

11. **The President:**

Thank you, Your Excellency. Our next speaker is His Excellency, Mr Nuno Crato, Minister of Education and Sciences of Portugal. Please.

12.1 **Mr Crato (Portugal)**

(address delivered in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation):

President of the General Conference, Chair of the Executive Board, Director-General, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, ambassadors, this General Conference is taking place at a time that requires us to make resolute efforts to find solutions to help strengthen our Organization. The time we are passing through compels us to work with a smaller budget, which necessarily means a reduction of the Secretariat and of the resources required for UNESCO to be able to take action.

12.2 We therefore wish to focus action on those priority areas of UNESCO, avoiding following a path where we would have an *à la carte* Organization based on the origin and nature of contributions. Portugal will continue to be committed to UNESCO remaining an Organization of reference in the United Nations in the promotion of culture, education and sciences.

12.3 Mr President, we know that investing in education through development of knowledge and basic cognitive abilities, the quality of education and the link between education and other development sectors also means investing in society's progress.

12.4 For Portugal, support in the area of education has been, is and will remain a priority in the multilateral and bilateral relations it has with foreign countries as a fundamental factor for human development and as a vector for truly inclusive economic growth.

12.5 May I stress here the cooperation we have with the Portuguese-speaking countries Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste. We are convinced that UNESCO should play a major role in the debate currently under way on the post-2015 development agenda.

12.6 Portugal has actively participated in these discussions, particularly in the context of the High-Level Panel. Universal access to quality education with constant assessment and commitment to the results of learning should be the path to follow. We know that improving the results of education directly returns an improvement in the competitiveness of the economy and social progress.

12.7 I would also like to stress that artistic education is fundamental for developing the individual and society itself. Artistic education should remain a priority of UNESCO and we welcome the fact that it has been acknowledged as a high priority.

12.8 Mr President, the history, culture and identity of Portugal are marked by the ocean. The aim of achieving sustainable development of maritime areas as conduits for economic and social progress managed in a balanced fashion on the basis of scientific knowledge requires increased endeavour for international cooperation. The role of UNESCO in this context requires the consolidation of the functional autonomy status of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), with the aim of making the most of the agreed action and the efforts of the Member States of the IOC in improving oceanographic knowledge and services for the international community and the United Nations system.

12.9 As regards cooperation with the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries in the areas of sciences, the Portuguese National Commission for UNESCO collaborates with various countries including Brazil, Sao Tome and Principe and Cabo Verde. This cooperation is based on the objectives of various science programmes of UNESCO, for example, the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP), the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), and the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), providing visibility to issues such as water, climate change and natural disasters. In order to promote these activities, Portugal has worked in a network with various geoparks, biosphere reserves, UNESCO Chairs and category 2 centres. In addition to supporting specific scientific projects, such as the Human Variome Project (HVP), Portugal is seeking to strengthen its partnership with UNESCO in the area of science in the service of peace and sustainable development.

12.10 The recent creation at Coimbra University of the Chair on Biodiversity Safeguard for Sustainable Development brings together a common project of Portuguese-speaking countries' universities and strengthens this aspect of cooperation.

12.11 Portugal's interest in promoting scientific policies and science is clear in the science initiatives in Portuguese of UNESCO. Also in the area of science, I have the pleasure to announce that Portugal's category 2 centre for the advanced training of scientists from Portuguese-speaking countries in areas of the basic sciences will be formalized tomorrow with UNESCO.

12.12 Mr President, the strengthening of UNESCO's ties with the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) is an encouraging sign in the quest for coherence and better results in the consolidation of peace. The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures launched this year, spearheaded by UNESCO, should be used as a major opportunity - as the Director-General so rightly said - for exercising UNESCO's responsibility in the Alliance to educate teachers and reconcile culture; this strategic instrument for development is a historical and civilizational benchmark for the identity of each people. To this end, each country, UNESCO and the international community in general should continue to pay due attention to the championing of tangible and intangible heritage of humanity as well as promoting and protecting cultural diversity. In this context, it will be important to reach an agreement on the cultural heritage sites in the Holy Land. It is an opportunity to show the world a sign of goodwill and cooperation in order that we may overcome obstacles of the past.

12.13 We stress the relevance of the provisions of the World Heritage Convention, and fair representation of all countries on the World Heritage List. It is essential to promote the preservation of cultural properties and ensure that there is respect for sustainability and the involvement of local communities and young people, which is why we advocate expanding the World Heritage Education Programme for young people.

12.14 Portugal is a firm champion of international cooperation in the context of world heritage. We are proud to belong to a community that values the cultural heritage and the universal nature and pledges to preserve these assets for future generations. As inheritors of a tradition of diversity and promoters of dialogue among civilizations and cultures, we wish to share our experience with respect to heritage. These are the principles that guide the present candidacy of Portugal for the World Heritage Committee. We count on your support. Portugal endorses the statement that Lithuania will be making on behalf of the European Union. Thank you very much.