



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Natural
Sciences
Sector



University Twinning
and Networking
Programme



Sustainable
Development
Goals

THE GENEVA MILESTONE

The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2017. Today, there are more than 700 UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks around the world, and more than 170 of these specialise in the fields covered by the Natural Sciences Sector of UNESCO. They provide a unique scientific expertise in the United Nations context and significant global, regional and local impacts, in a wide array of relevant fields. The UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in Natural Sciences have an important role to play in the shared efforts to link science, policy and society through adopting open science practices to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other United Nations development agendas.

The 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 by the United Nations, represents a significant step forward in terms of recognising science, technology and innovation (STI) as a driving force for sustainable development in its three pillars, environmental, social and economic. As the only UN agency that includes science in its mandate, UNESCO finds itself at the heart of this initiative. It implements its activities through its global network of field offices, international scientific programmes, centres, institutes, and the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks.

Within this context, the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks linked to the Natural Sciences Sector gathered for the first time in Geneva from 5 to 7 July 2017 for the Conference *“Mobilizing UNESCO Chairs in Natural Sciences for Policy Action Towards the 2030 Agenda”*. The results of the deliberations and reflections about how UNESCO Chairs can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda are expressed in form of the **Geneva Milestone**.

The **Geneva Milestone** contributes to guiding the future endeavours of the UNESCO Chairs in Natural Sciences in close cooperation with the UNESCO family and the UNESCO National Commissions, as a blueprint for potential activities and cooperation avenues, throughout the following concrete areas:

Values:

- Uphold the values of UNESCO, and incorporate those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, into the operations of UNESCO Chairs, at organisational level and in their research, teaching and outreach.

Focus on the 2030 Agenda:

- Increase and enhance the focus of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks activities on the 2030 Agenda.
- Identify main SDGs for each Chair where they can make the most substantial contributions, and indicate specific fields of action where they could provide advice to stakeholders and policy-makers.
- Develop programmes aimed at generating new knowledge, as well as innovative tools for Member States to face the challenges raised by the SDGs.

Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity:

- Foster interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity throughout UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks, crucial for the successful implementation of the SDGs.
- Encourage interactions between Chairs from different but relevant disciplines, particularly to implement joint pilot projects towards achieving the SDGs.
- Adopt Open Science practices to promote collaboration and knowledge co-production



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Science-policy-society:

- UNESCO Chairs will endeavour to influence the host academic institutions towards putting societal interests and the 2030 Agenda at the core of their mission.
- UNESCO and UNESCO Chairs, with the support of UNESCO National Commissions, will work together to increase collaboration with policymakers and other stakeholders, including civil society, local communities, mass-media and private sector, and establish multi-stakeholder strategic partnerships, to allow for focusing research and training towards SDGs.
- Further develop and promote the full potential of the capacities and role of the UNESCO Chairs as think tanks for advancing towards SDGs through Science, Technology and Innovation.

Fostering collaboration:

- Engage in concrete impact-driven actions to strengthen Chairs and Networks exchanges, particularly through regional, inter-regional, South-South, and South-South-North cooperation, in order to enhance their capabilities and improve their leading role within their fields.
- Foster collaboration in the development and implementation of programmes, and in capacity building and standards development, between UNESCO Chairs and Networks, and UNESCO Natural Science Programmes at headquarters, regional offices and other field offices, UNESCO sites, National Committees of International Science Programmes, UNESCO Centres, and other UNESCO Sectors, with special focus on UNESCO global priorities, i.e. Gender and Africa.
- Engage with governments at local, regional and national levels, as well as regional bodies, in cooperation with UNESCO field offices, to promote actions of UNESCO and the Chairs.
- Encourage UNESCO National Commissions to strengthen advocacy for Chairs towards stakeholders, such as governments, civil society, funding institutions, private sector, and international organizations.
- Encourage UNESCO and UNESCO Chairs to incorporate the 2030 Agenda in the content of their meetings, conferences and forums, and actively involve relevant UNESCO Chairs in these, in order to increase collaboration.

Increasing visibility and knowledge sharing:

- Promote the establishment of networks and working groups of Chairs, at national, regional or thematic levels, to enhance communication, create linkages and support programme development.
- Establish a knowledge-sharing platform linked to the SDGs, to facilitate information exchange and contacts among UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in Natural Sciences, and with partners.
- Enhance communication and outreach activities, to highlight the achievements and activities of UNESCO Chairs towards SDGs, including dedicated websites, and to share scientific results in an open access environment.
- Share success stories about Chairs that have effectively collaborated towards the 2030 Agenda, in partnership with governments, private companies, international organizations, NGOs, donors and other non-academic entities.

A working group with the participation of representatives of Chairs and the UNESCO Secretariat will prepare, by the end of 2017, an Action Plan for follow-up of the Geneva Milestone, to be submitted to consultation with the UNESCO Chairs and Networks in Natural Sciences.