

## **Tenth International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO**

Moscow (Russian Federation), 26-27 November 2018

### **“Science as a common good of humankind”**

*Science in our minds, science for our times*

### **Concept Note**

#### **Introduction**

In accordance with the Directives concerning UNESCO’s partnership with NGOs, adopted by the UNESCO’s General Conference in 2011, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee has the responsibility of organizing, in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, international forums of NGOs on UNESCO priority issues.

In order to take into account the cultural and geographic diversity of civil society and further involve new organizations located in diverse regions of the world, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the UNESCO Secretariat organize the Forums wherever possible outside UNESCO’s Headquarters in Paris.

Nine Forums have been organized on the following topics: “Which Education Goals for Tomorrow’s Citizens of the World: Is Quality Enough?” (Paris, France – 2013); “Access to Water for All in Africa” (Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire – 2014); “The Role of Youth in Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage” (Sozopol, Bulgaria – 2014); “The Role of Women in Fighting Poverty” (Paris, France – 2015); “Rapprochement of Cultures: One Humanity Beyond Diversities” (Beijing, China – 2016) ; “From Promoting to Building Peace with NGOs” (Querétaro, Mexico – 2016); “Youth and its Social Impact” (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – 2017), “Changing Minds, not the Climate; the Contribution of NGOs” (Paris, France – 2017) and “Another Perspective on Migration” (Tunis, Tunisia – 2018).

#### **Why a Forum on Science?**

Science is at the basis of a new era of our civilization, with ever-increasing technological and scientific evolutions, including big data, artificial intelligence and nanotechnologies, which creates a new deal in human activities and relationships. In the face of new global challenges, science can contribute to extraordinary advances in the areas of poverty, food security, health, education, inequalities including gender, water management, labour and ultimately the preservation of our planet, but also the exploration of new paths to inclusive and sustainable development (science for the good of all and for peace as foreseen by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Science can also be used in the transformation of warfare, the use of fully autonomous weapons and some forms of genetic manipulation and human “enhancement”, which implies new responsibilities and forms of cooperation between scientists and society, and raises new ethical issues and debates.

The key role of science goes beyond purely scientific issues and should be a concern to each and every one of us in our individual and collective choices as well as in our societal and political choices. Youth are also concerned by science and are key to achieving global goals; UNESCO has made it a priority to actively engage youth across all its programmes as “today, more than ever, young women and men are change-makers, building new realities for themselves and their communities (...) and all over the world, youth are driving social change and innovation”.

Encouraging a stronger participation of young people and youth organizations in the events of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee is an important part of our 2017-2018 strategy aimed at increasing scientific literacy for future citizens and drawing attention to potential educational pathways preparing them to pursue scientific careers.

This forum will also focus on issues related to ethics and social sciences, a necessary alliance between scientists to “provide solutions to complex and urgent problems of global public interest and to defend the values inherent in science at a time when it is increasingly difficult to make them heard”, as evidenced by the recent merger of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC), two of UNESCO’s earliest partners in the creation of the International Science Council (ISC), as a global non-governmental organization representing natural and social sciences.

### **The Tenth International Forum of NGOs**

In accordance with the aforementioned Directives, the Forum is organized by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat and with the active participation of UNESCO’s partner organizations. The Forum is designed in priority for NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, while remaining open to the participation of other NGOs and institutions, as well as representatives of Member States.

**The first objective** of the forum is its usefulness: how to elevate the quality of the debate on the role of science in our society. Due to its strong relevance in this field, we propose to take the UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers as reference, which was adopted unanimously at the 39th session of the General Conference, as reference. A table of correspondence between the themes of the Recommendation and those of the forum has been designed (and is included in the file) in order to help you find the words, sentences, articles relating to the issues raised in a free and open debate on the role of science and scientific researchers. Such a table is necessarily incomplete, since there is no limit to the questions that may be asked during the preparation and unfolding of the Forum.

**The second objective** is to explain, to provide benchmarks and empower, and create the right conditions for the development of a critical mind, an informed consent and a productive dialogue, as science concerns us all while being the subject of prejudices, expectations, fantasies and fears. It is a necessity to counter anti-science messages and to learn from science to unlearn prejudices as well as to know, for example, what some technologies such as artificial intelligence really mean.

**Finally**, the science forum will provide the opportunity to alert and engage civil society, for a better understanding of the relationship between scientific knowledge and the current challenges of our society. Young people are a driving force for development and innovation but only if they are provided with the new skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential and contribute to sustainable development and peace. NGOs have a key role to play as informers and in promoting a citizen dialogue involving all stakeholders including scientists, governments, international organizations, political and financial decision-makers in the private and public sectors as well as the media. It is our collective responsibility to work together to approach science as a common good of humanity.

### **Expected outcomes of the forum**

1. To contribute to a quality dialogue around science and to use and promote the UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers as a tool.
2. To issue a *Call of NGOs* based on the participants' inputs on the different issues raised during the Forum.
3. To promote it and strengthen the partnerships with UNESCO in order to bridge the gender gap in science, and to contribute to the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.