

Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations System Review of Management and Administration in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Management Response

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presents its management response to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations System concerning the recommendations set forth in the report of the JIU on the Review of Management and Administration in UNESCO (JIU/REP/2026/1). This is the third evaluation of UNESCO and builds on lessons learned from previous reviews, including the 2011 JIU review. While the review process itself took place under the previous administration, the final report was issued following the assumption of office of the current Director-General on 15 November 2025, during the initial phase of the UNESCO80 reform and modernization process.
2. The objective of the review was to provide an independent assessment of organizational arrangements and processes, regulatory frameworks and related practices concerning the management and administration of UNESCO, with a view to enhancing operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness.
3. The review assessed core areas of the institutional performance of UNESCO, including governance, leadership, strategic planning, financial and human resource management, information and communications technology (ICT), integrity functions, risk management, internal controls, oversight, and inter-agency coordination. Particular attention was paid to the impact of ongoing management reforms across Headquarters and field offices.
4. The review was conducted through a consultative, collaborative, and iterative process, with the methodology and Terms of Reference (ToR) jointly agreed upon by both parties. UNESCO acknowledges the constructive engagement with the JIU throughout the process, which ensured that the findings, the formal and informal recommendations are both relevant and actionable.
5. The JIU distributed the final report on 3 March 2026. The report was addressed to the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Board. The report contains 13 formal recommendations, six addressed to the Director-General and seven to UNESCO Executive Board, as well as 39 informal recommendations. In this management response, UNESCO addresses all recommendations of the Review.
6. In parallel with the finalization of the review, and pursuant to 43 C/Resolution 85, UNESCO developed and presented to the Executive Board at its 224th session the UNESCO80 Roadmap, as a phased and forward-looking institutional reform

framework aligned with the broader UN80 initiative. Structured around the three pillars of efficiencies and institutional improvements, mandate implementation review and structural adjustments, UNESCO80 constitutes the principal framework through which the Organization is pursuing institutional modernization, operational improvements and administrative reforms. UNESCO notes in this regard that a significant number of the reform objectives reflected in the JIU report were already under consideration or implementation within the UNESCO80 framework at the time of the finalization of the review.

7. It should be further noted that the JIU presented the results of the review to the Special Committee of the 224th session of the UNESCO Executive Board on 9 April 2026, and the Secretariat provided the management response during the same session (Annex 1: UNESCO document 224 EX/13 Rev), followed by a debate.
8. As a result of this debate, the Executive Board invited the UNESCO Director-General to pursue his efforts to address the systemic challenges identified in the JIU report, and requested him to submit to it at its 227th session (autumn session of the Executive Board in 2027), a consolidated report on the implementation of the recommendations and how they relate to or are included in the UNESCO80 reform programme. UNESCO will continue to pursue these efforts in a phased and pragmatic manner, in full respect of the Organization's Constitution and Basic Texts, the prerogatives of Member States and the Governing Bodies, and applicable intergovernmental processes and resource considerations.

II. General comments on the formal recommendations

9. UNESCO management appreciated the Inspectors' acknowledgement of UNESCO personnel's engagement and cooperation in conducting the review. UNESCO recognizes the timeliness of the JIU review and the relevance of a number of its observations and recommendations, particularly in light of the ongoing reform and modernization efforts being undertaken through the UNESCO80 framework. The Organization notes in this regard that many of the reform objectives identified in the report were already under consideration or implementation within UNESCO80 at the time of the finalization of the review.
10. In response to recommendation 1, addressed to the Executive Board, the Secretariat stands ready to support the Governing Bodies in strengthening decision-tracking and monitoring mechanisms, in line with the governance modernization objectives set out in the UNESCO80 Roadmap (Pillar I - Efficiencies and Improvements), which foresees enhanced institutional accountability and improved digital integration. As requested by the Executive Board, the Secretariat will design and implement, within available resources, a centralized digital platform to track Executive Board decisions and General Conference resolutions, assign

responsibilities, and monitor implementation in real time, and to present periodic progress reports on their implementation to the Governing Bodies. Regarding recommendation 2, concerning the adoption of a comprehensive governance reform, UNESCO notes that these matters are being pursued through the Open-Ended Working Group established pursuant to 43 C/Resolution 82 to review the procedures and methods of work of UNESCO's Governing Bodies. The Working Group, co-chaired by the President of the General Conference and the Chairperson of the Executive Board with the support of the Secretariat, is expected to submit recommendations and relevant proposals to the Executive Board at its 225th session and to the General Conference at its 44th session in 2027. In parallel, the UNESCO80 consultation process has generated a number of proposals aimed at strengthening working methods, coordination and institutional effectiveness in the interaction between the Secretariat and the Governing Bodies. A compilation of proposals relating to working methods received through the UNESCO80 consultations has been shared with the Chairs of the Governing Bodies for consideration within the framework of the ongoing intergovernmental process. With regards to recommendation 3, concerning the working methods of the Executive Board and the General Conference, the UNESCO secretariat confirms that this is aligned with the above-mentioned 43 C/Resolution 82 and the UNESCO80 consultation process, which has already produced proposals on improving the working methods of the governing bodies.

11. The Secretariat supports recommendation 4 regarding structured, regular engagement and communication between the Governing Bodies. In recognition of the importance of respecting the role of the governing bodies and the prerogatives of their heads as set in the respective Rules of Procedures, regular coordination meetings between the Chairperson of the Executive Board, the President of the 43th Session of the General Conference and the Director-General have been systematized and are an integral part of UNESCO80 Roadmap (Pillar I.1.B). The Director-General's participation in Executive Board sessions is ensured, and structured exchanges with Member States will continue to be strengthened.
12. To address recommendation 5, regarding the strengthening of the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies, structural adjustments have been implemented to improve the servicing of the Governing Bodies, in consultation with the President of the General Conference, the Chairperson of the Executive Board and subsequently endorsed by the Executive Board at its 224th session. These organizational adjustments, including updated coordination and reporting arrangements aligned with the revised governance support structure, are intended to strengthen governance support functions; improve operational coherence and enhance coordination and clarity in support of transparent, effective and trusted governance processes. The Secretariat

emphasizes that all members of the Secretariat remain fully bound by the obligations of independence, neutrality and professionalism set out in the UNESCO Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, which constitute the fundamental safeguards governing the conduct of international civil servants. Complementary measures under the UNESCO80 Roadmap are further enhancing governance support and information flows with Member States. These changes have been incorporated into UNESCO's 2026-2027 programme and budget.

13. The Secretariat supports recommendation 6 which calls for adopting a regulatory framework to govern internal candidacies for the post of Director-General. Provisions relating to the Director-General election process, including elements applicable to internal candidates, were considered by the Executive Board at its 224th session and will be further discussed at its 225th session in October 2026. The Secretariat stands ready to support any further guidance that the Governing Bodies may wish to provide in order to ensure transparency, clarity and consistency in the electoral framework, in full respect of the UNESCO Basic Texts.
14. The Secretariat supports recommendation 7 regarding the alignment of externally recruited appointments to the Office of the Director-General with the tenure of the serving Director-General. In accordance with this recommendation, the Secretariat will propose by the end of 2027 provisions in the Human Resources Manual, under Chapter 13 (Contractual Arrangements), regarding the alignment of externally recruited appointments to the Office of the Director-General with the tenure of the serving Director-General, with any transition into the permanent workforce of UNESCO being subject to open, competitive recruitment in full compliance with UNESCO Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.
15. The Secretariat supports recommendation 8, which calls for a comprehensive institutional review, aimed at enhancing organizational effectiveness, strategic alignment and operational coherence. JIU report notes that this review should be anchored in three strategic pillars:
 - Mandate consolidation: refocus efforts on areas where UNESCO holds clear normative leadership and comparative advantage
 - Structural realignment: restructure the Organization to eliminate duplication, foster intersectoral collaboration and improve coherence
 - Enhanced coordination and delivery: strengthen mechanisms for integrated planning, monitoring and evaluation to ensure measurable impact
16. The Director-General constituted an internal task team in December 2025 to undertake a comprehensive institutional review. This work resulted in the UNESCO80 Roadmap, structured around the three pillars of efficiencies and

institutional improvements, mandate implementation review and structural adjustments. Under Pillar II of the UNESCO80 roadmap (Mandate Implementation Review) a Member State-led working group will be launched to address mandate focus, with a view to further strengthening strategic alignment and ensuring that UNESCO's programme portfolio reflects its comparative advantage and normative leadership. Reflections on "Structural realignment" and "Enhanced coordination and delivery" are dealt with under Pillars I and III of UNESCO80, the implementation of which is regularly followed and discussed by the Senior Management Team. Some structural realignment efforts were approved at the 224th session of the Executive Board, including the consolidation of Natural Sciences and Social and Human Sciences into a single Sciences Sector. In this regard, the Secretariat considers that the objectives of this recommendation are being addressed through the UNESCO80 reform process.

17. The objectives of recommendation 9, regarding a sector-wide strategy and shared service standards, performance indicators and workflow automation in relation to the repositioning of the Sector for Administration and Management, are being addressed through Pillars I and III of the UNESCO80 Roadmap. Under these Pillars, the Secretariat will be modernizing working methods, strengthening accountability and enhancing institutional efficiency. Accountability Compacts for senior leadership, consolidated delegations of authority, prioritized management indicators and key performance indicators (KPIs) are being introduced to ensure clearer alignment between administrative functions and programme delivery. Workflow simplification, digital transformation, procurement reform and the consolidation of travel management processes are being implemented to reduce fragmentation and improve responsiveness across the full programme cycle. In parallel, targeted structural adjustments within the Administration Sector are being undertaken to streamline structures, strengthen coordination and reinforce financial oversight and accountability. In line with audit recommendations, the functions of "Budget Management" and "Financial Services" have been formally separated, and operational divisions have been consolidated to enhance coherence and oversight.
18. The objectives of recommendation 10, in relation to a centralized coordination mechanism between Headquarters and field offices, are being addressed through the UNESCO80 reform framework, particularly under the elements of Pillars I and III related to Structural Adjustments. Under Pillar I.1.C, operational coherence between Headquarters and the Field Network is identified as a priority, with clear lines of guidance, accountability and support. In particular the Division of Field Coordination has been reestablished within the Sector for **Priority Africa and External Relations** and a Director appointed. Structural adjustments have been implemented to strengthen UNESCO's capacity to engage effectively with Member

States and partners, enhance coordination between Headquarters and the field, and reinforce intersectoral approaches in support of the Organization's strategic priorities, in particular Global Priority Africa and also support to Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

19. Regarding recommendation 11, addressing staffing gaps and improving workload distribution, the Secretariat is reinforcing strategic workforce planning under UNESCO80 (Pillar I.4), to better align posts and expertise with programme priorities and evolving organizational design. A comprehensive review of operational requirements and available competencies will be undertaken to identify skills gaps, structural imbalances and areas requiring reallocation. In this context, posts may be reprofiled or redefined to progressively strengthen mission-critical functions and enhance institutional efficiency and productivity. Priority in new recruitments will continue to be given to positions directly related to programme delivery and essential support functions, including at the P-3 and P-4 levels where operational continuity and technical expertise are critical. The Secretariat further notes that workforce planning and organizational adjustments will continue to be undertaken in a phased manner, taking into account programme delivery requirements, operational realities and available resources.
20. The objectives of recommendation 12, in relation to a unified internal communication strategy, are being addressed within the framework of Pillar I of the UNESCO80 Roadmap which provides for strengthened internal coherence through enhanced information flows across Headquarters and the field network, structured engagement with staff and staff associations, and more predictable communication on institutional decisions and reform progress. Measures already undertaken include regular information and exchange sessions, improved access to institutional information, the systematic publication of the Director-General's official calendar, and the launch of a regular institutional newsletter. Building on these measures, the Secretariat will further consolidate a unified internal communication approach to ensure consistent, inclusive and accountable engagement across the Organization, reinforcing transparency, institutional alignment and collective ownership of reform under UNESCO80.
21. Regarding Recommendation 13, the repositioning of the Division for Partnerships and external relations has been addressed through structural adjustments reflected in the revised 2026-2027 programme and budget, and under Pillar III of the UNESCO80 Roadmap. The former Bureau of Strategic Planning has been reorganized into two distinct entities: the Division of Strategic Planning and Intersectorality, reporting directly to the Director-General, and the Division for Partnerships under the authority of the Deputy Director-General. The Deputy Director-General now exercises direct oversight of UNESCO's fundraising efforts

and strategic partnerships with Member States, multilateral institutions, philanthropic foundations, the private sector and civil society. With the appointment of a new ADG for Priority Africa and External Relations (PAX) as of 1 May 2026, coordination modalities between the Division for Partnerships and the Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations will continue to be strengthened in order to ensure coherence, complementarity and alignment in UNESCO's external engagement and partnership ecosystem.

III. General Comments on the Informal recommendations

22. The UNESCO secretariat also welcomes the 39 informal recommendations in the report, which the JIU indicates as intended to reinforce the Organization's management framework and related practices. The recommendations span areas such as decentralization and field network capacity, enterprise risk management, budgeting and reporting, assessment of intergovernmental programmes, strengthening of internal controls, the accountability framework and the further development of digital tools and data management. UNESCO Secretariat is committed to taking these informal recommendations into consideration, within the framework of Pillar I ("Efficiencies and Institutional Improvements), Pillar II (Mandate Implementation Review) and Pillar III (Structural Adjustments) of the UNESCO80 Roadmap as it continues to strengthen the management and administration of the Organization.