

# UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an important programme under the United Nations. Such international bodies and programmes are very relevant for the [UPSC exam](#). In this article, you can read all about UNESCO, its functioning, mandate, objectives and India's relations with it.

## UNESCO

UNESCO is a specialised agency of the [United Nations](#) that works for world peace through global cooperation in the fields of education, culture and the sciences.

- Through its programmes, it strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- UNESCO develops educational tools so as to help humanity live in a world free of intolerance and hate.
- It works in preserving the cultural heritage of the world's many cultures and also promotes the equal dignity of all cultures.
- It also engages in advancing scientific programmes and policies as platforms for cooperation and development.
- UNESCO is also known for advocating the freedom of expression and stands up against the killing of journalists.
- Although officially founded as UNESCO in 1945, the organisation had its origins in the League of Nations itself. The Constitution of UNESCO came into force in 1946.
- Headquartered in Paris, UNESCO is also a member of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Currently, UNESCO has 193 members.
  - The US, Israel and Liechtenstein are members of the UN, but not members UNESCO.
    - The US and Israel pulled out in 2019 citing bias in the organisation in the Palestine issue.

- The US had pulled out of UNESCO once earlier in 1984 and then rejoined in 2003.
  - Three countries, namely, Palestine, Niue and the Cook Islands are members of UNESCO, but not of the UN.
- UNESCO sponsors many programmes such as in the fields of teacher training, science, promotion of media and press freedom, regional and cultural history, cultural diversity, natural and cultural heritage, translating world literature, human rights, etc.
- UNESCO is headed by its Director-General.
- **Culture Conventions of UNESCO:** These conventions have helped in the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the world.
  - Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property (1970)
  - Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
  - Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001)
  - Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
  - Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
  - Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)
- UNESCO is the only UN Agency to have a global network of national cooperating bodies known as National Commissions for UNESCO.

## UNESCO World Heritage Sites

UNESCO World Heritage Site is a site recognized by UNESCO as having a distinctive cultural or physical significance, and which is considered of outstanding value to humanity. There are more than 1000 heritage sites across 167 nations.

To know more about UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and the list of World Heritage Sites in India, click [here](#).

## International Days observed at UNESCO

Through UNESCO, the United Nations designates specific days as occasions to mark particular events or topics in order to promote, through awareness and action, the objectives of the Organization.

Some of the International days observed by UNESCO is given in the table below:

Date	Name
27 January	International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust
13 February	World Radio Day
8 March	<a href="#">International Women's Day</a>
22 March	World Water Day
23 April	World Book and Copyright Day
3 May	<a href="#">World Press Freedom Day</a>
25 May	Africa Day/ Africa Week
5 June	<a href="#">World Environment Day</a>
12 August	International Youth Day
15 September	International Day of Democracy
5 October	World Teachers Day
16 November	International Day for Tolerance
1 December	<a href="#">World AIDS Day</a>

To know more about other important [international days and dates](#), visit the linked article.

## UNESCO and India

India is a founding member of UNESCO.

- The National Commission in India that works with UNESCO (as mandated by UNESCO's Constitution) is called the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (INCCU).
  - The INCCU comes under the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI.
- UNESCO has its presence in India since 1948 and currently has two offices.
- India has been continuously re-elected to the Executive Board of UNESCO since 1946.
  - Members are elected for four-year terms.
- India makes huge contributions to the organisation in the form of funds every year.
- A UNESCO Category I Institute dedicated to education for peace and sustainable development was established in 2012 and is called the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP).
  - Located in New Delhi, It is the first and only category 1 Research Institute in the Asia Pacific and focuses on achieving the SDG 4.7 towards education to foster peaceful and sustainable societies.
- UNESCO's most significant work in India relates to the cultural heritage of the country. UNESCO works closely with the Ministry of Culture in this regard.