



## General Conference

39th Session, Paris, 2017

# 39 C

United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

• Item 4.20 of the provisional agenda

39 C/61  
2 November 2017  
Original: English

### STRENGTHENING UNESCO'S LEADERSHIP IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN PLAN OF ACTION ON SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY

#### OUTLINE

**Source:** 201 EX/Decision 5.I.I, 202 EX/Decision 5.I.K.

**Background:** At the examination of document 202 EX/5 Part I (K), the Executive Board invited the Director-General to present to the General Conference, at its 39th session, a report outlining how UNESCO will strengthen its leadership of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

**Purpose:** The Director-General informs the General Conference about the actions planned by UNESCO to exercise its leadership to strengthen the implementation of the UN Plan of Action since its 38th session.

**Decision required:** Paragraph 17.

In line with the Executive Board decision 202 EX/Decision 5.I.K, UNESCO will exercise its leadership to bolster the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity in the following way:



Job: 201702895

## **I. PROMOTE BETTER COORDINATION WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM**

1. UNESCO has taken steps towards the formalisation of a system of focal points for the safety of journalists within relevant United Nations entities. At the request of the United Nations Secretary-General's designated focal point for the safety of journalists, UNESCO, in consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is developing terms of reference for the focal points.

2. The Organization will continue to maintain close links with the informal Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO, as well as at the United Nations in New York and in Geneva, including through regular meetings and the organization of joint events and awareness-raising initiatives. One recent example is a commemoration side event at the General Assembly on 2 November 2017 to mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI).

## **II. SUPPORT MEMBER STATES IN TRANSLATING THE PROGRESS MADE AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL INTO NATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

3. UNESCO will continue supporting the reinforcement of Member States' monitoring and reporting capacities on the safety of journalists, following two pilot projects in Iraq and in Pakistan, supported by the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). Such activities are expected to help maintain the steady increase in the level and comprehensiveness of responses from Member States to the Director-General's annual request to report on the status of judicial enquiries of the killings of journalists condemned by the Organization. Between 2014 and 2017, the response rate has increased from 27% to 74%.

4. UNESCO will scale up its support to Member States in setting up or strengthening, on a voluntary basis and at their request, national mechanisms to prevent, protect against and prosecute attacks on journalists, using the insights in the "Practical Guide to Developing Specialised Safety Mechanisms".<sup>1</sup> Immediate action includes the organization by UNESCO of a regional conference on national mechanisms for the safety of journalists in Eastern Africa on 13 and 14 November 2017. A regional seminar in Colombo in December 2017 for IDEI will bring together representatives of national human rights' commissions with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation on the safety of journalists and combatting impunity in Asia. From 16 to 18 November 2017, UNESCO will co-host an event on protection mechanisms organized in Tunis by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). UNESCO will also support the UNESCO Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists in organizing a meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in December 2017 to exchange good practices in this area.

5. The Organization will produce and circulate accessible materials for strengthening the UN Plan of Action which can support Member States to act, on a voluntary basis, on the options for consideration identified in the Outcome Document of the Multistakeholder Consultation on Strengthening the Implementation of the UN Plan of Action held during 2017, accessible at: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/options\\_geneva\\_consultation.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/options_geneva_consultation.pdf).

## **III. EMPOWER KEY INSTITUTIONS ON THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS THROUGH CAPACITY-BUILDING**

6. UNESCO will reinforce the strategic focus it has given to promoting among key institutions – in particular the judiciary, law enforcement actors, and parliaments – an enhanced understanding of the importance of press freedom, the safety of journalists, and eradicating impunity.

---

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO and Centre for Law and Democracy (2016), "Practical Guide to Developing Specialised Safety Mechanisms"

7. Following a successful pilot project in Latin America, through which UNESCO has trained over 5,000 judges and justice system workers since 2014 on international standards of freedom of expression, the Organization is replicating the initiative in Africa, in partnership with the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights. UNESCO also intends to sensitize law students to these issues by carrying out similar training activities in moot courts in law schools.

8. In addition, the theme chosen for the 2018 celebration of World Press Freedom Day is "Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law", which includes particular attention to reinforcing judicial follow-up to cases of killings of journalists.

9. UNESCO will also organize further activities involving open dialogue and training to improve relations between police and security forces and journalists, having trained more than 1,000 security force members in 12 countries to date.

10. Institutional capacity-building will also focus on journalism education schools, notably through the integration of a model course on the safety of journalists developed for media students in the Arab States region by UNESCO and the IFJ.

#### **IV. ADDRESS SPECIFIC THREATS FACED BY WOMEN JOURNALISTS**

11. In response to the increase in attacks against women journalists, the Organization will promote the implementation by news outlets of gender-responsive safety protocols that include procedures for addressing online violence and harassment of women journalists.

12. UNESCO will also seek to strengthen its human resources working specifically on the safety of women journalists and digital safety.

#### **V. INCREASE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES**

13. Within the framework of its Research Agenda on the Safety of Journalists, UNESCO will pursue partnerships for new academic research on emerging issues regarding the safety of journalists, taking into account its digital dimensions, as well as on gender-specific threats. These specific areas, as well as an analysis of trends in physical violence against journalists and impunity, will continue to be studied in the biennial *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development Report*. To strengthen the knowledge base for the *World Trends Report*, UNESCO will collaborate with the "Worlds of Journalism" project which brings together researchers from almost 70 countries and surveys 27,500 journalists every four years. Furthermore, in light of the persistent high level of impunity for crimes against journalists, UNESCO will encourage further academic research on the underlying factors behind impunity.

#### **VI. REINFORCED MONITORING OF THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SDGs**

14. UNESCO will support Member States in regard to the use of indicator 16.10.1, which deals with the killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists and associated media personnel, as part of national monitoring of SDG progress. For example, UNESCO will help Member States prepare for the review by the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Political Forum in 2019 of SDG 16, which includes indicator 16.10.1. UNESCO will also work with Member States in regard to submissions and recommendations around safety within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review process at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

15. UNESCO will also carry out assessments using the Journalists' Safety Indicators (JSIs) in new countries, on a voluntary basis, following their application in ten countries to date. The Organization

will further encourage the adoption of a common set of basic criteria among international non-governmental organizations which monitor safety and impunity.

## VII. FUNDRAISING

16. A new, dedicated Special Account has been created to support UNESCO's work in promoting the safety of journalists and freedom of expression. UNESCO will increase fundraising for this account and for funds-in trust projects contributing to Expected Result 1<sup>2</sup> of the Major Programme V (Communication and Information) in document 39 C/5, as well as for the safety-related grant-making to grassroots groups that are carried out by the IPDC. UNESCO will seek secondments and loans to strengthen its capacity on the safety of journalists.

### Proposed resolution

17. The General Conference may wish to adopt a resolution along the following lines:

*The General Conference,*

*Recalling* 202 EX/Decision 5.I.K,

*Further recalling* the options for consideration of the Outcome Document of the Multistakeholder Consultation on Strengthening the Implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,

*Having examined* document 39 C/61,

*Strongly condemning* all attacks against journalists, media workers as well as social media producers who generate a significant amount of journalism, online and offline, and *recognizing* the need to improve safety conditions for journalists in all situations, including armed conflict,

*Acknowledging* the importance of enhanced coordination between all stakeholders, both within and outside of the United Nations system, to ensure the effective implementation of the UN Plan of Action,

*Welcoming* the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly at its 71st session of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes a dedicated indicator on the safety of journalists under SDG 16.10 on public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms,

*Noting with appreciation* the continued increase in the level of response by Member States to the Director-General's annual request for information on the status of judicial enquiries into the killings of journalists condemned by UNESCO,

*Noting with concern* an increase in attacks against journalists and the specific threats faced by women journalists, including sexual harassment and violence, both online and offline,

*Welcoming* the active role of the informal Group of Friends of the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO in supporting the Organization's work in this area, and its links with the Groups of Friends at the United Nations in Geneva and in New York,

---

<sup>2</sup> Member States are enhancing norms and policies related to freedom of expression, including press freedom and the right to access information, online and offline, and are reinforcing the safety of journalists by implementing the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

1. *Welcomes and supports* the actions outlined in document 39 C/61 regarding how UNESCO will use its leadership to strengthen implementation of the UN Plan of Action;
2. *Encourages* Member States to carry out, on a voluntary basis, national monitoring of indicator 16.10.1 on the safety of journalists, in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and *requests* the Director-General to support Member States in this process;
3. *Further encourages* Member States to strengthen voluntary implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at country level, including through capacity building and the establishment of national safety mechanisms to prevent, protect against, and prosecute attacks on journalists and to combat impunity;
4. *Invites* Member States to consider providing voluntary contributions, such as through the Special Account for freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), to ensure adequate funding for UNESCO's work in leading the implementation of the UN Plan of Action;
5. *Invites* the Director-General to reinforce activities addressing the specific threats to the safety of women journalists, both online and offline.