re-aligning its programmes on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we have only just come through a strategic transformation process, the results of which cannot yet be assessed. If a transformation is necessary, which we do not doubt *a priori*, we would like to know on what basis and on what findings and observations this process should focus, as it supplements the other processes already in place.

4. Lastly, ISAU is concerned about the impact that the strategic transformation process could have on staff (such as the potential abolition of posts and increased workload). The transformation should take into account the element of human capital, which is critical to the Organization. The process should lead to a more just, equitable and diverse Organization.

I. UPDATED AND COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW THE STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION PROCESS (PARTICULARLY PARTS 1 AND 2) INTENDS TO IMPROVE UNESCO'S OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND MEANS OF ACTION

Objectives of the strategic transformation process

5. The document provides a description of the objectives of the transformation, which relate only to technical, or even technocratic issues, without reference to our Constitution and the crucial issue of the contemporary challenges of peace.

6. Taking into account the objectives referred to in the document, we note in particular the step to enhance UNESCO's efficiency and effectiveness. With what resources, both financial and human, does UNESCO hope to achieve such an objective in its current situation?

7. The document then put forward a list of five commendable principles, including transparency, inclusiveness and consultations, which was then expanded upon in the corrigendum for no apparent reason, at the risk of undermining the strategic ambition by hindering the coherence and effectiveness of the action. Without a strong starting point, without a substantiated preliminary diagnosis, the transformation under discussion may well end up being merely just another process. It is only proposed to undertake the transformation based on existing structures, rather than on reflection about the goals of our Organization. By endeavouring to describe the transformation processes, the document seems to be a collection of means for which the end is hard to see.

Governance of the strategic transformation process

8. ISAU reiterates its request for involvement, particularly within the thematic working groups in charge of the Organization's operational effectiveness and UNESCO's presence worldwide. The issues addressed (such as recruitment, mobility, performance and relevance of field offices) are all matters on which we are working daily with the staff and to which we can make a valuable contribution.

9. We are surprised to see that, within the steering committee of the reform, it is specified that the Director of Evaluation and Audit is reduced to the status of observer (paragraph 8); how can the transformation be strategic if it considers evaluations and audits, which entail understanding what the Organization is specifically accomplishing, to be secondary?

II. CONCEPT PAPER – IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE STRENGTHENING AND STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENT OF THE PROGRAMMES

10. Following several paragraphs on technocratic mechanisms, we finally come to the section on programmes. While this section addresses issues of content, we cannot fail to note that the issue of peace, which is the mandate of our Organization, is mentioned almost in passing, among a plethora of topics.

11. We must be rigorous in our approach to the respective role held by the three bodies (Member States, Secretariat and partners) in facilitating the strategic transformation process. It was surprising to read in the original proposal that “the strategic reflection process [...] will be led by the Secretariat” (paragraph 22). We are pleased to note that the corrigendum reconsidered this problematic wording, which should be still discussed in view of how surprising it is that it had seemed appropriate to make such a statement. Such a process could on no account be led by the Secretariat, which may only propose and support, but surely not lead, which is the prerogative shared by the Director-General and the Member States.

12. The leadership role that must be held by the Director-General is all the more important given that the documents provide for the consultation of external experts (paragraph 23). However, we fail to see how such consultation could lead to a meaningful outcome if no starting point is proposed to those experts, the recruitment modalities for which have yet to be clarified.