

PRESS RELEASE



UNESCO commemorates 70th Anniversary



WINDHOEK - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) commemorates its 70th Anniversary this year. The celebrations in Namibia will start on 10 August 2015 with an introductory event at the National Theatre of Namibia to reflect on some of UNESCO's key achievements and contributions to Namibia's development.

The main celebration will take place on 22 September 2015 and is expected to be attended by senior Government officials, members of the international community and other key stakeholders. At the same occasion a documentary narrating the relationship and developmental collaboration between UNESCO and Namibia since 1992 will be screened. Similarly, a publication documenting UNESCO's contribution to the country's socio-cultural development and setting the tone for the post-2015 agenda will be launched.

A public lecture and discussion on UNESCO's work in Namibia is set for 25 November 2015 at the Polytechnic of Namibia. To conclude the celebrations, a 3-day camp for young people from UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) will be held in February 2016 under the theme "*UNESCO at 70: Cultural Heritage in Young Hands*".

The 70th Anniversary celebrations offers UNESCO and Namibia, as a Member State of the Organisation since 2 November 1978, a unique opportunity to reflect on past achievements, revisit and rethink UNESCO's orientations and programmes for the future, with particular focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNESCO was founded in 1945 to develop the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" as a means of building lasting peace. Its pioneering work has helped change the way people everywhere understand each other and the planet we live on.

In its early years, UNESCO helped rebuild schools, libraries, and museums destroyed during World War II, and served as an intellectual forum for exchanging ideas and scientific knowledge. As newly independent countries joined between the 1950s and 1970s, it turned its attention to access to education for all girls and boys and tackling illiteracy, which remain major challenges.

UNESCO led the movement to protect the environment and sounded the alert over the planet's shrinking biodiversity. Through its "Man and the Biosphere Program", established in 1971, it sought to reconcile both the use and conservation of natural resources. It was the first step towards sustainable development.

The Nubian Temples campaign of the 1960s to save Egypt's most famous monuments from the rising waters of the Aswan High Dam transformed approaches to cultural heritage protection and inspired the creation of the World Heritage programme, dedicated to safeguarding sites of outstanding universal value. This laid the basis for widening UNESCO action to safeguard three dimensions of heritage – tangible, intangible and documentary – and to promote respect for cultural diversity on the basis of human rights.

Through the development of community radio and multimedia centres, training for journalists, helping governments design media laws or, encouraging them to develop broadband services for all, UNESCO has championed freedom of expression, the rights of citizens to information, and helped lay the foundations of tomorrow's Knowledge Societies.

UNESCO is firm in the conviction that in this age of immense social change and increasing limits, the world must invest in resources that are renewable: education, cultural diversity, scientific research - and the boundless energy of human ingenuity - that will enable and drive the development essential for a just and sustainable future.

Millions of girls and boys still have no access to learning. Illiteracy prevents hundreds of millions of

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women and men from fully participating in their societies. Youth unemployment is a global challenge. Education remains a top priority on the new global development agenda being shaped by the international community. UNESCO makes the case for a new goal for equitable and quality lifelong learning and is mobilising governments and a wide range of other partners for this.

Climate change, shrinking biodiversity and increasing demands on natural resources call for more science, and more scientists, to increase our capacity to observe and comprehend the planet. UNESCO's programmes on the ocean, fresh water resources, the sharing of scientific knowledge, and in the social sciences have an important contribution to make.

Culture, a force for dialogue, social cohesion, economic growth and creativity, remains at the heart of UNESCO's mission. UNESCO is determined that it should be a priority in the post-2015 agenda, which should be human rights-based, with a focus on governance and the rule of law.

This is why freedom of expression is also so important and why UNESCO will continue to advocate for harnessing information and communication technologies, building knowledge societies and bridging divides.

The Namibia National Commission for UNESCO, in collaboration with the UNESCO Windhoek Office, work together to deliver on the above-mentioned commitments at national level, hence the importance to celebrate UNESCO's 70th Anniversary, to illuminate the contribution of UNESCO to Namibia's development in many ways.