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DRAFT MOST INITIATIVE ON THE BACKGROUND CAUSES, PROCESSES AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MIGRATION

The present document, prepared by the secretariat, proposes the basis for and outlines preliminary actions under a MOST initiative on the background causes, processes and social implications of migration. The document takes account:

- of the MOST Strategy (paragraph 22), which calls for particular emphasis, within the overall primary emphasis on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, on “migration and displaced people” as one of five “topics of high contemporary relevance” for MOST;
- of the content and outcomes of relevant activities conducted by the secretariat between February 2016 and January 2017, each of which has involved consultation with Member States, along with discussion on document MOST/IGC/Bureau/2016/24;
- of proposals relating to migration made by Member States for the purposes of the MOST Action Plan, as contained in document MOST/IGC/Bureau/2016/22;
- of specific proposals relating to migration made by certain Member States in response to the first phase of consultations on the draft MOST Action Plan, as contained in document MOST/IGC/Bureau/2016/23.1;

On the basis of a suggested analytical framework for migration issues within MOST (paragraphs 9-19), the document proposes that the MOST initiative be designed to:

- enhance research-based and policy-relevant understanding of the social, cultural, economic and political context of migration;
- contribute in targeted ways to a more favourable social and cultural context for inclusion of migrants in host societies;
- and thus contribute to the design and implementation of better-informed policies and migration institutions, creating increased opportunities and well-being for migrants and for host and originating societies generally.

Draft general guidelines for the organization of concrete activities in pursuance of the initiative are proposed in paragraphs 20-37.

Background

1. At its meeting on 27-28 January, the IGC Bureau decided to include “migration and displaced people” among the five “topics of high contemporary relevance” on which the MOST Strategy (paragraph 22) called for particular emphasis, within the overall primary emphasis on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. Support for the inclusion of the theme was justified in particular by the shared perception within the Bureau that migration represents a major political challenge for Member States, exemplified but not limited to conflict-induced displacement.
2. In pursuance of its strategic decision, the Bureau requested the secretariat, in consultation with interested members of the Bureau and of the Intergovernmental Council, to develop preliminary proposals for a possible MOST initiative of the present topic for consideration at its meeting on 15-16 September 2016. After the meeting, the Bureau requested the secretariat to revise and expand the document (MOST/IGC/Bureau/2016/24), and invited the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) to strengthen its advisory role in the context of the MOST Action Plan and in particular to publish an annual report on migration issues of relevance to MOST.
3. In order to inform the present document, the secretariat has drawn on several activities conducted between February 2016 and January 2017, including a Futures Literacy Lab focusing on “The Future of Human Mobility Patterns and Identity: 2050” with particular reference to Africa, in collaboration with UNESCO’s Africa Department and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (4-5 July 2016); and a one-day conference on “Migration for Sustainable Development: Social Transformations, Media Narratives and Education”, organized in collaboration with and with the support of the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, based in Moscow (6 July 2016). Consultation with Member States was a component of all activities.
4. The 1st Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Central Africa, which was hosted by the Government of Cameroon in Yaoundé from 24 to 26 October 2016, focused on “Insecurity and migration: Impact on Women and Youth”. The Forum considered in particular a review of the various regional dimensions of migration, emphasizing the factors contributing to movement of people as well the consequences for the societies in which refugees and other migrants settle. Expressing concern that inappropriate migration regimes are damaging both to migrants’ life chances and to the prosperity of receiving countries, Ministerial Forum participants supported investment in research to enhance the knowledge base and support policy development.
5. On 29 November 2016 in Brussels, in partnership with the Slovak Presidency of the European Council, MOST co-organized a high-level meeting on “Sustainable Migration in the Context of Development”. The meeting emphasized that there is no single problem called “migration”, but rather a range of different issues requiring differentiated responses, and furthermore that development policies designed to reduce migration are unlikely to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The conditions for research-informed evidence to be taken up by policy-makers, and for differentiated and contextualized analysis of migration, can be improved.¹

¹ The report of the meeting is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002468/246850E.pdf>. An analytical report on the migration and development nexus is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002470/247089E.pdf>. It emphasizes that migration within the 2030 Development Agenda needs to be understood as a development policy challenge.

6. “Migration and borders” has been adopted as one of six main themes for the World Humanities Conference, which will take place in Liège, Belgium, from 6 to 12 August 2017. In preparatory work towards the Conference, the MOST secretariat has been exploring with its humanities stakeholders how the distinctive contributions of the humanities disciplines, including emphasis on narrative, representations, values and long-range history, can enrich understanding of the dynamics and social implications of migration, talking full account of the perspectives of migrants themselves.
7. At its meeting on 7-8 July 2016, SAC was invited to consider issues of migration and displacement, which it did in particular from the angle of social inclusion and digital technologies, pulling together three of the five thematic areas specified by paragraph 22 of the MOST Strategy. SAC proposed that MOST should focus on helping Member States to understand the drivers of migration, the social consequences on sending and receiving societies, and the role digital technologies – especially social media and online news outlets – are playing in attitudes toward migrants around the world in order to inform research-backed migration policies.
8. Other activities implemented by the Sector for Social and Human Sciences are also relevant in this regard. For example, UNESCO’s International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) offers a platform to mobilize cities to promote inclusion and protect rights for refugees.² Cities are the front line of efforts to foster the wellbeing and inclusion of refugees and migrants and today play an increasingly important role in ensuring respect for human rights and social cohesion. Similarly, the Intercultural Dialogue section provides a channel to advocate for cultural diversity to achieve a harmonious society, including but not limited to migrant integration. In particular, it promotes and disseminates values, attitudes and behaviours conducive to dialogue, non-violence and the rapprochement of cultures in line with the principles of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Furthermore, the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) has established a working group to develop an initial reflection on bioethical responses to the situation of refugees, with a specific focus on healthcare, which contributed to the knowledge base as well as the normative framework on refugee integration.

Analytical Framework

9. Drawing on the activities and workstreams summarized in the previous section, it is apparent that migration constitutes an important and cross-cutting issue within the 2030 Agenda, as well stated by the UN Global Migration Group (GMG) in its April 2015 Discussion Document “Realizing the Inclusion of Migrants and Migration in the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda”.³ This broad approach is well reflected in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2016.⁴ On the other hand, the term “migration” refers to a very wide range of research and policy issues, not all of which correspond to the institutional competence of UNESCO. Furthermore, the ways in which migration is perceived as a policy challenge vary considerably across regions, and give rise to complex interregional dynamics. This

² A report on “Cities Welcoming Refugees and Migrants. Enhancing effective urban governance in an age of migration”, based on a European survey, was published in 2016. It is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002465/246558e.pdf>.

³ Background note for the GMG communiqué, “Call to strengthen the inclusion of migrants and migration in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda” available at <http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org>.

⁴ UN document A/71/L.1, available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1.

underlines the potential contribution of MOST, but also points to the value of a targeted approach, identifying areas in which, consistently with the adopted strategy, MOST can make distinctive contributions through improved understanding and enhanced structuring of the research-policy nexus.

10. As emphasized in the earlier discussions of the IGC Bureau (see document MOST/IGC/Bureau/2016/24), it is the social, cultural, economic and political context in which the movement of people takes place that offers space for a MOST initiative rooted in the theoretical and empirical contributions of the social and human sciences as well as the extensive and diverse policy experience of Member States. In order to clarify what making sense of this context entails, it may be helpful to make an analytical distinction between three components of migration as a global phenomenon: drivers, migration regimes, and social consequences.
11. The “drivers” of migration – causal factors, motivations, structural conditions, “push” and “pull” factors etc. – constitute a research-driven issue of great policy relevance on which there is extensive literature. Despite the wealth of available analysis and evidence, the implications of research are generally poorly reflected in policy agendas. Within its general mandate to strengthen the nexus between research and policy, and within its adopted strategy, MOST can support policy stakeholders in considering how improved understanding of the very diverse forms and patterns of migration can inform more appropriate policies.
12. While media and political attention tends to focus – understandably – on interregional migration in emergency situations, it is important to recognize that such migration flows are not the only ones, and indeed are in many respects untypical. Most migrants are not refugees, or even asylum-seekers, who migrate as a direct response to acute or imminent personal danger (physical or otherwise). The majority of migrants do not cross state borders, remain within the global South, and move looking for increased social and economic opportunity. Special attention must therefore be paid to environmental change, global inequalities, and sustainable development, but also to routine, non-emergency migration, especially within areas of free or semi-free movement. South-South, internal and non-emergency movement tend to be neglected in media coverage and, even, policy discourse.
13. Migration is also mediated through the legal and administrative processes that apply to its various manifestations, as well as the political and cultural dynamics that shape how abstract regulatory frameworks are actually applied. Beyond migration policies, migration regimes also relate to mental maps that reflect the perceived desirability of various destinations and the nature of the barriers to mobility that they throw up. Migration regimes are thus always to some extent imagined, and not simply legal-administrative constructs, and they have significant effects both on mobility and on the social conditions in which migrants are received.
14. It is proposed therefore that the MOST initiative consider people on the move in a comprehensive manner, consistently with policies aimed at protecting all categories of migrants and displaced persons, throughout the entire cycle of migration, while also recognizing that design and implementation of such policies as well as advocacy with respect to them fall, generally speaking, outside the institutional competence of MOST. This approach is in accordance with a transnational approach to mobility, as supported by the New York Declaration, and builds on an improved understanding of the migration and development nexus.
15. Such a comprehensive approach may be mapped in terms of three major dimensions: first, the timeframe (slow-onset or sudden pressures); secondly, the structural constraints or context-

specific circumstances within which decisions are made (such features include migration regimes, the economic cost of migration, the existence of social networks and reachable diasporas and ICTs); and thirdly, the level of preparation that allows distinguishing between proactive and reactive mobility (or immobility) decisions. Migration policies thus need to take account of these complexities, recognizing in particular that “root causes” do not operate separately from other migration dynamics.

16. There are significant knowledge gaps with respect to how the determinants of migration interact with one another. This implies understanding the evolution and transformation of migration flows over time, without overemphasizing politically framed priorities that may refer to past challenges. Designing anticipatory policies calls for improved research, including reflection on “rapid reaction” tools, based on more flexible and rapid identification of emerging challenges and policy requirements, with stronger involvement of policy-makers throughout the process.
17. Migrant integration, the process of becoming an accepted part of a society, covers important issues relating to the socio-economic, cultural and political inclusion of migrants in host societies. As underscored by the academic literature as well as UN policy documents, successful integration is a two-way process that involves mutual adaptation of migrants as well as equality of rights and obligations.
18. The various dimensions of inclusion are both connected and distinct. There is extensive research on each of them and on the connections between them. Social and economic integration refers to participation in a society through its characteristic processes of employment, housing, welfare care and education, which means that integration is shaped *inter alia* by the structures of inequality that prevail in a particular society. Cultural integration is a process of gradual adoption of host society norms and customs. Because these norms and customs are never uniform and are often contested, there are multiple pathways of cultural integration, which does not necessarily entail the loss by migrants of any cultural distinctiveness. Furthermore, because norms and customs are not static, cultural integration has implications for host societies as well. Finally, political integration refers to participation in citizenship, through voting, membership of political parties and voluntary associations and other forms of citizen activity. Pathways of political integration are highly diverse and depend *inter alia* on legal rules such as access to nationality, the political rights of non-nationals, restrictions on dual nationality, and residency rights.
19. It is neither feasible in terms of resources nor credible in terms of institutional profile for MOST to attempt to address all aspects of migration as reviewed above. The practical challenge is thus to identify a limited set of issues on which to focus, within the emphasis of the adopted Strategy on strengthening the research-policy nexus in order to support achievement of the 2030 Agenda with particular reference to SDG 16, while remaining sensitive to the bigger picture within which they fit.

Outline Action Proposals

20. Taking account of the discussions in the course of the activities referred to in paragraphs 3-8 and of the recommendations of SAC, and referring to the agreed UN language of the New York Declaration, it is suggested that a realistic and relevant focus for the MOST migration initiative should be defined in terms of the following expected results and outcomes:

- enhance research-based and policy-relevant understanding of the social, cultural, economic and political context in which (selected) movements of people take place,
 - contribute in targeted ways to a more favourable social and cultural context for inclusion of migrants in host societies,
 - and thus contribute to the design and implementation of better-informed policies and migration institutions, creating increased opportunities and well-being for migrants and for host and originating societies generally rather than deprivation and vulnerability, consistently with SDG 10, target 7 (“Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”).
21. Within this general framework, in synergy and in close cooperation with other UNESCO programmes and relevant agencies within and outside the UN system, there is a role for MOST to support Member States in collecting and using data to inform policies, with particular reference to the wealth of information and experience available at local level. The suggestions in the following paragraphs reflect the migration content already included in the MOST Action Plan (see document MOST/IGC/2017/3) and are further designed to encourage complementary initiatives for inclusion in future updates of the Action Plan.
 22. Within the **MOST research pillar** (paragraph 24 of the Strategy), there is an agreed need to pull together, and where relevant complement, the social and human science knowledge base on all aspects of migration in order to strengthen the research-policy nexus.
 23. In order to achieve this, the proposed MOST initiative needs to be strongly anchored in research considering migration as a multi-causal, socially transformative process in long-term historical context. This entails that, rather than distinguishing between drivers (e.g. environmental pressures, conflict, structural economic inequalities, etc.), MOST should be emphasizing the complex relations between them and the need to understand them systematically as a comprehensive development issue, consistently with the thrust of SDG 16.⁵ In addition to interacting with existing research and policy communities to draw on their extensive knowledge and expertise, MOST may offer a platform for specific initiatives at national and/or regional level to foster research addressing identified knowledge gaps and ensure its effective dissemination through the MOST Discussion Papers and Policy Papers series.
 24. The proposed MOST initiative should include a structured partnership, building on existing relations with major social science and humanities stakeholders and on the action proposed at regional level by certain Member States, with a focused set of planned outputs in terms of publications (paragraph 24.3 of the Strategy) and innovative mechanisms for experimentation and policy analysis (paragraph 24.2 of the Strategy). The European Union Horizon 2020 programme offers a number of opportunities for such coordinated action.
 25. A MOST-branded session on migration will be convened at the 2017 World Humanities Conference, which will take place in Liège. The session will aim at addressing migration in an integrated manner with particular reference to the construction of meaning through interpretations of migrant experience, building on the contributions of humanities scholars as well as artists and writers.

⁵ This issue is explored in detail, with a specifically European focus, in document MOST/REPORTS/2017/1.

26. Academic experts are calling for an enhanced evidence base on migration in certain areas of the world. There is a particularly urgent need for data in areas where basic statistical information is lacking – as emphasized in the case of Central Africa by the outcome declaration of the MOST Ministerial Forum (Yaoundé, October 2016). To fill in the data gap, the Yaoundé Ministerial Forum announced the launch in January 2017 of a policy-oriented research project on “Conceptualizing and measuring migration policy change in Central Africa”, which aims to develop a methodology for the construction of a migration policies database in Central Africa. This approach is proposed as a “pilot” migration policies database and a basis for replication, with due sensitivity to specific circumstances in other regions. The question of migration data, including a critical approach to its production and social meaning, should also be a focus of this research-oriented work.
27. Research networks and online platforms could be used to address research gaps through connecting countries and researchers and sharing more resources on different aspects of migration, particularly those that lack of data and literature. The possibility of establishing or supporting interdisciplinary networks such as the Asia Pacific Migration Research Network (APMRN), established by MOST in 1995, could be considered as an option.
28. The UNESCO Gender Youth Migration (GYM) online initiative also has potential for extension. A growing repository of free resources and a platform for sharing knowledge and expertise on the theme of migration, GYM brings together researchers, practitioners and decision-makers working on issues of internal migration in India, enabling them to learn from one another and keep updated on new research and developments in the field of migration.
29. In order to foster improved understanding of the social consequences of migration, MOST can offer a platform for research-informed discussion that counteracts the uninformed assumptions, often driven by media representations that tend to dominate public debate in many regions. In this respect, a key challenge, both analytically and practically, is to ensure that the differences between categories of migrants and modes of migration are recognized and correctly analysed. This entails in particular developing an expanded perspective on migration that takes full account of migrants’ own narratives, voices and situations, recognizing that migration and its consequences are inherently issues of identity, not just of mobility.
30. Within the **MOST intergovernmental pillar** (paragraph 25 of the Strategy), there is broad support for the principle of addressing migration in Ministerial Forums, both specifically, as in Yaoundé in October 2016, and in connection with other issues relevant to the 2030 Agenda in other events.
31. Regional forums are especially important in this regard given the high number of migrants who remain in their region of origin. Fostering discussion and collaborative problem-solving between ministers from neighbouring countries, researchers, and subject-matter experts, can spur the exchange of ideas and best practices regarding regional drivers of migration, including social inequalities and climate change. At the same time, migration connects regions and offers an opportunity for the organization within MOST of interregional Ministerial Forums bringing together the global South and the global North.
32. In addition, MOST will continue to seek partnerships with other organizations, including the International Organization for Migration as well as regional UN economic commissions and integration bodies, to contribute to the promotion of an evidence-informed approach to policies even outside the institutional competence of UNESCO.
33. Within the **MOST policy support and capacity-building pillar** (paragraph 26 of the Strategy), each mechanism offers the potential for a migration component as well as for stronger linkages across

mechanisms, with particular sensitivity to promotion of positive perceptions of migration and migrants informed by evidence rather than prejudice.

34. MOST Schools offer an appropriate format for knowledge exchange and policy learning. A series of MOST Schools specifically focusing on migration in various regions could be established, and at the same time, efforts should be made to take account of migration in connection with the other issues relevant to the 2030 Agenda on which Schools might focus. The Middle East and Africa constitute particular priorities in this regard. Over time, such a series of Schools will in addition contribute in valuable ways to the development of publications in this area.
35. It will also be important to foster new spaces for the voices of researchers and experts based in and originating from the global South, which, while often overlooked, offer a bottom-up perspective that can be crucial to forming policies addressing realities on the ground. Such MOST Schools should be based on partnerships with local institutions exploring similar topics. As discussed in the next paragraph, Schools can also be combined with Future Literacy KnowLabs.
36. MOST Futures Literacy KnowLabs, building on the successful pilot relating to Africa held in July 2016 (see paragraph 3 above), offer a format to interrogate standard assumptions about migration and to develop innovative ideas that can be fed into other MOST mechanisms, including combined Schools/KnowLabs, as well as to connect the issues of migration and identity. The potential usefulness of such an approach was illustrated during the MOST School held in July 2016 in Cuba, where Cuban institutions selected migration as the area on which to conduct the practical exercise on futures literacy proposed as a component of the School.
37. The UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab offers a platform for exchange of knowledge and expertise on migration as an aspect of social inclusion challenges in the various regions of the world, as well as for assessment of the inclusive character of migration regimes and policies. The migration initiative could comprise e-teams on inclusive migration policies, focusing on specific thematic or regional issues, which will be designed to support engagement, knowledge-sharing and collaborative action among MOST migration stakeholders. The Inclusive Policy Lab support system will also offer valuable opportunities to connect research-based expertise with contextualized policy requirements.