

2.1 **Mr Vigenin** (Bulgaria):

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Chair of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, may I take this opportunity, Mr President of the General Conference, to congratulate you on your election and wish you a very successful mandate. May I also commend H.E. Ms Katalyn Bogyay for so brilliantly presiding over the 36th session of the General Conference. My delegation associates itself with the statement on behalf of the European Union to be delivered later in the debate.

2.2 Madam Director-General, on behalf of my Government I would like to congratulate you on your nomination by the Executive Board for a second term in office at the helm of UNESCO. Two years after the 36th session of the General Conference we witness remarkable efforts and tangible results in achieving the goal of a reformed UNESCO, more focused on its core activities. My delegation wishes to congratulate the Director-General for her strong commitment to increased visibility of UNESCO and for her efforts towards more coordinated interaction with other United Nations agencies. I also commend her for the courageous decisions she has made in difficult moments for the Organization. Bulgaria renders its unreserved support for all her endeavours.

2.3 In times of conflicts and transition, societies reach out to their cultural routes for equilibrium. If they are mature enough, they consider their past with the understanding that history is not a mere succession of shifting borders and the movement of people. Neither is it a succession of governments and economic policies. It is most of all an intensive spiritual and intellectual exchange, an endless process that unites peoples and which we call civilization.

2.4 The dynamics of social movements in recent years, the strife for change persistently demonstrated by young people everywhere in countries of different economic, political and cultural settings, is clear proof that societies are facing unprecedented challenges. These are exacerbated by multiple global crises aggravated by a crisis of values. While globalization has brought together peoples and cultures and benefited social and economic development, progress is hampered by poverty, growth of inequalities, the erosion of social cohesion in many countries, and the growing degradation of the environment.

2.5 All this is challenging our understanding of social agreement, international solidarity and interaction as they have been formulated at the establishment of the United Nations system. However, the philosophical design of humanism through education and culture, which has always been at the core of UNESCO's very foundation, is more relevant than ever before for managing the global problems. And here let me quote from the vision of the Director-General of UNESCO: "Our times call for new humanism that allies human development with the preservation of the planet and guarantees equal access for all to the benefits of education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. This new humanism must build on renewed aspirations for freedom, equality, tolerance and mutual understanding, especially between peoples of different cultures. It must seek to craft more inclusive societies, guided by a profound concern for social justice, human dignity and for fundamental rights and moral principles."

2.6 Ladies and gentlemen, it is with gratification that I would stress the enhanced role and recognition of specific lead competencies of UNESCO in the United Nations system. UNESCO's special place in the constitution of the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Scientific Advisory Board and the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) is proof of relevance. UNESCO's participation, together with other United Nations agencies, in responding to post-conflict and post-disaster situations cannot but create synergies and improve the efficiency of impact. It increases the visibility of the Organization internationally and, most importantly, on the ground. UNESCO needs to successfully position itself in the preparation of the post-2015 development framework in the areas of education for all (EFA), quality education, stronger interface between science and policy, and the full integration of culture as an engine for sustainable development.

2.7 My delegation commends the shared efforts of the Member States and the Secretariat for achieving enhanced programmatic prioritization. Acting together, we managed to continue the reform and prevent the collapse in the implementation of UNESCO's programmes. Your role, Madam Director-General, in this exercise was crucial. Bulgaria welcomes the ambitious goal within the framework of the Medium-Term Strategy to lay the foundations and establish the conditions for achieving sustainable peace, for eradication of poverty and for sustainable development. UNESCO is better equipped now than it was two years ago to face the challenges ahead and to deliver. It is more focused on its core competencies. It is better integrated in the United Nations system. The adaptation of the field offices to specific needs of countries and regions is under way. Alongside strengthened global priorities, youth is underpinning all UNESCO action and the Organization should continue to do so in an even more integrated way. What we still need is predictable financing of our programmatic activities for the longer term.

2.8 Today UNESCO is more needed than ever before. And UNESCO needs the commitment of all countries, large and small, in order to deliver successfully and efficiently. It is also crucial for the Organization to preserve to the maximum extent possible the expertise of its staff while implementing the reform process. For Bulgaria, quality education and the improved implementation of the cultural conventions will remain a priority within the next programme period. Ladies and gentlemen, Bulgaria will remain a reliable UNESCO partner in strengthening the values of freedom, intercultural dialogue, human rights and dignity in the implementation of the mandate of the Organization. Thank you very much.