Serving the region for 70 years

As it commemorates its 70th anniversary, the UNESCO Regional Sciences Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean renews its commitment to the fundamental principles of UNESCO’s constitution: contributing to peace and security by promoting collaboration through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Over the years and in keeping with changes in the region and in UNESCO, the Bureau has adapted, contributing to reflection, critical thought and to the generation of science and knowledge as the foundation for policies geared towards sustainable development.

Taking an intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach, the Bureau addresses emerging challenges facing UNESCO’s Member States.

With the aim of furthering sustainable development in the region, the Bureau proposes a frame of reference with three strategic pillars that encompass the main challenges faced in Latin America and the Caribbean so that we can consolidate democratic, sustainable and inclusive development, and protect and promote human rights.

The three pillars are:
1. Democratic governance and justice; 2. Socioenvironmental resilience and 3. Access to knowledge and the right to science. A cross-cutting priority area will be its contribution to capacity building and conservation of UNESCO’s values for today’s emerging leaders.

Key regional challenges that must be tackled through an integrated approach include enhancing democracy and the rule of law, reducing the violence that has a major impact across the region; supporting environmental action—including climate action, disaster risk reduction, halting biodiversity loss and promoting the vitality of our ecosystems; and fostering policy-making based on the sciences and knowledge.

To do so, the Regional Bureau is developing and will implement a multiversal and innovative programme that includes actions to promote UNESCO’s values with current and emerging leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean. This will support them in assuming the responsibility to achieve the ambitious goals being demanded by the more than 500 million people who live in the region.

Through advancing these three strategic pillars, the Bureau will support Member States in implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and achieving the 17 sustainable development goals, especially their overarching pledge to “leave no one behind” and with the guidance of the 2030 Agenda’s five themes: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships.

Additional efforts:
- Programme on Science Education for Latin America was launched.
- UNESCO Interdisciplinary Consultative Group for disaster risk reduction was established in the region.

Diverse cross-sectoral initiatives were implemented throughout the region in 2018 and 2019. Here we share some of them:

CILAC 2018 Forum
1300+ participants from 68 countries.
200+ speakers took part in 67 parallel events. 30+ Sciences in the City activities, under the slogan of “science in every life”.

Water security
4500+ staff officials, decision makers and technical staff from 32 countries, trained in 51 seminars / courses / workshops on water security.

“Estamos Comprometidos” 2018
200+ projects contributing to sustainable development led by young people across the region.

Bioethics
320+ professionals, trained with scholarships in the Bioethics Lifelong Education Programme.

Biosphere Reserves
200+ experts from 19 countries in RED BIOCITIES and 14 LAC national bioethics committees.

Biological Reserve
780+ countries from Ibero-America and the Caribbean took part in the Eighteenth Meeting of the Ibero Man and Biosphere (IberoBAR) Network and endorsed an Action plan to 2025.

Disaster Risk Management
240+ Decision makers, journalists and technicians participated in capacity building.

Freedom of expression
400+ journalists from the region gathered in Bogota to discuss key elements of investigative journalism.

UNESCO Global Geoparks
8+ UNESCO Global Geoparks in Latin America and the Caribbean.

15 countries participated in the first interwise training course on geoparks.

Water security
200+ Decision makers, journalists and technical staff from 32 countries, trained in 51 seminars / courses / workshops on water security.

Social transformations
6000+ participants took part in the massive open on-line course “Knowledge and Inequalities in LAC”.

Youth and violence
20+ Digital applications for preventing violence created by young people with the assistance of experts.

Education
+600 Universities in Buenos Aires debated the role of school libraries in today’s education.

Reality: digital education application for young people was launched, based on Edgar Degas’s work “Seven complex lessons in education for the future”.

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Seventy years ago, shortly after the creation of UNESCO and through the impetus of a group of distinguished regional scientists, the Latin American Science Cooperation Office (LASCO) was established, with the aim of promoting and consolidating science in the region.

The 1950s: First actions in the region

The Sixties: UNESCO promotes science policy in Latin America

The Seventies: Decentralization and consolidation of major programmes

The Eighties: Greater reach in the region

The Nineties: From fostering science and technology activities to a Culture of Peace

The start of a new century: the Culture Programme joins the Bureau

Because the challenges of the future demand scientific knowledge; because the region still faces many pending questions; because the future will only be possible in peace and cooperation; the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Sciences commits to working for sustainable development, transforming the region.