

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

38th session of the General Conference of UNESCO

NATIONAL STATEMENT

of the Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria
to the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference
delivered on his behalf by Mr. Rumen Alexandrov, Vice–minister of Foreign Affairs
and President of the Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO

Mr President of the General Conference,
Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madam Director General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I take this opportunity, Mister President of the General Conference, to congratulate you on your election and wish you a very successful term of office!

My delegation associates itself with the statement on behalf of the European Union to be delivered later in the debate.

Madame Director-General,

During the last two years since the 37th General conference we, Member States and Secretariat, have made remarkable efforts and achieved tangible results in pursuing our major goals – continue the reform actions for the sake of a more focused and efficient UNESCO; harness the potential of all to prepare for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

UNESCO managed to successfully position itself in the preparation of the Post 2015 Development agenda in the areas of quality education, science, integration of culture as an engine for sustainable development. In fact, the whole of UNESCO's mandate is part of the Sustainable development goals and targets. This is a clear recognition that today UNESCO is more needed than ever before. And UNESCO needs the commitment of all countries, big and small, in order to deliver successfully and efficiently.

My delegation wishes to congratulate the Director-General for her commitment in pursuing these objectives through strong advocacy and efforts for a more coordinated interaction with other UN agencies. We also commend her for the continued engagement in reforming UNESCO. Rest assured, Madame Director–General of Bulgaria's unreserved support for all your endeavors.

Today we are to adopt the Framework for Action for the implementation of the SDGoal on Education. And we should remain as committed as we were before to complete the unfinished business regarding the 6 EFA Goals.

We commend the inclusion into the Framework the affirmation of education as a basic human right and the higher education as a global public good;

Bulgaria supports in particular the holistic and humanistic vision of the Education 2030 Agenda, which understands education as “inclusive and crucial in promoting democracy and human rights, enhancing global citizenship, tolerance and civic engagement as well as sustainable development, as a facilitator of intercultural dialogue in fostering respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, which are vital for achieving social cohesion and justice”.

In this regard we reiterate our firm belief that education is key, along with other approaches, to address the challenge of increased recruitment and radicalization of youth on social media, in communities and in schools. That is why my Government has supported at its very inception the proposal for the High level Conference on the use of INTERNET as a tool for development of youth against all forms of extremism and radicalism. It is with the same conviction that Bulgaria supports the US initiative for the side event on the November 6 to address the issue of using education to combat violent extremism.

In a similar vein, my Government supported the project “Empowering youth in the post conflict situation of Mali for reconciliation, peace and development through an increased access to, and use of, new (ICT).

UNESCO has long recognised the power of increased access to information as a vehicle and tool for positive social transformation, peace and development, for making knowledge societies inclusive. The Promotion of access to information and media for girls and young women in Burkina Faso is yet another UNESCO activity that enjoyed Bulgaria’s support.

Within the priority Africa activities of UNESCO Bulgaria assisted the Organization in a range of other activities, related to the Slave Route, capacity building in the protection of intangible heritage, as well as on the key topics of the General History of Africa. In 2014 UNESCO received the ITU/UN WOMEN GEM-TECH Award for the development of an e-learning tool, financed by my Government, focusing on women’s role in African history.

My country’s contribution, to all these activities, within its limited resources, is the expression of our understanding that solidarity should guide all UNESCO’s action to overcome the challenges we all face.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last two years saw an unprecedented rise in terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization that attempt to strike at the very heart of human civilization and the values we share. The destruction of cultural heritage, the “cultural cleansing” and the illicit trafficking that affects the common heritage and all religions is an affront to all humankind.

We need a resolute and coordinated approach in order to find immediate as well as long term sustainable solutions to this crisis.

Bulgaria is pleased to see UNESCO and its Director-General at the forefront of initiatives and activities aimed at alleviating the current situation, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

The list of your actions in this area, Madame Director – General, is long, impressive and well documented. Bulgaria commends you for your leadership in harnessing the potential and expertise of the UN and other intergovernmental bodies, actors and civil society to promote cultural diversity and protect cultural heritage.

My Government welcomes the new Strategy for “Reinforcement of UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict” that we are to adopt at this session. My delegation subscribes as well to the Italian proposal to define rapid mobilization mechanisms in support to the Strategy implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bulgaria commends France for organizing the COP 21 meeting. We are impressed by the degree of UNESCO engagement in this Forum of extreme significance for the sustainable protection of our common Home.

Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the United Nations’ Education, Science and Culture Organization, we should ensure that Our Organization continues to strongly uphold the guiding principles and objectives that kept UNESCO relevant and build together the defenses of peace in the mind of every man and woman, of every girl and boy.

Thank you!