

## Fact Sheet

Bureau of International Organization Affairs  
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### **The United States Rejoins UNESCO**

*"As a symbol of our commitment to human dignity, the United States will return to UNESCO. This organization has been reformed and America will participate fully in its mission to advance human rights and tolerance and learning."*

President George W. Bush  
57<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly, September 12, 2002

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established in 1946 to promote peace and security through educational, scientific, and cultural initiatives worldwide. It focused on five major thematic areas of education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, communication and information, and culture. In 1984, the United States, a founding member of UNESCO, withdrew from the organization. Since that time, however, the United States continuously maintained an Observer Mission to UNESCO and participated in programs of mutual benefit, particularly the World Heritage Committee and the International Oceanographic Commission. UNESCO has recently made a concerted effort to institute financial and management reform and resumed efforts to reinforce founding principles, including an emphasis on international press freedom.

### **Why the United States is Rejoining UNESCO**

- UNESCO's mission and programming reflect and advance a wide range of U.S. interests. For example, UNESCO manages the "Education for All" program, which promotes universal basic education and literacy. This initiative advances U.S. educational goals worldwide and closely parallels the U.S. "No Child Left Behind" program.
- UNESCO advocates education that promotes tolerance and civic responsibility. This is a key to building democracy and combating terrorism.
- UNESCO helps countries protect their natural and cultural heritage. It promotes adoption of sound scientific standards. These efforts are important in maintaining a healthy balance between continuity and imperatives for change.

- UNESCO promotes press freedom and independent media, essential foundations of democracy.
- UNESCO brings countries together to address issues that have significant implications for the future, such as bioethics and cultural diversity. The United States intends to be a full and active participant in these deliberations.

*"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."*

American poet Archibald MacLeish  
Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution