

**The Assistant Director-General
For Priority Africa and External Relations**

To: National Commissions
for UNESCO of invited Member
States and Associate Members

Cc: Permanent Delegations
to UNESCO of invited Member
States and Associate Members

Ref.: PAX/DFC/NAC/2026/38

3 July 2026

Madam/Sir,

On behalf of the Director-General, I am pleased to inform you of the launch of the call for applications for the 2026 cycle of the UNESCO/Japan Young Researchers' Fellowships Programme (also known as the UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi Research Fellowships Programme). This Programme aims to strengthen research capacities and foster knowledge development and exchange among young researchers in areas aligned with UNESCO's mandate.

Generously funded by the Government of Japan through the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Capacity-Building of Human Resources, the 2026 cycle of this Programme will award ten (10) fellowships to highly qualified young researchers from Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as well as Ukraine and Türkiye. These fellowships are intended to support innovative and interdisciplinary postgraduate research related to heritage conservation and management, sustainable development, and artificial intelligence. More specifically, the 2026 cycle will focus on the following interdisciplinary research areas:

- Heritage Conservation and Management;
- AI for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Climate Action;
- Ethical, Inclusive and Human-Centred AI for Sustainable Development;
- AI for Sustainable Cities, Infrastructure and Societal Resilience; and
- AI and Education.

The list of research areas and their indicative sub-areas is provided in *Annex 2* of the enclosed *Application Guide*.

Selected fellows will receive a fellowship grant of up to US\$10,000, provided as a lump-sum contribution, to support the implementation of their proposed research project in Japan. The fellowship must be carried out for a period of no less than three (3) months and no more than nine (9) months, under the supervision of an academic mentor at a Japanese university or research institution.

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Applicants must meet the following requirements:

- be nationals of one of the invited Member States or Associate Members listed in *Annex 1*;
- be no more than forty (40) years old at the time of application;
- hold at least a Master's degree or equivalent in a field relevant to the proposed research, and demonstrate strong academic and research potential;
- demonstrate sufficient proficiency in reading and writing in the language of instruction or supervision at the proposed host institution in Japan; and
- have obtained acceptance from an academic supervisor at a Japanese university or research institution, who will oversee the proposed research.

The enclosed Application Guide provides detailed information on the eligibility requirements and submission procedures.

Each invited Member State or Associate Member may submit a maximum of two (2) candidates, of whom at least one (1) should be a woman. Endorsed applications, including the letter of nomination and all required supporting documents completed by the candidates in accordance with the Application Guide, must be submitted by e-mail to keizoobuchi.fellowships@unesco.org no later than **30 September 2026 at midnight, Paris time**.

We would be grateful if you could disseminate the information on this call for applications through the most appropriate channels and networks of your National Commission to ensure that it reaches the most qualified candidates.

Should you need further information, please contact the National Commissions and Fellowships Unit at the e-mail address indicated above.

Yours sincerely,



■ Lidia Arthur Brito

Enc.:

Application Guide and Annexes for the UNESCO/Japan Young Researchers' Fellowships Programme Cycle 2026