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Press kit

75th anniversary





1. First UNESCO General Conference, 1946 Spanish delegation (front row, Pablo Picasso)
© UNESCO

2. Rehabilitation work on the Al Nouri Mosque, Mosul, 2019 – © UNESCO

3. Diver on an operation to study the seabed and underwater heritage
© UNESCO

4. Literacy campaign, Iraq, 2018
© UNESCO

5. Couscous know-how and traditions, UNESCO Intangible Heritage, 2020
© UNESCO



Foreword by the Director-General

*S*eventy-five years ago, on the moral and physical ruins of the Second World War, women and men gathered around a single conviction set down in our Constitution: that peace could only be founded “upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”.



© Christelle Alix, UNESCO

This 75th anniversary is an opportunity to take a look back at these decades of history, written by our Member States, but also to honour our founders. Their vision is all the more relevant today.

Indeed, years later, as our Member States gather for the 41st General Conference of UNESCO, this solidarity is more necessary than ever. Whether this means defending the right to education, reforging the relationship between humans and the environment, safeguarding the shared treasures of humanity, or creating an ethical compass for the technologies that are increasingly present in our lives, our Organization is working in all of the fields of its mandate to respond to these crucial challenges common to all humankind.

The pages that follow shine a spotlight on our many different fields of action, on our many different methods – from standard-setting to operations via international cooperation. In this way, this booklet pays tribute to all those who bring our Organization to life every day – the Secretariat, Member States, National Commissions, non-governmental organizations and civil society, especially young people.

Thanks to them, we are able to carry out the mission assigned to us three-quarters of a century ago: to give the international community a place where it can collectively address the upheavals affecting our world; a place where it can unite around the global common goods of humanity: education, culture, the sciences and information.

This place has perhaps never been more necessary than today.

Audrey Azoulay

UNESCO

Vision and mandate

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. UNESCO's Constitution was adopted in London in 1945, it entered into force in 1946.

After two World Wars in less than thirty years, UNESCO was born of a clear vision: to achieve lasting peace, economic and political agreements among States are not enough. We must bring people together and strengthen the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind, through mutual understanding and dialogue between cultures.

Over the years, UNESCO has launched pioneering programmes to achieve this.

UNESCO mobilized philosophers, artists, intellectuals from every nation. From the very beginning we debunked racist theories and we developed innovative projects that changed the world:

- The Universal Copyright Convention (1952)
- Man and the Biosphere programme (1971)
- World heritage Convention (1972)
- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)

UNESCO gave rise to global centres of scientific research, from CERN (1952) to SESAME (2017), and developed a global tsunami early warning system. UNESCO brought together experts and scholars to write

the first ever general history of Africa and all five continents.

UNESCO carried out literacy campaigns that spearheaded the development of nations, in Italy... in the Republic of Korea... in Afghanistan.

UNESCO established universal principles for scientific ethics and the human genome, and protected the best that humanity has to offer: the temples of ancient Egypt... saved from rising waters; The treasures of Venice...and Angkor; The old Bridge of Mostar... rebuilt after war.

Faced with the challenges of our age, UNESCO's mandate is more relevant than ever – and with all our Member States, UNESCO continues to lead the way forward.

- By imagining the futures of education to navigate to our new world and to live in peace with others and with the planet
- By establishing common standards on open science and the ethics of artificial intelligence
- By developing new tools to fight new forms of racism, hate speech and misinformation

UNESCO works on the ground, in Beirut, In Mosul, to revive the spirit of the people.

After 75 years, our mission is as critical as ever: the world needs education, science, culture and information. The world needs humanity.

Key dates in UNESCO history



First UNESCO General Conference at the Sorbonne university, Paris – © UNESCO

1946

The birth of UNESCO

The organisation was officially formed after its 20th member ratified its charter. In its famous preamble, the Organization's founding charter states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

1950

The first of UNESCO's Statements on Race

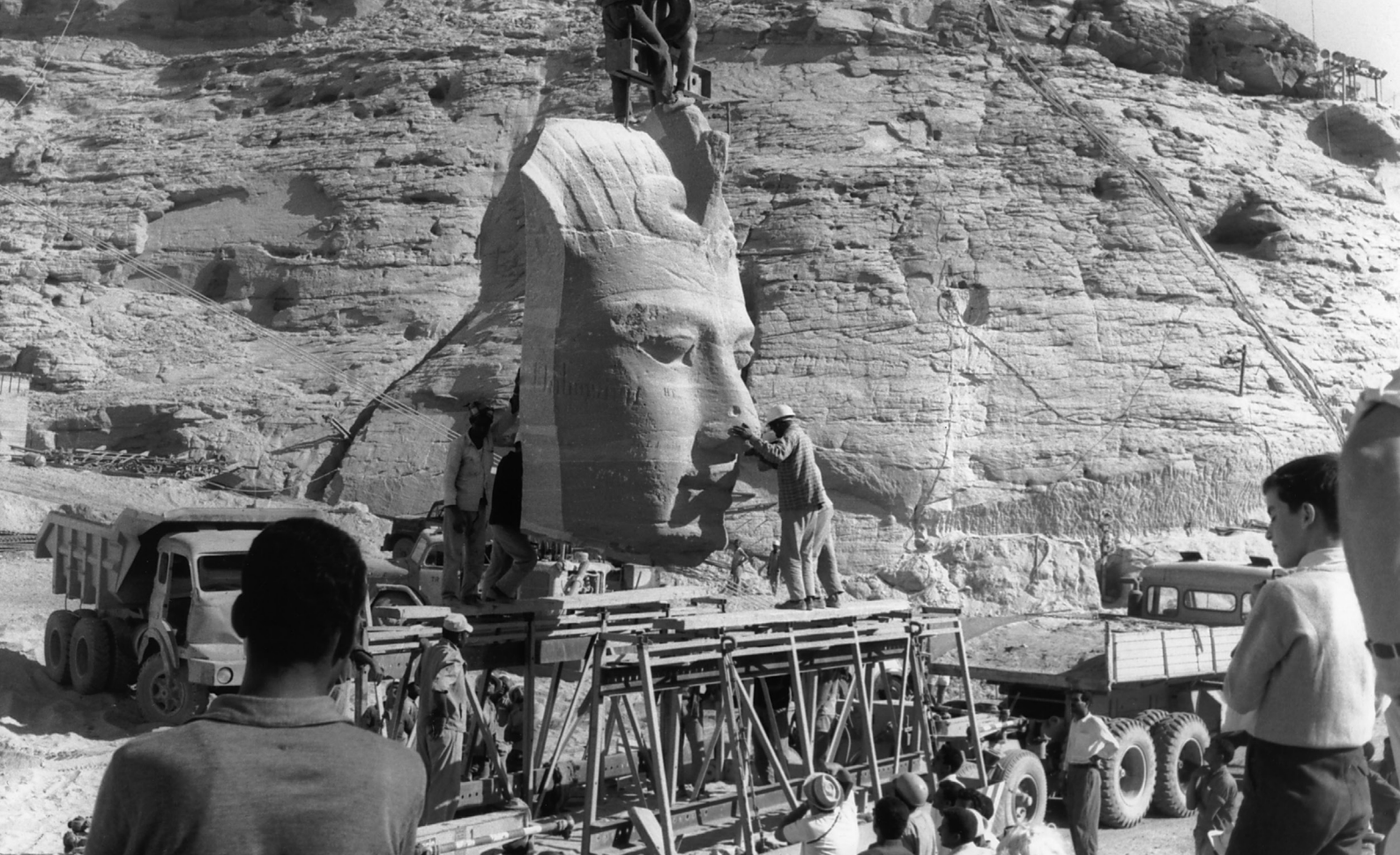
In 1949, UNESCO launched a major global program to combat racism, established in collaboration with leading intellectuals and scientists including Claude Lévi-Strauss, Alva Myrdal, Alfred Métraux and Michel Leiris.

UNESCO published the 1950 Statement on Race, which declared that there was no scientific basis or justification for racial bias – such a claim had never been made by an official public body, and it fundamentally changed the nature of the debate on racial difference.

1950

Literacy campaigns in Italy and Korea

UNESCO supported national literacy campaigns in Italy, in the Republic of Korea, and many other countries. These campaigns were instrumental in the formation of modern education systems which contributed greatly to future development.



Dismantling of the face of one of the colossal statues of the Great Temple of Abu Simbel, Egypt, 1966 – © UNESCO

1950

The creation of CERN

The idea of creating a European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN) was endorsed at the fifth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1950 in Florence, Italy. European intellectuals, cultural figures and scientists had understood that cooperation was a key tool for the reconstruction of peace. It was necessary to bring together European researchers from countries that had been fighting each other just a few years earlier around the same project.

1952

Universal Copyright convention

The famous © symbol in a book means it is protected by the Universal Copyright Convention which was sponsored by UNESCO.

1959

The UNESCO

Nubian campaign

In 1959 the Egyptian and the Sudanese Governments requested UNESCO to assist their countries in the protection and rescue of the endangered monuments and sites. In 1960, the Director-General of UNESCO launched an appeal to the Member States for an International Campaign which resulted in the excavation and recording of hundreds of sites, and the salvation and relocation of a number of important temples to higher ground, the most famous of them the temple complexes of Abu Simbel and Philae.

1970

Convention on the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Objects

UNESCO's 1970 Convention was an initiative led by newly independent countries in Africa and Asia, who were concerned about

the frequent looting of their cultural heritage for sale on the black market. The Convention empowered newly emerging developing countries to prevent the systematic looting of their national treasures. It was the first international convention for the protection of culture in times of peace.

1971

UNESCO's Man & the Biosphere programme was born

At the forefront of the sustainable development movement, Biosphere reserves were established as 'petri-dishes' for finding the optimal balance between the needs of local people and those of their environments. They are a testimony to UNESCO's innovation in creating sustainable livelihoods for local populations, safeguarding biodiversity, and promoting peace between communities in conflict over natural resources.

1972

World Heritage Convention

This is the world's blueprint for conserving sites which are considered to be of outstanding universal value. It has fueled international cooperation and provided a framework for the funding and management of the preservation of cultural and natural heritage all around the world.

1990

Education is a Right, not a Privilege

Although the universal right to education was enshrined in the Human Rights Act in 1948, by 1990 there was a growing awareness that far too many children around the world were missing out. In 1990, UNESCO led a global conference which produced the 'Education for All' framework, to make free primary education a reality for all children, everywhere.

1991

The Windhoek Declaration and World Press Freedom

When African independent journalists met in Windhoek, Namibia for a UNESCO conference on the role of a free, independent and pluralistic media, they shared experiences of the constant pressures and violence they and other journalists across the continent were facing. The declaration demands that governments should be proactive in protecting journalists and advancing opportunities for citizens to exercise freedom of expression, and that they should avoid controlling the media, and forbid State monopolies on the media. UNESCO has since developed a global network to support and protect journalists.



Guatemalan Stele which was recently handed back to Guatemala – © UNESCO



Young girls at Aisha Durani School, Kabul, Afghanistan. The UNESCO Initiative, the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education. © UNESCO

1997

The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome

The human genome is the complete set of genetic material of the human being. Scientists have called for a public debate about the ethical implications of germline modification. UNESCO regards the human genome as the "heritage of humanity", and believes it should be protected and passed on to future generations and that advances in science need to be considered in the light of human rights.

2001

Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage

Our ocean, seas, lakes and rivers hide from view and protect beneath the surface a priceless and largely unknown heritage. UNESCO has developed and implemented this Convention to Protect Underwater Cultural Heritage from looting, global warming, acidification and water pollution.

2003

Intangible heritage Convention

Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and know-how, transmitted from generation to generation within communities. Adopted after 60 years of work in this domain, the Convention is the international community's first binding multilateral instrument which aims to safeguard and raise the profile of this heritage.

2005

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

The adoption of the 2005 Convention was a milestone in international cultural policy. The global community formally recognized the dual nature, both cultural and economic, of cultural expressions produced by artists and cultural professionals.

2015

Restoration of the Mausoleums in Timbuktu

Three years after their destruction by extremists, the Timbuktu mausoleums were fully restored by UNESCO through extraordinary work carried out by local craftsmen and with international support. The oldest of these buildings were built in the 13th century. Sixteen of them are inscribed on the World Heritage List. Fourteen were destroyed in 2012, representing a tragic loss for local communities and humanity.



1955 - Colombia. An eager queue of girls at a UNESCO mobile library in Medellín. – © UNESCO

2018

“Revive the Spirit of Mosul”

Mosul, one of the world’s oldest cities, was overrun by Daesh in 2014. The city’s heritage was left in ruins following three terrible years of occupation and conflict. Religious monuments and cultural antiquities were badly damaged and thousands of its inhabitants were displaced and reliant on humanitarian aid. UNESCO has launched a major initiative to rebuild the city by engaging with the population through culture and education.

2020

“Li Beirut”

After the two devastating explosions in Beirut, Lebanon, in August 2020, UNESCO coordinated the reconstruction of schools and mobilized national and international organizations and experts to safeguard the city’s severely damaged education system and cultural heritage.

2020-2021

Response to COVID-19

UNESCO has been at the forefront of international efforts to mitigate and combat the COVID-19 outbreak and public health crisis. UNESCO developed tools to ensure the continuity of education, with a global education coalition, bringing together over 180 public and private partners and provided global real-time data on school closures. UNESCO spearheaded the global ‘Resiliart’ movement, organizing hundreds of debates to support and reinvent cultural policies at a time when museums, cultural sites, concerts and cultural practices and jobs were under threat. COVID-19 reminds us that scientific cooperation is key when we are confronted with a global public health issue. It is also stark reminder of the importance of quality, reliable information, at a time when rumors are flourishing.



A UNESCO team checks one of the century-old buildings in Beirut 2020 at risk of collapse. It was stabilized and temporarily covered before the rainy season by UNESCO, with the support of Germany. – © UNESCO

Flagship initiatives in 2021

Futures of education

Every generation needs its own approach to education, to tackle the challenges of its time. UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative aims to rethink education and shape the future. The initiative is catalysing a global debate on how knowledge, education and learning need to be reimaged in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and precarity. UNESCO convened an independent International Commission to work under the leadership of the President of Ethiopia, Her Excellency President Sahle-Work Zewde, and develop a global report on the Futures of Education. The report will be presented on November 10th, ahead of a key meeting on Global Education.

Revive the Spirit of Mosul

The city of Mosul, which means "the linking point" in Arabic, is one of the oldest cities in the world. For millennia, it has been a strategic crossing and a north-south, east-west bridge. In 2014, Daesh took the city and declared it its capital. Three devastating years (2014-2017) of occupation passed before the shackles of violent extremism could be broken. In February 2018, the Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, launched the flagship initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul", focusing on three key areas : reconstructing heritage sites, strengthening the educational system and revitalizing Mosul's cultural and intellectual life.

Ethics of AI

UNESCO proposes the development of a comprehensive global standard-setting instrument to provide artificial intelligence with a strong ethical basis, that will not only protect but also promote human rights and human dignity. If adopted, it will be an ethical guiding compass and a global normative bedrock allowing to build a strong respect for the rule of law in the digital world. After two years of international discussions, it is expected that this first ever global recommendation will be adopted during UNESCO's General Conference in 2021.

Global recommendation on open Science

UNESCO, as the United Nations Agency with a mandate for Science, is the legitimate global organization enabled to build a coherent vision for Open Science and the idea that key scientific research should be universally available for the good of human kind. At the 40th session of UNESCO's General Conference, 193 Members States tasked the Organization with the development of an international standard-setting instrument on Open Science, to be adopted at the 41st session of UNESCO's General Conference in 2021.

UNESCO in numbers

193 Member States, **2,217** staff with **53** regional offices and **136** institutes and research centres.

1154 UNESCO World Heritage Sites

727 UNESCO biospheres in **131** countries all over the world, occupying more than 6% of the earth's landmass.

1.4 billion US dollars: UNESCO's total budget for 2020/21.

More than **180** partners in UNESCO's Global Education Coalition.

95 schools being partially reconstructed or rehabilitated in Beirut following the devastating explosions in the city's port in August 2020.

3000 judges and magistrates took part in training sessions in 19 different countries in Latin America provided by UNESCO. The sessions focused on critical issues surrounding freedom of expression, free access to information and the safety of journalists.

9 Asian countries benefit from the South China Sea Tsunami Advisory Center which is one of 11 centers which make up the Global Tsunami Warning System of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

120 million US dollars of funding mobilized by UNESCO for over **2000** media development projects in the last 40 years.

300 policy-makers, scientists and community leaders are being trained to manage early warning systems for droughts and floods around Lake Chad. The BIOPALT program will also mobilize **30,000** lake residents for the peaceful management of natural resources, including water.

10,000 families from **30** fishing communities benefited from the Project on Sustainable Fishing on the Amazon Coast.

More than **800 million** people across social media platforms generated over **80,000** engagements on UNESCO's #truthneverdies campaign to monitor the killing of journalists around the world.



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and the 75th anniversary celebrations**



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