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OFFICIAL VISIT TO CAMEROON

MADAM AUDREY AZOULAY
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION (UNESCO)**

Yaounde, 5-7 February 2022

PRESS KIT

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CONTEXT OF THE VISIT

Madam Audrey AZOULAY, Director-General of UNESCO, will pay an official visit to Cameroon from 5 to 7 February 2022. This visit will be an opportunity to take stock of the cooperation between Cameroon and UNESCO which dates back to 11 November 1960.

The Director-General of UNESCO arrives in Cameroon on the eve of the final of the 33rd edition of the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON 2021). On Sunday 6 February 2022, she will be the guest of honour of the Head of State, H.E. Paul BIYA at the Olembe Stadium during the Total Energies 2021 AFCON final. Her presence at this event reflects UNESCO's commitment to the values of sport in general and football in particular. Sport is, in fact, one of UNESCO's flagship programmes, which has made it a tool for dialogue between civilisations, cultures and peoples and an indispensable element of social cohesion and harmony between peoples. In this, Cameroon is in perfect symbiosis with UNESCO.

This visit also comes in a context marked by a new strategic vision driven by Madam AZOULAY since her election in 2017 at the head of UNESCO. In her new mandate, which began in 2021, she advocates education for development, the invention of a new relationship between humanity and its environment, peace and cohesion in our societies and the mastery of the digital revolution.

The visit of the Director-General of UNESCO to Cameroon comes at a time of a transition at the head of UNESCO's Regional and Multi-sectoral Office in Central Africa, which is based in Yaounde. The outgoing head of the said Office, Salah Khaled, has been assigned to the UNESCO Office in the Persian Gulf region with residence in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. But he will continue to follow up on certain files initiated in Cameroon, such as the steps aimed at increasing the funding of Gulf countries in some UNESCO projects in Central Africa.

BIOGRAPHY OF MADAM AUDREY AZOULAY, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

On 9 November 2021, the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO elected, Madam Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, for a second four-year term. She has been in this position since 15 November 2017 – succeeding Bulgaria's Irina Bokova, with the overwhelming support of 193 Member States (155 votes out of 169 voting).

A former student of the National School of Administration (ENA) in Paris, Madam Audrey Azoulay, a French national born on 4 August 1972 in Paris, is a graduate of the Paris Institute of Political Studies and holds a Diploma of Business Administration from Lancaster University (UK).

She has been working in the cultural sector since the beginning of her professional career. She has, among other things, worked on the financing of the French public audio-visual sector, and on the reform and modernisation of the French film support systems. She has also worked as an expert for the European Commission on culture and communication issues.

As Culture Advisor to the former President of the French Republic (François Hollande), she notably initiated, in 2014, the design of a plan for the protection of endangered heritage. A plan that she implemented in 2016 as Minister of Culture and Communication. She also worked to promote access to culture among children with the launch of artistic and cultural education programmes within the school "Creation in progress", but also among the population in the regions or in priority security zones with the creation of innovative cultural infrastructure "Microfolies".

Audrey Azoulay has been actively involved for years in promoting intercultural and intergenerational dialogue in order to advance education for all and the dissemination of scientific and cultural knowledge.

She is committed to ensuring that UNESCO can fully fulfill its universal mandate, which promotes the values of humanism and openness, and can play a leading role within the United Nations. And this, as a forum where the world of tomorrow is conceived, as a body that produces standards that advance society and as an agency of experts that participates in disseminating knowledge to the greatest number of people in the world.

For Madam Audrey Azoulay, “none of the major challenges of today’s world can be solved by one country alone and without relying on the fundamental pillars of science, education and culture. Therefore, UNESCO can and must fully participate in a world order based on multilateralism and humanist values.

Under the leadership of Madam Audrey Azoulay, Africa has continued to be one of the two global priorities of UNESCO, along with gender equality. The adoption, in November 2021, of the new Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2022-2029), which aims to address the major challenges facing African countries, offers many opportunities for strengthening cooperation between UNESCO and African States.

For the past four years, UNESCO has been engaged in a major modernisation process in order to make its action more effective. In particular, the Organisation has mobilised for the reconstruction of the Old City of Mosul (Iraq), initiated in 2018, and whose construction sites are now at work.

Following the dramatic double explosion of August 2020, UNESCO also intervened in Beirut (Lebanon), where it successfully completed the reconstruction of nearly 90 schools and where it is now continuing its action in the fields of heritage and culture.

During the HIV-19 pandemic, when hundreds of millions of children and adolescents were deprived of their right to learn, UNESCO once again demonstrated its capacity to intervene by creating the Global Coalition for Education, which made it possible to ensure educational continuity in 112 countries.

This new dynamic is reflected in the consolidation of UNESCO’s budget. Based on two pillars - compulsory contributions from States and voluntary contributions - it reached 1.4 billion US dollars for the period 2020-2021. Voluntary contributions have increased by 50% over the period 2017-2021 compared to the previous four years.

MAJOR ELEMENTS OF CAMEROON-UNESCO COOPERATION

UNESCO Offices in Cameroon

Cameroon hosts the UNESCO Regional Office for Central Africa, which covers ten countries: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe.

Since 2019, two sub-offices for the North-West and South-West Regions are operational in Bamenda and Buea respectively. The establishment of another sub-office in Maroua (Far-North Region) will soon be completed.

Mrs Chantal BIYA and UNESCO

The First Lady of Cameroon, Mrs Chantal BIYA was nominated UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador on 14 November 2008, for her commitment to the fight against social exclusion through the promotion of inclusive education for the most vulnerable. In 2006, she received the UNESCO Marie Curie Silver Medal in recognition of her commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Areas of cooperation

Education

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon

Through the Global Coalition for Education, UNESCO has supported the establishment of distance education in Cameroon. In this regard, Cameroon is the first country in the Central African region to have put more than 1,000 courses online.

- In May 2020, UNESCO, as a partner agency of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), received funding of US\$ 11 million for the period 2020-2021, for the pedagogical and health response of schools and the strengthening of the resilience of the Cameroonian education system.
- UNESCO also received US\$ 1 million (April-December 2020) from the Education Cannot Wait programme to ensure pedagogical continuity, particularly for learners in conflict-affected areas. In cooperation with the Ministry of Basic Education, these funds have enabled, among other things, the establishment of a national digital platform for education (English and French), the creation of four (4) recording studios and the recording of 50 courses.

UNESCO's intervention in the North-West and South-West Regions

In response to the situation in these two regions of the country, UNESCO has implemented the following programmes, among others:

- Access to quality education and psychosocial support for children affected by conflict. Funded by Education Cannot Wait and the Central Emergency Response Fund (US\$ 1.1 million, 2019-2020), the project aims to develop alternative distance education and psychosocial support for children affected by the health crisis. A digital platform has been set up for 293 community learning spaces, representing 14,798 learners. The project has enabled UNESCO's assistance to be extended also to other countries in the sub-region affected by the pandemic.
- Educational needs assessment. In 2019, an emergency response (US\$ 250,000) enabled rapid improvement in access to inclusive education for in- and out-of-school children in the North-West and South-West Regions, through the production and dissemination of lessons in non-formal centres, as well as the subvention of students.

Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3 Programme)

In Cameroon, the programme, funded with US\$ 640,000 for the period 2018-2022, targets more than 210,000 teachers, 6.4 million students, 23,690 schools, more than 620,000 out-of-school youth, as well as parents and religious leaders.

In 2019, the programme built teacher capacity on comprehensive sexuality education. In 2020, five micro-programmes were produced and disseminated through online platforms (YouTube, Facebook, etc.), covering the prevention of both COVID-19, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and the prevention of unwanted teenage pregnancies during the confinement period.

Funded by UNAIDS (US\$ 30,000, 2020-2021), UNESCO contributes to the UN programme "Access to HIV/AIDS prevention services for women of reproductive age, young people and other vulnerable populations". The project aims to increase by at least 45% the number of adolescents and young people using prevention services in fast-track cities and emergency areas, and to strengthen integrated sexuality education in schools and out-of-school settings.

Support for the development of a national education strategy

- The school map at the Ministry of Basic Education: Funded by the World Bank, to the tune of US\$ 363,658 (2020-2021), the project aims to put in place a geographic information system (GIS) for basic education structures, integrating digital mapping and allowing easy access to data, school indicators and localities, and institutions, in order to establish effective measures for decision-making in education.
- The strategic plan for the development of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and the school map: Also financed by the World Bank, to the tune of US\$ 121,549 (March - December 2020), this project aims to ensure good management and guarantee the sustainability of the EMIS in Cameroon.

In addition, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics is conducting a study on out-of-school children in Cameroon, in collaboration with other national partners. This study, which was completed in February 2021, will facilitate the process to obtain the number and profiles of out-of-school children in order to help orient dedicated policies. The study also addresses issues related to the impact of COVID-19 on national education.

In 2019, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning contributed to the development of a sector analysis and the new Cameroon education sector strategy (2020-2025).

Natural Sciences

BIOPALT Project: Cameroon benefits from the regional BIOPALT Project which aims to support the preparation of biosphere reserve proposals; capacity building on the peaceful management of natural resources, targeting 30,000 people; data collection in favour of national and regional policies, in the fight against poverty and the promotion of peace within communities. UNESCO is supporting the country in the implementation of income-generating activities and the establishment of a community radio in the Waza Biosphere Reserve, as well as the establishment of a National Committee for the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme.

Promoting the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. Funded by the India UN Development Fund to the tune of US\$ 1 million (2020-2021), the project aims to improve access to energy in the North and Far-North Regions. Ultimately, at least 1,000 households, or approximately 6,000 people, will benefit from the positive impacts associated with the use of renewable energy for a better quality of life and sustainable management of the environment.

The Central African World Heritage Forest Initiative. Funded by the European Union to the tune of US\$ 6 million (2017-2020), this regional project (Cameroon, Congo, Gabon,

CAR) has led to the emergence of a network of excellence of protected areas and World Heritage sites that reflect the natural heritage of the region and will help manage and protect the transboundary forest landscapes of the Congo Basin. A second phase is under discussion with the EU.

The Yaounde Centre of Excellence in Micro-science (CEM): Approved as a UNESCO category 2 centre in 2015, the Yaounde CEM has accompanied UNESCO's activities in micro-science, notably through workshops held in Liberia and Congo in 2019. Furthermore, the Centre is part of the system of Regional Centres and Institutes of Scientific Excellence, coordinated by the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP). The Centre has expressed its desire to create a centre of excellence in the basic sciences that would link theoretical science education with practical experiments.

Water Science. In 2019, UNESCO set up an initiative called **City Blueprint** in Yaounde, with funding of US\$ 11,000, to provide a diagnosis of water management in the city, while contributing to disaster risk prevention and improving the resilience of the population. In addition, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission is working with various Cameroonian institutions, including the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, and the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD), on capacity building, ocean data and information exchange, ocean observing systems and ocean science and assessment.

Humanities and Social Sciences

Culture of Peace. In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNESCO is implementing the project, "Young Weavers for Peace in the Cross-Border Regions of Gabon, Cameroon and Chad". This project has resulted in the creation of a network of 1,800 young peace weavers for the prevention of conflict, violence and peace building in cross-border regions. Nearly 160 young people will also receive support for income-generating activities to set up cooperatives and ensure their socio-economic empowerment.

Financed by the Peacebuilding Fund, UNESCO has also implemented another project (to increase the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding initiatives, while strengthening social cohesion mechanisms).

In addition, UNESCO supported capacity building on the organisation of peaceful elections and social cohesion in Cameroon between 2018 and 2020. This project contributed to a peaceful pre- and post-election environment, focusing on strengthening partnership and information exchange through the creation of consultation mechanisms and the conduct of awareness campaigns; empowering youth and women to participate effectively in decision-making processes; and building the capacity of security forces.

Youth skills and employability

UNESCO is one of the agencies responsible for the implementation of the **Youth Connect Cameroon** programme, in partnership with UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, UN Women and the Cameroonian government. This three-year programme (2020-2022), financed to the tune of US\$ 1.8 million, aims to improve the socio-economic empowerment and civic engagement of young people in the country's development, through the promotion of self-employment, the integration of young people into the labour market, and the promotion of civic values, peace and social cohesion.

Culture

World Heritage

Within the framework of the Central African World Heritage Forest Initiative (CAWHFI), UNESCO has contributed to improving the conservation of the Dja Faunal Reserve (to the tune of US\$ 580,000) through surveillance patrols, the strengthening of governance structures, as well as the assessment of impacts and corrective measures against the activities of certain industrial plantations. UNESCO is also supporting the Sangha Tri-National (US\$ 150,000), which has improved the involvement of local communities in the management of this forest massif.

Communication and Information

Media and information literacy and media development

Since 2014, UNESCO has been implementing the project Support to local development through community radios in Cameroon, with funding of US\$ 5.8 million from the Cameroonian government, aiming to establish a network of 36 community radios.

On 13 November 2021, on the sidelines of the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris, Cameroon and UNESCO signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the second phase of this project (USD 10.8 million, 2021-2027), which aims to create and rehabilitate 40 community radios and multimedia centres, including the production of thematic programmes on the fight against COVID-19 and hate speech.

Response to COVID-19

Funded by UNDP, UNESCO has been tasked with implementing the project Support to the response to COVID-19 in Cameroon through community radios between 2020 and 2021, with a budget of US\$ 150,000. Cameroon is also one of the target countries of the #CoronavirusFacts project - Fighting "Infodemic" on COVID-19 in conflict-prone environments. Funded by the European Union for an amount of 2.5 million euros (including 110,000 euros allocated for Cameroon from 2020 to 2021), the project aims to strengthen resilience to disinformation, through capacity building of media professionals, as well as support to the production and dissemination of content.

Youth and media

In 2019 and 2020, UNESCO supported Cameroon in media and information education for young people and youth organisations through multi-donor funding amounting to US\$ 12,000. Other programmes have also been implemented for the period 2019-2022 to empower youth through media and communication. These include building the capacity of the media to produce quality information on migration-related risks, and supporting the production and dissemination of awareness-raising content in local languages.

Promotion of Cameroonians within UNESCO

Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo was appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO as Director (D-2) of the World Heritage Centre on 6 December 2021. He is the first African to occupy this important and strategic position at UNESCO.

Created in 1992, the World Heritage Centre coordinates World Heritage activities within UNESCO. It is responsible for the day-to-day management of the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (this Convention is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year), organises the annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau, and advises State Parties on the preparation of their nominations.

Another Cameroonian, Mr Barthélemy Togouo was nominated UNESCO Artist for Peace (2021-2023), because of his works on Cameroonian culture through the "Bandjoun Station" initiative – an artistic centre that promotes the mixture of international contemporary art and the Bandjoun tradition in the service of peace.

In conclusion, cooperation between Cameroon and UNESCO is excellent and should continue to grow to the benefit of both parties. As was pointed out by the President of the Republic, H.E. Paul BIYA at the Leaders' Forum organised on the side-lines of the 38th General Conference of UNESCO in Paris, on 19 November 2019, Cameroon has very cordial relations with UNESCO. The Head of State declared that within the large family of the United Nations System, Cameroon has a special inclination for UNESCO. The reason is simple. A peaceful and tolerant country, inhabited by people of different ethnic, religious and traditions, we acknowledge the humanist ideal of UNESCO, whose ultimate goal is the "well-being" of man and harmony amongst peoples. Just like UNESCO, Cameroon thinks that our differences, far from being a handicap, are rather a source of enrichment.