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Item 5 of the agenda

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

PART III

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

E. UNESCO's strategic transformation

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 (document 207 EX/5.III.E).

1. The succinct presentation of the reforms under way throughout the Organization may be welcomed. However, the document gives the impression of a rather thin catalogue that does not allow for an overall view. As we have pointed out before, it is surprising that restructuring is taking place in the programme sectors, as in the Culture Sector (CLT), at a time when many thematic discussions are under way and a high-level expert commission is expected to start work soon. This paradox must be questioned. Whether the imminent reform of the sector in no way affects, for instance, the current changes, or whether future transformations override current developments, resources will probably have been mobilized in vain, staff will have certainly been destabilized and time may have been lost.

2. The section of the document on partnerships does not reflect existing networks such as UNESCO Chairs, NGOs or National Commissions, on which the Organization must, however, rely in order to be in line with current developments in UNESCO fields of competence. Moreover, reference to these networks is important because these partners can contribute to the mobilization of resources for joint projects. The networks are a key asset of UNESCO, contributing to its reputation and credibility. Noting that the networks are mobilized at the level of sectors, it is important to underline the predominant role they must play in terms of partnership and resource mobilization, since they are, in the last instance, responsible for the projects.



3. We note in the section on communication that the communication strategy “*responds to the need to better capitalize on UNESCO’s brand*”. The way this is worded is thought-provoking. UNESCO, as an intergovernmental organization and as an agency for education, science and culture, is an institution with a public and universal vocation for which the notion of profit cannot be that of the strictly commercial sector. We wish here to draw the attention of UNESCO’s stakeholders to the fact that the notion of profit cannot be confused with the more appropriate notion of valorization, without a risk to the credibility of the Organization.

4. With regard to global presence, there is also concern about the consistency between field office reform in the context of the strategic transformation and that of the “Delivering as one” programme, of which UNESCO is of course a part. Logic would suggest that we wait for the recommendations of the “One United Nations” initiative, whose deadline is 2022, in order to avoid undoing the changes that will be implemented at UNESCO from 2020, thus minimizing the financial and human impact. According to the business strategy plan, it was planned to close some field offices and entrust their management to the Regional Coordinator. We would also like to recall the recommendation to close some offices and antennas made during the last field office reform. It should be noted that this last incomplete reform was not extended beyond Africa, because it was basically a total failure.

5. The section on pillar three mentions a large number of substantive and thematic consultations and meetings. This implies a genuine effort to strategically strengthen programmes. However, it is to be regretted that there are absolutely no substantive reports on the content aspects discussed at these meetings. This lack of information is surprising, particularly in the context of a strategic exercise whose stated values are transparency and openness.

6. Finally, ISAU notes and welcomes the fact that the group of experts has been set up in a timely manner to support the preparation of the next C/4 document. Nevertheless, in view of the remarks we have just made, we hope that this commission will work in good cooperation with the Secretariat, and in particular with the staff, because it is important to stress that the commission’s long-awaited reforms will, in the end, be implemented by the Secretariat. In conclusion, let us emphasize the sincere interest of the staff in the principle of demanding reforms to improve our Organization in a comprehensive way – it explains the challenging nature of our remarks.