

DECLARATION OF THE ITALIAN UNESCO CHAIRS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Dichiarazione delle Cattedre UNESCO Italiane per la Sostenibilità

The Italian UNESCO Chairs, which with the *DIALOGHI DELLE CATTEDRE UNESCO: un laboratorio di idee per il mondo che verrà / DIALOGUES OF THE UNESCO CHAIRS: a laboratory of ideas for the world to come* project have started a process aimed at operating as a collective body, interacting and proposing themselves as a "community of knowledge", have drawn up a Declaration for sustainability and socio-ecological transition.

This Declaration is the result of a journey that began a year ago (in the autumn of 2020) and that has seen the Italian UNESCO Chairs/UNITWIN develop an intense scientific dialogue through a series of webinars about environmental and social sustainability. The dialogue undertaken implements the indication and spirit of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO, which has always supported the network cooperation of UNESCO Chairs.

We believe that, in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development set by the United Nations 2030 Agenda, an integrated thinking, the commitment of all and a profound change in our perception of ourselves and the world are needed to achieve a new paradigm of human development in harmony with the planet that hosts us.

The Declaration is an expression of the commitment and contribution of the Italian UNESCO Chairs in the development of education and knowledge in relation to the global environmental challenge. The many specificities of the Italian UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs converge on this point and, speaking with one voice, they intend to propose a contribution of ideas and expertise to national, European, and international policies and to the UNESCO itself.

The Declaration is also addressed to the national university institutions, within which the UNESCO Chairs are committed to the achievement of sustainable development objectives. They responsibly assume the role of producers of new knowledge, preparing programs aimed at responding more promptly and independently to the renewed demand for new learning and research in a world undergoing rapid economic, social, and technological change.

Finally, the Declaration intends to speak to people and communities, bringing ideas confronting everyday life.

DECLARATION OF THE ITALIAN UNESCO CHAIRS

PREAMBLE

Having regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity,

Having regard to the Resolution adopted by the United Nation General Assembly on 19 December 2019 on Culture and sustainable development,

Having regard to the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Program launched in 1992, which promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work,

Having regard to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in 2001,

Having regard to the UNESCO Climate change education initiative for sustainable development launched in 2010,

Having regard to the UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021,

Having regard to the Jena Declaration on Humanities and Social Sciences for Sustainability. Cultural and regional dimensions of global sustainability, adopted on March 18th, 2021,

Having regards to the Wuppertal Declaration on Sustainable Development through International and Transdisciplinary Cooperation in Science and Education Recommendations of the UNESCO Chairs in Germany and their international partners,

THE ITALIAN UNESCO CHAIRS HAVE ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING DECLARATION

1. Challenges

In the interdisciplinary debate that defines the UNESCO Chairs, the point of convergence has been identified in the future of our planet, a necessary focal point in a context characterized by radical anthropogenic transformations of ecosystems (Anthropocene). The environmental issue emerges as a perfect indicator and multiplier of differences and inequalities, where the inextricable interconnection between nature and human society is evident. The appropriation of nature is at the heart of today's ecological and social problems, such as climate change, the intensification of disaster events, the loss of biodiversity, the degradation of habitats and cultivated land, and the

indiscriminate extraction of raw materials. All this implies a radical fragmentation of the relationship between human being and nature.

Environmental and demographic transitions, including climate change and ageing populations in high-income countries, are likely to alter migration patterns in the coming decades and require a deep understanding of the future of social composition across the globe.

At the same time, the exponential acceleration of changes in technological development and in digital communication and in the relationship between human being and machine calls for an equivalent growth of awareness and responsibility in individuals, communities, social and institutional organizations. The impact of digital tools on democratic systems as well as on the natural environment is evident. Moreover, there is the necessity of promoting digital equity in education in all countries of the world.

In a context increasingly defined by a digital environment, and where the dimension of the virtual expands, volatility and uncertainty also increase. To govern the acceleration and exponential increase of the new contexts, there is a need for a restructuring of knowledge and the growth of critical skills for the validation and organization of knowledge. There is a need to develop the potential of the human being that distinguishes him/her from the machine, namely, his/her ability to contact a moral and spiritual dimension, and to express abstract projections and visions.

The UNESCO Chairs are intended to respond to an urgent and heartfelt requirement to make the appropriate decisions to cope with these radical global changes.

2. Vision

The vision expressed in the Declaration is summarized in the following points:

- The environmental challenge and the future of the planet as the horizon (attractor) against which to process reality and the relationships between phenomena, issues, and contexts, both environmental and social;
- The global and local perspective in addressing environmental issues, where the needs of the local reality (landscapes, territories and cities) meet those of the planet;
- The central role of education and the reorganization of knowledge to address the environmental and social challenge in their interdependence, with an approach to education as a "common good" and knowledge as a "global common good";
- Educating in complex thinking, through the development of skills to "learn to become" and through reflection on issues such as climate change;
- A commitment to a just, egalitarian ecological transition for all peoples that recognizes human rights to the environment, and to a bottom-up, participatory, and shared ecological transition;

- A perspective on sustainability that leads back to human-nature unity and to an interdependent society-nature relationship;
- A perspective on sustainability as the development of community awareness, and self-awareness of people, based on the relationship between matter and aspiration (spiritual dimension), for an integral sustainability and a responsible ecological transition to the whole, and for a sustainability that is based on peace, whose defense must begin in the hearts and minds of people;
- The need for integrated knowledge, to be developed in a transdisciplinary environment, and for co-created knowledge, adopting and experimenting with "communities of knowledge" and "communities of practice", in which all can contribute as "knowledge carriers", fostering cooperative learning and the ethics of collective intelligence;
- Promote and develop educational and knowledge processes, through dialogue and integration between different cultures so as to value bio-cultural diversity.

3. Methodological approach

The way to operate and the tools are integral parts of the vision.

In order to collectively address the many challenges described above, UNESCO Chairs share a methodological approach that provides a common basis for addressing complexity through the interaction of multiple perspectives:

- Create transdisciplinary research environment;
- Become a "community of knowledge";
- Practice scientific knowledge of excellence, shared with all social actors, embracing the principles and tools of "post-normal science" and "citizen science";
- As a collective subject with a high scientific profile, adopt complex thinking, able to contribute to the definition of transition strategies towards a just and sustainable ecological society (for the "transition from below", and the "just transition");
- Practice strategies of interrelationship between issues and problem areas by bringing the links on a plane of superordinate logical order, in order to deal effectively with complexity;
- Develop tools to verify processes through the definition of appropriate quantitative and qualitative indicators.

4. Objectives and future perspectives

In order to meet the challenges of the world to come, the UNESCO Chairs intend to collaborate, as a collective entity, by undertaking the following actions and pursuing the following objectives:

- Provide a think-tank useful for the creation of knowledge, strategic and technical support tools for decision-makers, and above all to transfer this knowledge to future generations;

- Implement a transdisciplinary and transnational educational approach and promote a culturally open educational and research environment;
- Contribute to introduce the environmental challenge in school and university education, in order to enable the acquisition of a critical view of reality and of the relationships between natural and social phenomena;
- Educate on climate change, as a complex phenomenon that necessarily implies overcoming a reductionist view of skills;
- Contribute to the realization of a just and inclusive ecological transition, which takes into account the different social and natural vulnerabilities in different contexts, as well as different cultures and migration processes;
- Ensure bottom-up participation according to democratic principles, respecting gender equality and fundamental rights;
- Increase the process of community awareness, and self-awareness of people, for an integral sustainability based on the balance between human being and nature;
- Develop scientific and educational actions to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda by proposing new solutions, emphasizing the importance of human dignity, common good and health, solidarity and subsidiarity in personal actions and political decisions, in the search for truth, freedom, justice and peace;
- Operate consciously for the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, becoming intermediate actors between institutions (national and UNESCO) and communities, contributing to the construction of new paradigms to manage the transition of natural, social, productive and settlement systems;
- Present themselves as potential interlocutors of national institutions and international agencies on issues of ecological transition, creating new support tools for decision-makers, promoting actions based on "risk-informed sustainable development";
- Develop tools that facilitate the process of sharing and dissemination of knowledge, as well as the implementation of best practices, acting as bridge builders between academia, civil society, and policy makers;
- Embrace the process initiated with the "*DIALOGUES OF THE UNESCO CHAIRS*" as a good practice in the experimentation of collaboration among UNESCO Chairs.

October 2021

*The Italian UNESCO Chairs
(With the complete list of signatures on the next pages)*

1. **Rita Aquino**, UNESCO Chair on Plants for Health in the Mediterranean Traditions (2021), University of Salerno;
2. **Aldo Aymonino**, UNESCO Chair on Heritage and urban regeneration (2016), IUAV University of Venezia;
3. **Lucio Barbera**, UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Urban Quality and Urban Culture, notably in Africa (2013), La Sapienza University of Roma;
4. **Patrizio Bianchi**, UNESCO Chair on Education, Growth and Equality (2020), University of Ferrara;
5. **Federico Bucci**, UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in Heritage Cities (2012), Polytechnic University of Milano;
6. **Paolo Canuti**, UNESCO Chair on the Prevention and Sustainable Management of Geo-Hydrological Hazards (2016), University of Firenze;
7. **Francesco Castelli**, UNESCO Chair on Training and Empowering Human Resources for Health Development in Resource-Limited Countries (2014), University of Brescia;
8. **Paolo Ceccarelli**, UNESCO Chair in Urban and Regional Planning for Sustainable Local Development (2008), University of Ferrara;
9. **Annamaria Colao**, UNESCO Chair on Health Education and Sustainable Development (2019), Federico II University of Napoli;
10. **Vittorio Colizzi**, UNESCO Interdisciplinary Chair in Biotechnology (1998), Tor Vergata University of Roma;
11. **Emanuela Colombo**, UNESCO Chair in Energy for Sustainable Development (2012), Polytechnic University of Milano;
12. **Angela Colonna**, UNESCO Chair on Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes and Communities of Knowledge (2016), University of Basilicata;
13. **Gennaro Curcio**, UNESCO Chair on Peace, Development and Cultural Policies (1999), Jacques Maritain International Institute, Roma;
14. **Fiorella Dallari**, University of Bologna – Polo of Rimini, italian partner in the Réseau UNITWIN «Culture tourisme développement» (2002), Panthéon Sorbonne University of Paris;
15. **Alessandra De Rose**, UNESCO Chair in Population, Migrations and Development (2008), Sapienza University of Roma;
16. **Pier Paolo Franzese**, UNESCO Chair on Environment, Resources and Sustainable Development (2020), Parthenope University of Napoli;
17. **Carmine Gambardella**, UNESCO Chair on Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Territorial Governance (2016), Benecon University Consortium of Caserta;
18. **Alberto Garcia**, UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights (2009), Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, European University of Roma;

19. **Stefano Grimaz**, UNESCO Chair on Intersectoral Safety for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (2018), University of Udine;
20. **Antonio Guerci**, UNESCO Chair on Anthropology of health, biosphere and et systemes of heal (2013), University of Genova;
21. **Giovanna Marconi**, UNESCO Chair in Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants: Urban Policies and Practice (2008), IUAV University of Venezia;
22. **Marco Mascia**, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, Democracy and Peace (1999), University of Padova;
23. **Aristide F. Massardo**, UNESCO Chair on Innovative, Sustainable and Clean Energy Research and Education (2021), University of Genova;
24. **Alberto Melloni**, UNESCO Chair in Religious Pluralism and Peace (2008), University of Bologna;
25. **Giulio Mondini**, UNESCO Chair on New paradigms and instruments for bio-cultural landscape management (2015), Links Foundation – Leading Innovation & Knowledge for Society - former Higher Institute on Territorial Systems for Innovation (SiTI), University of Torino;
26. **Paolo Orefice**, UNESCO Transdisciplinary Chair in Human Development and Culture of Peace (2006), University of Firenze;
27. **Dario Padovan**, UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Development and Territory Management (2010), University of Torino;
28. **Pier Luigi Petrillo**, UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Comparative Law (2019), Unitelma Sapienza University of Roma;
29. **Roberto Poli**, UNESCO Chair on Anticipatory Systems (2013), University of Trento;
30. **Barbara Pozzo**, UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women’s Rights (2019), Insubria University of Como;
31. **Paola Raffa**, UNESCO Chair on Mediterranean Landscaper in Context of Emergency (2021), University of Reggio Calabria;
32. **Giuseppe Resnati**, Network UNITWIN on Green Chemistry Excellence from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean and Beyond (2017), Polytechnic University of Milano;
33. **Domenico Simeone**, UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Development and Solidarity among Peoples (2018), Sacro Cuore Catholic Univerity of Milano;
34. **Lucio Ubertini**, UNESCO Chair on Water Resources Management and Culture (2013), University for Foreigners of Perugia;
35. **Giovanni Vaggi**, Network UNITWIN on International Cooperation and Development (2015), University of Pavia and University of Bethlehem;
36. **Francesco Vallerani**, UNESCO Chair on Water Heritage and Sustainable Development (2020), Ca’ Foscari University of Venezia;
37. **Guido Zolezzi**, UNESCO Chair in Engineering for Human and Sustainable Development (2011), University of Trento.