

# Transforming knowledge for just and sustainable futures

An international conference to mark the 30th anniversary of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme

UNESCO Paris  
3 - 4 November 2022

Last updated: 22 September 2022

## Background

Established in 1992, the [UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme](#) is an inter-sectoral network to mobilize and share the expertise of higher education institutions to address complex interdependent development challenges. It promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work.

The 850 university chairs and UNITWIN research networks from over 110 countries represent a unique resource for intellectual and scientific cooperation at national, regional and global levels. They play a key strategic role in strengthening connections between knowledge, research, education, and public policies.

As the world faces multiple overlapping social, economic, political, technological and environmental disruptions, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme is needed more than ever. The inter-disciplinary nature of the Programme is well placed to address some of these issues. As well as recognizing past accomplishments, this conference will take a forward-looking approach and consider the future potential of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in contributing to the knowledge commons and open science.

This conference, organized by UNESCO with the support of the French National Commission for UNESCO, will celebrate the accomplishments of the Programme over the last three decades and advance authentic interdisciplinary dialogues and the cross-sectoral mobilization needed to confront the complex challenges on the horizon. Dedicated to the theme of “Transforming knowledge for just and sustainable futures”, the two-day event is grounded in the spirit of global scientific, moral, intellectual, and academic solidarity.

## Participants

Current members of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, Permanent Delegations to UNESCO and National Commissions for UNESCO, higher education institutions, partner organizations, and other UNITWIN stakeholders and UNESCO colleagues and networks are welcome to attend.

The conference will be held in-person at UNESCO’s Headquarters in Paris, 7, place de Fontenoy, Paris, France. Further information is available on the [UNITWIN home page](#) and the conference webpage is open for [pre-registration](#). UNESCO strongly encourages higher education institutions with funding possibilities to consider sponsoring the travel of collaborators and partners from the Global South.

# Objectives

## 1. Recognize the accomplishments of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme over the past thirty years

Celebration and recognition of accomplishments from across the past 30 years will be woven through the event, with attention focused on the ways that the Programme has generated knowledge and ideas that matter, strengthened capacities, enriched international and inter-cultural cooperation, and promoted intellectual solidarity.

## 2. Invigorate greater interdisciplinary cooperation and catalyze new research collaborations

The conference will also serve as a platform for generating foresight in priority thematic areas and to envisage the further evolution of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme. It will feature plenary and parallel sessions on developing foresight within and across UNESCO's priority programmes and provide opportunities for networking.

# Provisional agenda

| Day One – Thursday 3 November 2022 |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>MORNING</b><br>08:30-09:30      | <b>REGISTRATION</b>  |
| 09:30-10:00                        | <b>OPENING REMARKS</b> (Room I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, UNESCO (tbc)</li><li>• Ms Sylvie Retailleau, Minister of Higher Education and Research, France (tbc)</li><li>• Mr Federico Mayor Zaragoza, President, "Fundación Cultura de Paz", Madrid, Spain and former Director-General of UNESCO (tbc)</li></ul>   |
| 10:00-12:00                        | <b>The Transformation of the Knowledge Commons</b><br><b>Public Lecture</b><br><br>The growing complexity and interdependence of multiple global development challenges call for more inter-disciplinary and forward-looking research and knowledge generation. As a public good, science, research and evidence can inform decision-making at all levels, and shape agendas and policy actions for more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development in the years ahead. This conference will examine the value of key concepts and actions in the quest to transform knowledge for just and sustainable futures, such as the global knowledge commons; co-creating knowledge, research and evidence; democratizing research; steering digitalization; gender equality in science; and epistemic justice. |

A welcome coffee/tea will be offered to participants from 8.30am to 9.30am.

## Day One (cont.) – Thursday 3 November 2022

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 12:00-14:30                     | Lunch break   |
| <b>AFTERNOON</b><br>14:30-16:00 | <b>Responding to Multi-dimensional Crises: Implications for research</b><br><b>Plenary Panel 1</b> (Room II)<br><p>We are still experiencing the impact and aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the effects of climate change are becoming more evident, and violent conflict continues to undermine peace and development. In the context of such multiple and profound social, economic and environmental, crises, the principles, values and public institutions that our societies are founded upon are being called into question. This session will consider common denominators of these crises and what roles researchers, scientists and related institutions could play in responding to power asymmetries and social, economic and environmental imbalances. Do we need a new 'eco-social contract' as a means of addressing multi-dimensional crises? What are the possible implications for research, science and international cooperation?</p> |
| 16:00-16:30                     | Break   |
| 16:30-18:00                     | <b>Parallel Thematic Sessions</b> (provisional titles) <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Towards a Research Agenda to Transform Education</li><li>2. Transforming Research: Indigenous Knowledge, Values and Capacities</li><li>3. Ocean Science and Knowledge for Sustainable Development</li><li>4. Social Sciences and the Humanities</li><li>5. Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development</li><li>6. Information as a Public Good in the Digital Era</li></ol>   |
| <b>EVENING</b><br>18:00-20:00   | <b>ANNIVERSARY COCKTAIL</b>   |

## Day Two – Friday 4 November 2022

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>MORNING</b><br>9:00-10:30    | <b>Reimagining our Futures Together</b><br><b>Plenary Panel 2</b> (Room II)<br><br>The Summit of the Future, to be hosted in 2023 by the United Nations Secretary-General, is intended to, ‘forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and how we can secure it’. The Summit will cover a range of topics, including conflict prevention, sustainable use of the oceans, digitalization, and the application of human rights online. UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks could support the United Nations to navigate this complex landscape and deliver solutions, for the global ‘breakthrough’ described in the report <i>Our Common Agenda</i> . The potential to apply anticipation skills to reimagine various areas of UNESCO’s mandate will be discussed.                               |
| 10:30-11:00                     | Break   |
| 11:00-12:30                     | <b>Parallel Workshops</b> (Provisional titles) <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Interdisciplinarity at the Intersection of Sustainability, Inclusion, Resilience and Well-being</li><li>2. Futures of Higher Education</li><li>3. Open Science, Artificial Intelligence and Implications for Future Researchers</li><li>4. The Free Flow of Ideas in the Digital Age</li><li>5. Safeguarding Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Futures</li><li>6. Ocean Sciences, Policy, Economy and Governance</li></ol>  |
| 12:30-14:30                     | Lunch break   |
| <b>AFTERNOON</b><br>14:30-16:30 | <b>UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme: A Global Observatory?</b><br><b>Concluding Session and Way Forward</b> (Room II)<br><br>Recalling the aims, objectives - and evolution - of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, this session seeks to envisage its future potential for strengthening inter-university cooperation, international partnerships, research, teaching and community engagement and intellectual solidarity. Considering possible and preferred futures this panel will reflect on how the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme could best serve as a global think tank and an observatory of emerging issues and trends. UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks, National Commissions, and UNESCO Specialists will engage in an open discussion on the past, present, and strategic potential of the Programme. |
| 16:30-17:00                     | <b>CLOSING</b> (Room II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Representative of France (tbd)</li><li>• Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO</li></ul>  |