Item **5** of the provisional agenda

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

PART II

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

ADDENDUM

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 document 206 EX/5.II.A.

Job: 201905154

A. Sustainability of the field network
(Follow-up to 204 EX/Decision 5.II.A)

ISAU welcomes the reform of the field network, which is essential to improve the efficiency and visibility of UNESCO in the world. The current structure creates confusion for stakeholders inside and outside the UNESCO system. However, it is important that this strategic transformation be accompanied by a viable human resources plan.

UNESCO's presence in countries is vital for its action and its ability to forge partnerships in the field, in particular with a view to mobilizing resources. UNESCO is clearly at a disadvantage in countries where it does not have a physical presence, particularly in terms of visibility and resource mobilization.

A fully-fledged decentralized regional office must be able to promptly and effectively assist and support the country offices under its responsibility without the need to consult Headquarters in most cases. If a regional office is unable to do so, and permanent consultations with Headquarters are excessively increased, it will lead to more bureaucracy and inefficiency within the system. It is also important that the regional offices be strengthened through the recruitment of staff with sufficient technical expertise in fundraising, programming and administration, as well as in technical aspects such as ICT and web support.

A clear reporting line and a feedback mechanism between the regional and country offices are essential. A regional offices and the country offices under its responsibility should be managed and **considered as a single entity**, while taking into account the United Nations reform on the "repositioning of the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda" and in close cooperation with the relevant resident coordinators.

With regard to the principle of time-bound presence of national offices, **ISAU requests clarification on the functions envisaged for such offices in terms of posts and activities**.

PARIS, 8 March 2019
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**FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

PART II

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

SUMMARY

A.   SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FIELD NETWORK

Pursuant to 204 EX/Decision 5.II.A, the Director-General presents herein a report on progress made as regards the review of the overall strategy for UNESCO's field presence, taking into account ongoing activities undertaken in the context of UNESCO's Strategic Transformation, in particular in the context of UNESCO's presence worldwide.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 22.

A. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FIELD NETWORK
(Follow-up to 204 EX/Decision 5 II.A)

I. Introduction

1. By its decision 204 EX/Decision 5.II.A, the Executive Board reiterated the importance of a responsive and sustainable field network for the implementation of the Organization's mandate, as well as to ensure that UNESCO is well positioned in the United Nations development system's joint programmes at the country and regional levels in order to attain the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Executive Board also invited the Director-General to focus her efforts on improving strategic and programmatic cohesion between Headquarters and the field network. With this in view, the Executive Board requested the Director-General to present to it at its 206th session an overall strategy for UNESCO's field presence following a comprehensive house-wide review accompanied by consultation with Member States, including National Commissions.

II. Context

2. Since spring 2018, UNESCO engaged in a **Strategic Transformation** process with a view to responding in an effective way to the ever more rapid and challenging global changes. This process aims to strengthen the management culture, improve means of action, strengthen and adjust the content of programmes (as detailed in documents 205 EX/5.III.INF.2; 205 EX/5.Part.III.D.Rev.; 206 EX/5 Part II.E).

3. As part of this Strategic Transformation, a **Working Group on UNESCO's global presence** has been established and followed the approach where emphasis was placed on an overall review and reflection on UNESCO's field structure – present and future. The results of the work of the Working Group are thus reflected in the present document, as ground work for an eventual future and comprehensive overall strategy for UNESCO's field presence.

4. The Strategic Transformation process is aligned with the ongoing reform of the **United Nations Development System (UNDS)** outlined in the Secretary General's December 2017 report on *Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet.* This reform, which reaffirms the importance of regional entities, and notably aims at optimal deployment of substantial assets at the regional level, is embarking on an in-depth restructuring which will have a considerable impact on the ground, in terms of structures, operational modalities and financial involvement. The United Nations reform provides an opportunity for UNESCO – which fully supports the general principles guiding the United Nations reform efforts towards a Repositioning of the UNDS – to redefine its comparative advantages, review its global, regional and country presence and reform its working modalities.

III. UNESCO's presence worldwide

5. The UNESCO field network is presently composed of 53 field offices (including four liaison offices). At the regional level, **two parallel structures** coexist (one in Africa and one in the remaining four regions), as the consequence of the field network reform process engaged but heavily impacted in 2011 by the financial crisis. As a result, in **Africa**, the field network structure consists of five multisectoral regional offices that supervise 11 national offices under their coverage (one also being a liaison office to the AU). In other regions, structured under a three-tier approach as per 2000/2001 field reform, cluster offices serve a group of Member States in all of UNESCO's areas of competence but do not supervise national offices under their coverage. They are backed by thematic regional bureaus. The field structure in the remaining regions is as follows:

–   **Arab States**: 2 regional thematic bureaus – which also have the functions of cluster offices – , 2 cluster offices and 4 national offices;

– **Asia and Pacific**: 2 regional thematic bureaus – which also have the functions of cluster offices – 5 cluster offices and 7 national offices;

– **Europe and North America**: 1 regional thematic bureau and 3 liaison offices;

– **Latin America and the Caribbean**: 3 regional thematic bureaus – of which two are also cluster offices and one is national office –, 3 cluster offices and 5 national offices.

The current dual structure makes it difficult to harmonize UNESCO's strategies and programmes across all the regions.

7.   Within the Strategic Transformation process, **Working Group 4** on **UNESCO's Presence Worldwide** has worked towards the reflection on the optimization of UNESCO's network of offices around the world and the improvement of its organization, in order to respond to the complex multilateral challenges of developing countries and to address evolving needs of all its Member States. UNESCO has to coherently position itself globally and locally, mobilize resources and partners, and ensure its relevance and impact at all levels with the aim to improve UNESCO's field network sustainability and effectiveness, including through the harmonization of its structure.

8.   The working group identified a number of measures that are directly related to strengthening the sustainability of UNESCO's field network, some of which are a result of implementation of relevant recommendations of external and internal audits. Performance management for Directors and Heads of offices have been enhanced and SMART objectives have been defined, based on which their performance will be assessed at the end of the biennium. In addition, responsibility and accountability matrices are being reviewed, on the basis of the matrix approved for UNESCO's field network in Africa.

9.   With reference to the 204 EX/Decision 21.I, an overall review and analysis of open audit recommendations was undertaken within the framework of the Strategic Transformation with a view to identify main points of dysfunction and improvements. Working Group 4 will include the relevant recommendations, in particular those related to the recent external audit of the field network, in its consideration of the architecture of the future field network.

10.   Working Group 4 has also worked on the review and refinement of the **criteria and principles of UNESCO's presence worldwide** which could eventually be applied to the mapping of a UNESCO's field network. Progress made by the Working Group 4 and in particular the development of these criteria and principles, was presented to Member States in November 2018 and February 2019 through information meetings.

11.   These principles and criteria are now presented hereafter for consideration by the Executive Board.

A.   UNESCO's field presence

12.   The **conditions for a successful implementation** of the field network reform and implementation strategy should respond to the following requirements, the first being a real institutional and political will to transform.

13.   Future global presence of UNESCO will need to be built in a progressive/phased manner. A time-bound Action Plan will need to be developed to transform our existing presence at regional and national levels into the new structure based on agreed principles and criteria for, both, Regional offices and country presence. The Action Plan should include clear targets, deliverables and risk assessment. A key component of transformation should be a communication strategy aimed at engaging both UNESCO staff, Member States and external stakeholders in building ownership of the planned change through the rationale of the reform, the vision and the expected outcome. A single oversight entity to monitor and report on the progress of the Action Plan will be required.

14.   Successful optimization of the field structure requires deep understanding of strategic challenges and opportunities of the whole Organization and its field network. The institutional and political will to transform the UNESCO presence in the world stems from the principle "UNESCO (acting) as ONE".

15.   Reflection on the field sustainability is intertwined with Headquarters structure, culture and procedures and should take into account (i) the review of overall human resources and administrative and financial policies (ii) definitions of roles and accountabilities of entities within the Secretariat, (iii) resource mobilization approaches and (iv) strategies and structures of Sectors. Determination of administrative functions at the regional and country levels will require the definition of independent services and taking into consideration United Nations system-wide reform of field presence as regards common back-office functions.

B.   Complementarity of UNESCO Headquarters and field Network

16.   **Headquarters**: Based on consultations with the field and all stakeholders, Headquarters defines the Organization's overall strategy and its programme and budget, as approved by UNESCO's governing bodies, that provide the framework for UNESCO's action globally and at regional and country levels. It also provides policy guidance and coordination for field implementation, strongly supported by programme sectors. In addition, Headquarters implements global programmes – either on a sectoral or inter-sectoral basis – which may have regional or country-oriented components. Headquarters supports overall governance of UNESCO and overviews the financial and program implementation management. Headquarters assumes "lead" role in fostering the intellectual mission of UNESCO globally, as a forum for intellectual debate, responsible for standard-setting and normative functions within its areas of competence.

17.   **Field office network**: Implements UNESCO's programmes in its fields of competence at the regional and country levels in response to the needs of and in close coordination with Member States. Field offices foster response to the emerging needs of Member States, through interactive relations with relevant regional and national partners and donors, notably with regional and national entities within the United Nations development system, in order to provide technical support and policy advice to Member States. Field offices cooperate with National Commissions and other relevant partners, and draw upon the skills available in other field offices in the region or at Headquarters. The network provides input to global programming of UNESCO activities. Directors and Heads of field offices have representation functions.

–   Regional offices have a key role in providing strategic direction at the regional level, coordinating UNESCO work within their region, leading the implementation of regional programmes and projects, ensuring UNESCOs active participation in regional United Nations governance structures, and providing technical and administrative backstopping to programme implementation at the country level.

–   Country presence is a key modality for UNESCO operational action, notably within the context of United Nations reform and the increased importance of country level intervention through UNDAFs. UNESCO's presence at the country level responds to national needs, and can either be implemented though established country offices or through flexible/time-bound presence in response to emerging specific country needs. Country field presence should be subject to more flexible transformation arrangements allowing adaptation of the scope and structure of the presence and should be accompanied by sunset clauses to be foreseen in respective host country agreements. The principles and criteria described in this document are proposed for country offices while other modes of national presence may be decided on a case by case basis).

–   Liaison and Partnership offices (LPOs): enhance inter-institutional cooperation between UNESCO and its partners, be it the United Nations system, the European Union, the African Union, or any other national, regional or international institution.

C. Principles and criteria for the proposed structure and functions of the field network

18. The future field network needs to be more manageable and efficient and would benefit from a more uniform structure. Based on the principles and criteria detailed in the Annex to the document, the proposed structure could be a **two-tiered system** composed of **regional level multisectoral offices** and **flexible country-level presence** responsive to particular needs of Member States based on principles and criteria defined above:

– Number and location of Regional offices would be determined by overall UNDS architecture including existence of United Nations regional hubs and/or economic and social commissions, with at least one Regional office per region, subject to consideration of regional specificities and demands.

– Decision on location of Country offices could be demand driven, based on an analysis of UNESCO's priorities and capacities in the area/country, level of available infrastructure and relevance of UNESCO's programmatic expertise to the overall United Nations system strategic approach

D. Functions of a two-tiered system:

19. **Regional offices (RO):** Fully-fledged Regional offices which would coordinate all UNESCO structures in the region, engage with regional United Nations entities, raise extrabudgetary funds, ensure coordination and supervision of country presence, serve as a decentralized regional central services platform and liaise with programme sectors and central services at Headquarters. The following main functions of Regional offices are proposed:

– Assume authority over and responsibility for all staff, programmes and projects (including intersectional);

– Exercise supervision/backstopping of country offices with clear reporting lines from country offices and Regional offices, and between Regional offices and Headquarters;

– Assume full authority, in their respective regions, as regards coordination of programme design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting;

– Engage effectively with UNDS system in the region;

– Build, host and manage, as and when required, temporary project teams to design and implement projects in support programme execution in countries in the region;

– Provide authoritative technical and expert advice to country offices in all areas of UNESCO's fields of competences;

– Provide support for country political/economical/social analysis to assist country offices in development of country level programme strategies and support their integration within UNDAF processes;

– Mobilize local/regional expertise, partners and networks (including UNESCO centres and institutes, UNESCO Chairs, National Commissions, etc.) to support programme implementation at both regional and country levels;

– Serve as a decentralized regional administrative platform aimed at strengthened and streamlined administrative support at regional level;

– Ensure communication flow outreach and advocacy at regional level and support country offices in these activities;

–   Ensure implementation of resource mobilization strategies for the region and support country offices in resource mobilization.

20.   **Country offices (CO) and presence:** Flexible structure to respond strategically to the needs of Member States through enhancement of UNESCO support to national development priorities and implementation of programmes which are exclusively funded from extrabudgetary resources, either through conventional donors or through self-benefiting arrangements. They will report to their respective Regional offices as regards programmatic alignment with regional strategic priorities and orientations. Maintenance of the country presence would be time-bound and subject to sunset clause to be included in the host country agreement. Proposed main functions of Country offices, carried out in coordination and support of respective Regional offices are as follows:

–   Build strong relationships and engage with national partners, civil society, development community and United Nations system organizations;

–   Mobilize extrabudgetary resources and implement extrabudgetary programmes at country level;

–   Identify programmatic opportunities and coordinate with the Regional office and Headquarters to develop programme proposals;

–   Engage in the development and delivery of UNESCO country-level planning and programmatic strategies, and their integration into the UNDAF;

–   Assume representational functions at country level

21.   **Liaison and Partnership offices** (LPOs): to continue to enhance inter-institutional cooperation between UNESCO and its partners.

Proposed decision

22.   In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1.   Recalling 204 EX/Decision 5.II.A,

2.   Having examined document 206 EX/5.II.A,

3.   Also recalling the need for UNESCO to align itself with the ongoing United Nations Secretary-General reform on "repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda", which will have impacts on the ground,

4.   Further recalling the need for a sustainable, effective UNESCO field network, able to respond to the complex multilateral challenges of developing countries as well as to the evolving needs of all its Member States,

5.   Welcomes the work undertaken by working group 4 of UNESCO's strategic transformation, which has already undertaken measures aimed at optimizing UNESCO's presence around the world and improving its organization;

6.   Acknowledges the work on principles and criteria as presented in document 206 EX/5.II.A;

7.   Invites the Director-General, on the basis of discussions of the Executive Board on the aforementioned revised principles and criteria, to present a further progress report on UNESCO's presence in the field, including a reflection on ways to implement this policy in the broader context of United Nations development system reform, as it unfolds.

ANNEX

PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR UNESCO FIELD PRESENCE

1. Principles for UNESCO overall field presence

Overall principles

Enhanced response to the needs and demands of Member States at global, regional and country levels within the context of sustainable development frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda and beyond; promotion of UNESCO's values, mission and vision at regional and national levels

UNESCO's continued relevance and effectiveness within the United Nations Development System (UNDS)

Fulfilment of the UNESCO's global mandate in setting international standards and norms in its areas of competencies and ensure their operationalization at the regional and country level

One UNESCO implementing a coherent programme

Structure of Headquarters and sound human resources and administrative policies that allow pertinent guidance in support of field network

Supportive principles

Effective Subsidiarity

Flexibility and pragmatism

2. <u>Principles and criteria for UNESCO for a Regional office</u>

Principles for a Regional office

Implementation of UNESCO regional programmes (strategies), providing leadership and guidance in the region on global and regional topics; advocacy for UNESCO's values, mission and vision at the regional level; backstopping to programme implementation at country level

Harmonization with the United Nations presence regionally

Potential to access partners, networks and extrabudgetary resources at the regional level

Criteria for establishment and maintenance of Regional office

Essential criteria	Supportive criteria	Operational criteria	Capacity and performance criteria
• Gains in efficiency and effectiveness of UNESCO actions in the region • Alignment with United Nations regional hubs/economic and social commissions are the first criteria for Regional office location and in addition, political or socio-economic regional groupings already established will also be a factor for decision	• Level of support from host Member States and from other countries in the region • Existence/signing of a host country agreement for the establishment/mainten ance of the Regional office at that location • Level of infrastructure, financial support and contribution-in-kind from the host Member States	• Level of extrabudgetary funding currently and potentially available (for maintenance or change of status) • Transportation connectivity to all Country offices and to international destinations, telecommunications infrastructure and access • Conducive environment for mobilizing expertise	• UNESCO critical mass of expertise across all the programmes and at management level • Capacity to implement regional initiatives and to support Country offices in the implementation of their programmes • Capacity to serve as the administrative, financial and Human resource platform for the Country offices in the region • Potential or demonstrated capacity of the office in fundraising, networking and programme implementation both within UNESCO and externally

3. Principles and criteria for UNESCO for Country office

Principles for Country office

Relevance to national demands, needs and situation (developmental, and post-conflict, crisis situation, small island developing States – SIDS, least developed countries – LDC, countries with self-benefiting opportunities among other priority countries); advocate for UNESCO's values, mission and vision at the national level and within United Nations country teams

Level of extrabudgetary funds that are available or that can be mobilized

Potential to access partners, networks and extrabudgetary resources at the local level

Criteria for establishment and maintenance of Country office

Essential criteria	Supportive criteria	Operational criteria	Capacity and performance criteria
• Gains in efficiency and effectiveness of UNESCO actions where it is required • Participation and level of engagement in the UNDAF and in UN coordination initiatives and mechanisms at country level • Financially viable with minimum support from regular budget • Programmatic portfolio	• Existence/ signing of host country agreement for the establishment/ maintenance of Country office that includes sunset clauses • Level of infrastructure, financial support and contribution-in-kind from the host Member State	• UNESCO's ability to function as an international agency without impediment for its programmes and with adequate security • Level of extrabudgetary funding currently and potentially available, in coordination with Headquarters	• Demonstrated capacity of the office in fundraising and networking both within UNESCO and with external partners • Capacity to partner with local communities and local partners

4. Principles and criteria for UNESCO for Liaison and Partnership offices

Principles for Liaison and Partnership offices

Enhanced coordination and cooperation within the United Nations Development System, the European Union, the African Union or with any other governments or relevant international institutions

Building and maintaining partnerships as a means of advocating and promoting UNESCO programmes as well as of mobilizing resources in support of UNESCO goals and priorities

Effective outreach and advocacy on relevant areas of UNESCO's strategic programme

Criteria for establishment and maintenance of Liaison and Partnership offices

Essential criteria	**Supportive criteria**	**Operational criteria**	**Capacity and performance criteria**
• Gains in efficiency and effectiveness of UNESCO actions towards agenda 2030 • Financially viability with institutionalized support from the Organization's budget or via internal agreement on extrabudgetary funding	• Level of infrastructure, financial support from the host Member State or institution	• UNESCO's ability to function as an international agency without impediment for its activities and with adequate security	• Demonstrated capacity of the office in performing its enhanced coordination, partnership and outreach functions