

# Statutes of the COMEST

Statutes of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), adopted by the Executive Board of UNESCO at its 154th Session, on 7 May 1998

## Article 1

A World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, hereinafter called 'the Commission' (category V), is hereby established.

## Article 2

The Commission shall be responsible for advising the Organization on its programme concerning the ethics of scientific knowledge and technology. It shall also be mandated:

- to be an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience;
- to detect on that basis the early signs of risk situations;
- to perform the role of adviser to decision-makers in this respect; and lastly,
- to promote dialogue between scientific communities, decision-makers and the public at large.

## Article 3

1. The Commission shall be composed of 18 members, appointed by the Director-General following consultation with the National Commissions and Academies of Science in the Member States, and serving in a personal capacity. It shall have an open-ended structure and may bring in specialists on specific subjects.
2. The members shall be appointed for a four-year term, renewable once. In the event of the resignation or death of a Commission member, the Director-General shall appoint a replacement for the remainder of the current term.
3. One half of the members of the Commission shall be replaced every two years. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 2 above, when appointing the first members of the Commission, the Director-General shall designate the nine members whose term shall expire on 31 December 2000.
4. The members of the Commission shall be chosen from among eminent personalities in the fields of science, professional engineering, law, philosophy, culture, religion or politics, having the competence and the authority necessary to fulfill the functions entrusted to the Commission, taking due account of geographical distribution and ensuring coverage of the various disciplines and schools of thought.
5. The Presidents of UNESCO's five intergovernmental scientific programmes (IOC, MAB, MOST, IGCP and IHP), of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and the Intergovernmental Committee, and those of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences (ICPHS), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs shall be invited to participate in the work of the Commission.
6. The Commission shall define, in agreement with the Director-General, the conditions under which certain specialists, representatives of non-governmental organizations or personalities may be consulted in person, on the questions listed in its programme.

## Article 4

1. The Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO may participate as observers in the meetings of the Commission.
2. States which are not members of UNESCO, but members of the United Nations system organizations, may participate as observers in the Commission's meetings at the invitation of the Director-General.
3. The United Nations and the other organizations of the United Nations system with which UNESCO has concluded mutual representation agreements may participate as observers in the Commission's meetings.
4. The Commission shall define, in agreement with the Director-General, the conditions under which other intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations with similar purposes to those of the Commission may be invited to attend its debates.

**Article 5**

1. The Director-General shall convene the Commission in ordinary session once every two years. He/she may convene extraordinary sessions at the request of the President of the Commission, and subject to the availability of the necessary resources.
2. The Director-General, in consultation with the Bureau of the Commission, shall set the date and place of each session.
3. Any Member State of UNESCO, or member of one of the United Nations system organizations, may invite the Director-General to convene a session of the Commission on its territory.

**Article 6**

1. At each of its ordinary sessions, the Commission shall elect a President, two Vice-Presidents and a Rapporteur, who shall form the Bureau of the Commission and shall remain in office until the following ordinary session.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 above, the Director-General shall appoint the first President of the Commission.
3. The Director-General shall convene the Bureau, in consultation with the President, and shall be represented at the Bureau's meetings.

**Article 7**

1. The Director-General shall provide the staff and the resources needed to ensure the operation of the Commission's Secretariat.
2. The Director-General of UNESCO shall designate a member of the UNESCO Secretariat as the Executive Secretary of the Commission.

**Article 8**

1. The travel expenses and subsistence allowances payable to Commission members in connection with meetings shall be borne by UNESCO, in accordance with the applicable travel regulations.
2. The costs arising from the participation of specialists, in connection with any hearings requested by the Commission, shall be borne by UNESCO, in accordance with the applicable travel regulations.
3. The international non-governmental organizations invited to participate in the Commission's work shall bear the expenses arising from the participation of their representative in the Commission's sessions.
4. The running expenses of the Commission shall be financed by an allocation made for that purpose by the General Conference at each of its ordinary sessions or by extra-budgetary resources that States may donate for that purpose.

**Article 9**

1. The Commission shall establish its Rules of Procedure, which shall be submitted to the Director-General for approval.
2. The Director-General shall draw up the agenda of the Commission's sessions, after consultation with the President of the Commission.
3. After each session, the Commission shall submit to the Director-General a report on its work, and its recommendations. The Director-General shall transmit the results of the Commission's work to the governing bodies of the Organization, and to the bodies concerned by the Commission's proposals.

**Article 10**

The present Statutes may be modified by the Executive Board at its own initiative or on a proposal by the Director-General.