

17. **The President:**

Thank you, Your Excellency. Our next speaker is Her Excellency, Ms Maria Arnholm, Minister of Gender Equality and Deputy Minister of Education of Sweden.

18.1 **Ms Arnholm (Sweden):**

Madam President, Madam Chair of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, no offense to all you prominent men, but let me just say what a pleasure it is for a minister of gender equality to start up a speech in that very female way. Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me to address the 37th session of the General Conference of UNESCO. Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by Lithuania on behalf of the European Union. This is a time of financial distress for UNESCO which, of course, puts a big strain on the Organization and its Secretariat. But these challenges should be seen as opportunities, leading us to foster a more focused organization.

18.2 UNESCO needs reforms and in this perspective, among others, Sweden welcomes the nomination of Ms Bokova for a second term of office. This is also why Sweden is a candidate for the Executive Board: because we want UNESCO to be an organization with the focus to meet global challenges instead of spreading its resources too widely. We trust in your support on November 13.

18.3 Madam President, many of UNESCO's core values are closely linked to what the world needs for development. Without education we cannot solve the challenges of the future. Without cooperation in sciences we cannot optimize development. Without culture and cultural diversity we cannot liberate ourselves from narrow-mindedness and thus we counteract the struggle for peace. Furthermore, the free exchange of ideas is a solid foundation for peace, cooperation, development and growth. We are pleased to see that UNESCO is devising a new strategy on youth in cooperation with the young people who met at the Youth Forum last week, here in Paris. When more than half of the world's population is under 20 their voices must be clearly heard.

18.4 Madam President, let also me speak very clearly. Girls make up the majority of the world's 61 million out-of-school children, and women are two thirds of the world's 775 million illiterates. This is unacceptable and unsupportable. In December last year, I had the privilege to participate in the "Stand Up for Malala" event here at UNESCO in Paris. For me it is evident that investing in girls' education is not just a moral and political obligation; it also is the most cost-effective investment humanity can make for growth, development and peaceful co-existence. Let us as governments rise to the action of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human rights of all women and girls. Every child, not every other, should hear the school bell call out to them on early mornings!

18.5 Ladies and gentlemen, UNESCO carries out essential work for the fulfilment of freedom of expression and press freedom everywhere and UNESCO has our full support in this. We look forward to the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and the publication of analyses on media development and trends. In this important field, UNESCO must continue to argue that human rights, including freedom of expression, apply online as well as offline.

18.6 Madam President, more than 600 journalists have been killed over the last 10 years and many have been imprisoned. We must speak up on behalf of those who have had their voices silenced, like the European-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak. He was arrested with other colleagues in Eritrea on 23 September 2001 because he used the freedom of speech guaranteed to everyone in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. He has been imprisoned ever since without a trial. We call for his immediate release.

(The speaker continues in French)

18.7 Chers collègues, chers amis, pour terminer, permettez-moi de citer le deuxième Secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, M. Dag Hammarskjöld. Il avait mis en regard deux conceptions différentes de l'ONU, qui serait soit « *un dispositif de conférence statique* », soit « *un instrument dynamique pour une communauté mondiale bien organisée* ». Espérons que cette Conférence générale sera l'occasion pour nous d'agir comme une communauté mondiale bien organisée, en arrêtant des objectifs peu nombreux, mais précis, et des projets clairvoyants. Merci pour votre attention.