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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

ADDENDUM 2

COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

C. Sustainability of the field network

Pursuant to Item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on management issues (document 222 EX/4.III.C).



Job: 2500924E

A shared, fair, people-centred reform

1. The full implementation of a fit-for-purpose field network remains essential to the Organization's effectiveness. To this end, ISAU remains convinced that Phase II of the field reform strategy must adopt a more systemic approach to human resources, addressing challenges in workforce planning and staff rights. This includes regularizing long-term precarious assignments (e.g., temporary contracts and related arrangements), establishing cross-functional roles to strengthen regional office expertise, and effectively recognizing the professional aspirations of staff.

2. The workforce planning process launched under the 2023–2027 Human Resources Strategy must be grounded in inclusive, transparent and sustained consultation, with the full involvement of staff associations. This is key to ensuring sustainable outcomes in career development, talent management, succession planning, mobility and learning. Organization-wide consultation processes between Headquarters and field offices are also essential to engage all staff and harness insights through inclusive, open dialogue. It must be fully acknowledged that an efficient field office network cannot deliver satisfactory results without an effective upstream coordination of staff issues.

3. The same logic of co-construction should guide the development of country, regional and liaison strategies, as well as the introduction of new Accountability Compacts and associated matrices. These represent a strategic opportunity to draw upon the field experience and knowledge of UNESCO staff, whose involvement is indispensable to ensure the contextual relevance and programmatic coherence of these strategies.

4. We note that, as of June 2025, only 31 of the 71 positions created under document 42 C/5 have been filled. The slow pace of implementation undermines the reform process. Moreover, the optimal use of the US\$20 million allocated to the reform remains unclear, particularly regarding the sustainability of funding for new posts. We encourage the Administration to provide greater transparency on the allocation and long-term viability of these resources. Clear progress indicators should be adopted to ensure that Member States can effectively keep track of the pace of the reform.

5. The reform's objectives cannot be realistically achieved without appropriate budget allocations. We stress that any available and additional resources should primarily be used to regularize precarious assignments. This is both a matter of justice and performance: UNESCO cannot successfully implement this reform without relying on staff who have demonstrated constant commitment and invaluable internal expertise.

6. We draw attention to the distribution of the 60 newly created posts: 43% are dedicated to support and liaison functions, compared to 57% for programme positions. This ratio raises questions about the actual efficiency of the reform, which was initially intended to create synergies and economies of scale to strengthen programmatic action in the field. We encourage the Administration to clarify the criteria underlying this distribution, including any benchmarks or intended outcomes.

A consistent and integrated reform

7. Another major concern is the lack of clarity regarding the integration of all decentralized components of the Organization in the reform process. For instance, the absence of references to category 1 institutes and decentralized programme units raises questions as to the concrete outcomes that are expected as to the improvement of UNESCO's presence and action at the country-level. These entities, integral to UNESCO, must be included in a global strategy for worldwide presence. Their omission undermines organizational coherence and complicates the implementation of a smooth mobility policy across entities. We encourage the Administration to adopt a less siloed approach when it comes to organizing its presence in the field. In this sense, ISAU insists that the reform of UNESCO's field office network should not be a matter for the sole administrative unit in charge of field offices but an Organization-wide integrated undertaking at the highest level of decision-making.

8. Furthermore, the field network reform must be implemented consistently across both geographic and programmatic dimensions, ensuring adequate resources for effective operations in all regional contexts and full involvement of all programme sectors. The current reform process shows uneven geographical application, hampering its overall coherence and credibility. It also lacks clearly defined roles for programme sectors and relevant entities in the design and implementation of the reformed field network. In this respect, an integrated organizational approach that places programme and staff at its core, leveraging UNESCO's multidisciplinary expertise, is essential to the reform's effectiveness, sustainability and credibility.

9. Finally, the document remains silent on the degree of actual decentralization of programme activities. Beyond the creation of posts, the increased and consistent decentralization of operational activities and associated budgetary resources is indispensable to ensure UNESCO's credible and sustainable presence across all regions. This evolution must be accompanied by clear mechanisms for delegated authority and regional budget management, ensuring full alignment between workforce planning and programme implementation.