



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of Lunch Event dedicated to the *Safe Schools Declaration***

**38<sup>th</sup> General Conference**

**UNESCO, 3 November 2015**

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon of Norway,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are deeply honoured by the presence of His Royal Highness and I thank you for the speech that you just gave to our General Conference on its opening day.

I thank you for your leadership on leading development issues, and for championing, in particular, the cause of education in conflict areas.

This makes a tremendous difference, in terms of raising awareness, in terms of mobilising all actors. We have just seen this at the United Nations in New York with the adoption of the new Agenda 2030 agenda.

I wish to thank the Government of Norway for its commitment to education and development – we see this across the board, in doubling aid to education, in the Oslo Summit last July, in launching the *International Commission on Financing of Global Education Opportunity*. I am honoured to be one of the co-conveners of the Commission and to have participated in its first meeting with Prime Minister Solberg in September.

This is outstanding leadership.

We are accompanied by other countries in this initiative.

Let me thank the Permanent Delegations of Nigeria and Argentina for supporting it.

We meet right after UNESCO's 9<sup>th</sup> Youth Forum, when we heard youth voices from across the world calling for change and responsibility. They spoke out about education in emergency, about the lost generation in the making that we don't want to see.

We meet on the first day of the General Conference, on a subject that goes to the heart of all UNESCO's work.

In her ground-breaking report in 1996, Graça Machel wrote:

*More and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum. This is a space devoid of the most basic human values; a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality.*

Unfortunately these conclusions still hold true today when we speak about conflict.

The figures are simply astounding.

More than 30 million children in conflict-affected areas are out of school today.

This is half of all children out of school.

In conflict situations, schools, teachers, schoolchildren are not collateral damage — they are directly targeted.

Between 2009 and 2013, we saw attacks on education in 70 countries, and these are escalating.

Girls face the steepest challenge – with adolescent girls 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school than young women in other countries.

Let me be clear.

This is a human rights crisis, a security crisis, and a long-term development disaster.

This is made worse by underfunding.

Education is often the first budget line cut by Governments facing conflict.

At the same time, education accounts for only 2 percent of humanitarian aid – this is ten times less than what is needed.

Recently I was in Brussels advocating for increased aid from the European Union, the largest donor of humanitarian aid. Commissioner Stylianides promised to increase the share of this aid to education from 2 to 4%. This will be a good advance, but it is not enough.

Education is not built into peacebuilding, and it is falling in the crack between humanitarian aid and development assistance.

This mortgages the future of entire societies, holds the world back from reaching the goal of leaving no one behind, and presents a serious obstacle to reaching Sustainable Development Goal 4.

I see this as a call to action.

This must begin, indeed, with mobilising awareness and strong political will.

In 2007 and 2010, UNESCO published two reports on education under attack, with support from Her Highness Sheikha Moza.

UNESCO is deeply engaged through the *Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack*, and I welcome the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.

The Government of Norway, with the support of Argentina, has sharpened the focus of this issue, through the launch of the *Safe Schools Declaration* last May in Oslo.

49 countries have endorsed the Declaration, and I reiterate my call for all Member States to join and support this Declaration.

This is why United Nations Security Council Resolution 1998 is so important, and I thank Germany for its leadership when it held the presidency as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and led this important initiative.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

J'étais l'année dernière, aux coté de Mme Leila Zarrougui, Représentante spéciale du Secrétaire général pour les enfants et les conflits armés, et nous avons lancé ensemble la *Note d'orientation* sur la Résolution 1998 du Conseil de sécurité, pour en accélérer la mise en œuvre sur le terrain.

En marge de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies au mois de Septembre, j'ai participé à la réunion de haut niveau pour Combattre la menace de Boko Haram et Ramener la stabilité, à l'invitation du Nigéria et du Fonds des Nations Unies pour la population, avec le Premier ministre du Bénin et des ministres des affaires étrangères du Tchad, du Cameroun, du Mali et du Niger.

Il faut renforcer notre action à tous les niveaux.

Dans le nord-est du Nigeria, justement, l'UNESCO aide le gouvernement à former les enseignants et les directeurs d'école en vue de renforcer la sécurité des établissements – en lien également avec les médias et la police, en organisant des ateliers, en fournissant des *kits scolaires de sécurité*.

Au Sud-Soudan, l'UNESCO travaille à renforcer le système éducatif.

En Afghanistan, l'UNESCO conduit le plus grand programme d'alphabétisation de l'histoire du pays, en mettant l'accent sur les femmes, avec le soutien du Japon, de la Suède et de la Finlande - nous veillons également à intégrer les cursus d'éducation à la paix dans la formation des enseignants.

En Palestine, nous nous efforçons de faire des écoles situées dans des zones vulnérables des espaces protégés, à l'abri des violences, et à former les enseignants aux outils de suivi et d'alerte.

Au Tchad et au Burkina Faso, l'UNESCO travaille avec ses partenaires pour développer des programmes de formation et aider les ministères de l'éducation à intégrer la gestion des conflits et la réduction des risques de catastrophes.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Ce travail n'a qu'un seul but – protéger le droit fondamental de chaque enfant à une éducation de qualité.

L'éducation n'attend pas – elle n'attend pas le retour de la paix, elle n'attend pas la fin des conflits, elle n'attend pas les jours meilleurs – c'est au contraire par l'éducation que les jours meilleurs arrivent.

C'est pourquoi nous devons agir, maintenant, augmenter les financements, et soutenir cette Déclaration comme un acte politique fondateur, porteur d'espoir.

Je vous remercie.