

UNESCO moves to readmit United States after its 2017 withdrawal

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Paris, July 1 (RHC)-- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has agreed to readmit the United States as a member.

UNESCO's governing board voted 132-10 on Friday to accept the U.S. proposal to rejoin the Paris-based agency. The North American country's membership will become official once Secretary of State Antony Blinken, or a designee, formally accepts the invitation, according to White House officials.

Russian, Palestinian and North Korean representatives had held up consideration of the U.S. proposal on Thursday with hours of procedural delays. That session was adjourned due to fatigue on the part of UNESCO interpreters.

In addition to Russia, North Korea and the Palestinians, those that voted against readmitting the US were Belarus, China, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Nicaragua and Syria.

The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden had announced in early June that the United States would apply to rejoin the organization mainly because it was concerned that China was filling the gap left in its absence. The 193-member UNESCO plays a major role in setting international standards for artificial intelligence and technology education around the world.

The administration of former President Donald Trump announced in 2017 that the U.S. would withdraw from UNESCO, citing anti-Israel bias. That decision took effect a year later, in 2018.

The U.S. and Israel stopped financing UNESCO after it voted to include Palestine as a member state in 2011.

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