

Introductory remarks by

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Chairperson of the Executive Board

**Informal interactive exchange session with
Joint Inspection Unit of the UN (JIU)
and Independent Chair of the FAO Council**

19 November 2024

Madam President of the General Conference,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I wish to welcome you all to the fourth exchange session.

It is with pleasure that I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guests **Ms Carolina Fernandez Opazo**, Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit, **Mr Conrod Cecil Hunte**, JIU Inspector, and **Dr Hans Hoogeveen**, Independent Chairperson of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Thank you so much for joining us at this exchange session with the members of the Executive Board and Member States of UNESCO about Governance.

Governance in an organization, particularly within international bodies such as the United Nations and its agencies, is a cornerstone for accountability, transparency, and ultimately effectiveness in fulfilling their mandates.

Strong governance implies the need for us as a governing body to be assessed but also to assess our own work to ensure that we function effectively while upholding the oversight responsibilities defined in our Constitution.

I strongly believe that an organization's governing body must be empowered to evaluate its own performance - not only to ensure compliance with its mandate, but also to evolve and improve its processes over time.

Self-assessment is not just a matter of ticking boxes : it's about critically examining whether the strategic decisions, priorities, and oversight mechanisms in place are actually driving the intended outcomes. It's about asking whether the Board is adaptable, responsible, and capable of meeting the emerging challenges it faces.

Another important aspect of governance is the relationship between the Secretariat and Executive Boards or equivalent. Both entities are integral to the success of an organization, but their roles must be clearly delineated. A clear understanding and respect for these roles is necessary.

The Secretariat, tasked with the daily operations and implementation of programmes, must be equipped to execute its functions with efficiency.

Meanwhile, the Executive Board has the responsibility to provide oversight, ensure accountability and guarantee that the organization remains aligned with its mission and constitutional mandate.

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to add that many of the issues mentioned in the JIU reports that were sent to you in preparation for this session are very relevant to our work at UNESCO. It is somehow reassuring to see that we all face in a way the same challenges, and I think that learning from each other's experiences is crucial.

I believe that the heads of Executive Boards of UN entities should all meet together from time to time, possibly virtually, to exchange on how to improve processes and other related aspects of work.

It is clear, for example, that the status of the secretariats of the Executive Boards is a subject of interest in many UN entities. The reinforcement of the independence of posts dealing with internal oversight and ethics, among other things, is also a common issue in many entities, as well as an efficient mechanism for the adoption and follow-up upon the implementation of the JIU recommendations.

I hope that we will have a lively and useful debate that can help us in our future deliberations in the Executive Board.

I now give the floor to Ms Fernandez Opazo.

Thank you.

Presentations were also made by :

Mr Conrod Cecil Hunte, Inspector of Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)
and

Dr Hans Hoogeveen, Independent Chairperson of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
