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Agenda Item 2

Organisation, Impact and Sustainability of MOST Ministerial Forums

This document is submitted for the consideration of the MOST Bureau and provides overall information related to MOST Ministerial Forums and an analysis of key issues relating to their sustainability and impact. Particular emphasis is put on preparation and follow-up, including the connections thereof with MOST Schools and MOST National Committees.

Objectives

1. Pursuant to paragraph 25 of the Comprehensive MOST Strategy, regional and sub-regional Forums of Ministers in charge of Social Development enable Ministers to meet and exchange their experiences on social development issues, as well as to dialogue with researchers and eventually other important stakeholders in social development, particularly the UN system and civil society. The end objective of this process is to facilitate and support social policy formulation and the implementation of Agenda 2030 and in particular SDGs 5, 10 and 16.
2. Within this overall strategic context, MOST Ministerial Forums should:
 - offer a space for regional dialogue at the Ministerial level on national and regional social policy strategies, including exchange of experiences and successful practices, with the participation of social scientists from the region as well as UN experts;
 - provide opportunities on this basis for the co-production of knowledge and South-South and South-North learning;
 - foster research-policy linkages in the thematic priority areas of MOST and thus contribute to policy-making informed by analysis of evidence and dialogue.

Organization

3. Experience of programme implementation points to certain mechanisms and modalities required for the overall success of a MOST Ministerial Forum.
4. The theme of each Forum should to be based on a dialogue between UNESCO and the host government making sure it corresponds to Agenda 2030 and the themes of the MOST Strategy and is of high relevance to the region.
5. Inclusive, high-level regional participation is crucial to ensure the credibility of the “MOST Ministerial Forum” brand. Operational experience underlines the importance of early preparation, including invitations long in advance of the event.
6. UNESCO should commission a research paper on the theme of the Forum with clear recommendations for policy-makers, especially focusing on the need for disaggregated data within the theme. The author(s) should be invited to the Forum to present the paper, followed by an interactive discussion between ministers and researchers, including identifying knowledge gaps, and which further research policy-makers need.
7. The research paper should also be presented in a senior official’s meeting organized immediately before the Forum, permitting a more lengthy debate with senior officials in the ministries, and also local and regional researchers, and allowing senior officials to brief their Ministers ahead of the Ministerial meeting.
8. The research paper needs to be circulated in advance of the meetings, alongside a concept paper for the Forum with the rationale and approach to the theme and the objectives, as agreed between the host country, UNESCO and any other relevant stakeholders.

9. At the Forum the participants should share their respective countries' success stories and actions within the theme of the respective Forum, along with challenges, lessons learned and identification of targeted research needs.
10. Cooperation with the UN system is important to enhance visibility, partnerships and impact. Joint organization of Ministerial Forums with other UN bodies is an option for relevance and impact at regional level.

Follow-up and sustainability

11. Follow-up to each Forum of Ministers is crucial to ensure sustainability, and thus effective and lasting impact. Follow-up depends on action by UNESCO, within its programmes, by Member States, through their national policies, and by academics and experts. Within the MOST Action Plan, MOST Schools and MOST National Committees are of particular importance for follow-up.
12. At each Forum, a Ministerial declaration or outcome document should be adopted with clear policy recommendations and initiatives for sustainability. In order to ensure that it is effectively acted on, and given potential change in ministerial responsibilities over time, it is desirable where possible to establish a senior official's network cooperating with researchers and sharing experiences on follow-up activities following each Forum.
13. Prompt and effective reporting on each Forum is essential, including both media outreach and substantive reporting. Video material and social media dissemination are increasingly important in ensuring visibility.
14. A research project may be launched on the theme of the Forum coordinated by UNESCO in cooperation with implementing partners. Such a project may *inter alia* involve the organization of MOST schools on the theme of the Forum discussing its outcome and contextualizing its relevance and possible application of its conclusions. MOST National Committees should also discuss and follow up on the recommendations taken at the regional level to the national level. Where National Committees do not exist or are not sufficiently active, their creation should be a key element of the outcome document.
15. In order to contribute to South-South and North-South learning, events should be organized to publicize Forums as a whole and the outcomes of specific Forums (e.g. in the UN Commission for Social Development). Each Forum should also have the opportunity to learn from Forums in other regions on a rolling basis.

Funding

Successful organization requires substantial in-kind contributions from the host country and, increasingly, from participant member states to cover their own travel.