

Statement of Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania
Mr Algirdas Butkevičius
at the 37th General Conference of UNESCO

Paris, November 6, 2013

Madam Director General of UNESCO,
Mister President of the General Conference,
Madam President of the Executive Board
Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

13 years ago, in September 2000, Member States of the United Nations adopted **8 Millennium Development Goals**. All of them were directly or indirectly associated with **UNESCO**, who indeed has significantly contributed to their implementation.

Therefore, on behalf of the Republic of Lithuania, I would like to **congratulate** UNESCO for its renowned actions on safeguarding cultural and natural heritage; as well as for its fostering cultural expressions and diversity.

Lithuania **welcomes initiatives** on education and science, **especially** in areas of recent and still on-going conflicts. Through such actions, UNESCO continually “Builds peace in the minds of men and women” and successfully

implements its main mission to enforce peace through the programmes on education, science, culture, communication, and information.

Although the Millennium Development Goals are, as it was correctly observed by UNESCO, **an unfinished business**, thanks to these goals and global platforms for cooperation, the world has made an unprecedented collaborative progress. And it is of **utmost importance** to continue following a **great example** of this unifying agenda. Thus we have two (2) main tasks ahead of us: **acceleration** of the Millennium Development Goals' achievement, and **strengthening** development efforts beyond 2015.

Currently, our main task is to accelerate the Millennium Development Goals' achievement, which we cannot be sure of **without a proper mobilization of all possible resources: public and private, domestic and international, and without using them in an innovative manner.**

The same rule applies for the future: we should commit more strongly to allocating sufficient resources, using them innovatively, and setting a more efficient framework based on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals' implementation period.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recent **financial crisis** has perfectly illustrated the vulnerability of progress and sustainability. The Millennium Development Goals' agenda **helped to lift** millions of people out of extreme poverty. It brought millions of girls and boys into classrooms. Unfortunately, **we have overlooked a new challenge – youth unemployment** – which has reached record numbers, became a threat to the global development, and caused yearly losses of as much as 1.2% of the global GDP, or almost a trillion US dollars.

It is of absolute importance to assure that these young people do not become the “**lost generation**”. Therefore, **tailoring a specific target to foster youth employability is crucial to ensure constant attention to this issue in the post-2015 agenda.**

Ensuring **equal access** to education and high attainment levels remain one of the most important goals. **Lithuania**, although having good level of overall literacy, low drop-out rates, and high tertiary education attainment, **strongly supports these goals.**

However, **stronger commitment has to be dedicated to improve the quality of education and to build dynamic education systems** – systems that are capable of overcoming future challenges, and adjusting to provide everyone – from children to the elderly – with the skills needed for successful life and decent jobs.

Despite the financial crisis, in the European Union alone there are over 2 million vacant jobs that cannot be filled because of the skills mismatch. Qualitative education **for all** and the possibility to learn **for the whole life are and will always remain** one of the main conditions for the continuing and successful development of a **person, society, and the world**.

Distinguished Guests,

Future development agenda should be closely linked to science, technology, and innovation. Scientific and technological innovation should be adopted in practical use, incorporated in the traditional knowledge, and made widely accessible, while scientific research should be demand-led.

Therefore, **strengthening** the interface between science and policy communities, as well as ensuring full coherence and synergy with the existing national, regional, and global initiatives on research, development, and innovation are important tasks to undertake in the **post-2015 agenda**.

It is no less important to emphasize the vital role that **communication and information** play in scientific advance and in promoting sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Culture is the area currently not reflected in the Millennium Development Goals. Yet it is **not only the main pillar** of the person's inner development; it has also grown into a strong economic sector, generating income and creating jobs, as well as being responsible for a significant share of the GDP.

Culture has become a driver and an enabler to realize development goals: **creative economy** plays an important role in the development of countries. **Culture-led development** ensures greater social inclusiveness, innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship for individuals and communities.

It is **crucial for us** to preserve our identity: our heritage, both tangible and intangible, for the future generations. It is also very important to foster cultural dialogue and diversity, not only to ensure the moral development of our countries, but also to maintain dialogue and peace between the diverse peoples of the world.

Thus we support the call by the Hangzhou Declaration for the full integration of culture to be defined in the Post-2015 development agenda through clear goals, targets, and indicators.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lithuania, as the current Presidency of the Council of the European Union, would like to highlight that the post-2015 framework should be based on the

principles of **equality and equity, democracy and good governance, the rule of law and accountability, and successful global partnerships.**

It is hard to believe that today there are still communities, where people cannot express themselves freely, do not have the right to vote and decide on their future, and where they face abuse and violence.

Therefore, we would like to see the post-2015 agenda with **a strong focus on peace and security, quality education for all, scientific innovations, culture, gender equality, and empowerment of women.**

Distinguished Guests,

Taking this opportunity, I would like to repeatedly emphasize the **commitment of the Republic of Lithuania to UNESCO.** We have consistently shared **the same view**, which is written in the Constitution of UNESCO: that **the peace** must be founded upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind, for it to be long lasting.

Let's create a better, smarter, more innovative, creative, and coherent future together.

Thank you.