



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Reply by**

**Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO  
to the 196<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board**

**UNESCO, 14 April 2015**

Chairman of the Executive Board of UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will ask the members of the Senior Management Team to address specific issues.

I wish to start by thanking all Members of the UNESCO for the clarity and depth of the commitment and support they expressed to this Organisation.

The tone was set eloquently and powerfully by you, Mr Chair, in an introductory speech that explored the origins of this Organisation in London in 1942, that reminded us of the vision that inspired UNESCO's creation in 1945, that shined light on the salience of the Organization's mandate today, in new times of turbulence and change.

As you said, Mr Chair, this is a moment of responsibility for Member States, for this Organisation, for the international community as a whole.

In your words, this calls for strategic decision-making -- decision-making that renews with the spirit and values of this Organisation, decision-making that rises above the technocratic.

This message of strategic responsibility was echoed by all Permanent Delegates, from across the world.

The Distinguished Representative of the United Kingdom spoke of the importance of UNESCO, noting that “world events have tragically shown how nothing we work for at UNESCO can be taken for granted” – I concur entirely.

The Chair of GRULAC, Distinguished Representative of Ecuador, highlighted the profound crisis affecting all countries today – a political, economic, social, and ecological crisis – which calls upon all Member States to renew ever more firmly with the core mandate of UNESCO.

The Distinguished Representative of Japan said “the Organisation stands at a critical juncture.”

In similar light, the Distinguished Representative of Italy spoke of the Organisation facing “a turning point in its history.”

The Distinguished Representative of Brazil underlined that “the role of UNESCO has never been as relevant as it is nowadays.”

This was echoed by the Distinguished Representative of the Republic of Korea, who spoke of UNESCO’s importance in what he called a “monumental year” for the international community, as it shapes a new global sustainable development agenda.

The Distinguished Representative of Uganda underlined UNESCO’s role in addressing the rising “peacelessness” across the world, just as the Distinguished Representative of Cuba stressed the importance of peace as the condition for all development.

In this context, the Distinguished Representative of Indonesia reminded all of the urgency “to bring into reality the purpose of the Organisation.”

We heard strong support to UNESCO action at the global and the regional level, and the Distinguished Representative of Angola, for the Africa Group, called for stronger resolution by Member States in supporting the Organisation at a time of such high expectations.

The Distinguished Representative of Ethiopia made the stakes clear – without the necessary means, UNESCO will be faced with “weaker delivery, reduced field presence, the considerable loss of expertise and reduced visibility within the United Nations system.”

The Distinguished Representative of Estonia was equally clear – “under both expenditure plans, funds are not sufficient to deliver on high expectations of Member States and the global community in the framework of the post-2015 agenda.”

I was inspired when the Distinguished Representative of Namibia made a powerful appeal to all, “to rise to the occasion,” to provide the Organisation with the support it needs, today and tomorrow, to deliver its mandate in education, the sciences, and freedom of expression.

The Distinguished Representative of Mexico took a high-level strategic perspective, looking to the weakness of investment in peace, in education, and calling on all Member States to support UNESCO.

This was eloquently expressed by the Distinguished Representative of India called on Member States “to rededicate to building a global society of tolerance based on universal human rights, respect for diversity and a permanent and creative dialogue, governed by mutual respect.”

This is written in the DNA of the Organisation.

The Distinguished Representative of China called for renewed resolution to find solutions, to support the Organisation with “adequate resources” – and the Distinguished Representative of Sweden called for a “stable, predictable and sufficient level of funding.”

In similar spirit, the Distinguished Representative of Morocco called on Member States to mobilize to strengthen UNESCO’s action and “provide concrete support to exit from this unsustainable financial situation.”

From all this, I believe, emerges a clear message.

Created 70 years ago, UNESCO has never been so in tune with the needs of societies, so relevant to the demands of new times.

This is true today, in societies undergoing transformation across the world, in conflicts where education and culture stand on the frontlines of peace, security and sustainable development.

This is true tomorrow, for the success of the new global sustainable development agenda.

Education, the sciences, culture, communication and information – these are foundations for human rights and dignity, these are forces for the sustainability of all efforts for poverty eradication and development, these are the strongest defences of lasting peace.

Yes, this is a moment for strategic decision-making.

Yes, this is a moment of responsibility.

Responsibility to the values that have guided this Organisation for 70 years.

Responsibility to answer the call for UNESCO that is rising from societies across the world.

Responsibility to the success of the future sustainable development agenda.

I agree with Member States that this is turning point year, notably for the post-2015 development agenda, where UNESCO will play a key role in shaping, in monitoring, in supporting States or its implementation – in education, in promoting freedom of expression and safety of journalists, in advancing gender equality and girls' education, in leading in the sciences, on the ocean, on human rights and dignity.

Member States also made a clear call for stronger reform, and this remains my absolute determination, launched five years and accelerated during the financial crisis.

I am committed to taking this ever forward, to strengthen delivery, to respond to the needs of Member States – working in two directions, on how we work, implement programmes, use resources and there have been strong advances and these will continue, guided by Member States, by the External Auditor and our plan of action, as well as by focussing on how to deliver better and with the greatest value, under your guidance.

Part of this involves the leadership of UNESCO in the United Nations system, where there have been huge efforts and strong progress, and this will continue, with your support.

I thank Member States also for the support expressed on the budget of the Organisation, and I wish to reiterate the need for a full budget.

In concrete circumstances, I am encouraged by the support Member States evoked for the ZNG+ proposal, to stabilise and move the work of the Organisation forward.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Vous avez parlé, avec émotion, avec force, de la question des attaques multiples contre les écoles, les étudiants, l'éducation en général, les bibliothèques, le patrimoine, les journalistes, les professeurs.

Il faut appeler les choses par leur nom : nous sommes au cœur d'une forme de guerre mondiale contre la connaissance, contre les savoirs, contre la diversité culturelle, contre la liberté et la dignité humaine.

C'est un enjeu contemporain qui est au cœur du travail de l'UNESCO, et comme l'a souligné le distingué représentant de l'Ancienne république yougoslave de Macédoine, nous travaillons sur les racines de la sécurité moderne.

L'UNESCO remplit une mission essentielle pour la paix et la sécurité dans le monde actuel, dans une guerre où la force des armes ne suffit pas.

Cette pertinence, cette urgence et je dirais même cette évidence de l'UNESCO a été réaffirmée par le pape François lors de l'audience solennelle qu'il nous a

accordée avec le Président de la Conférence générale et le Président du Conseil Exécutif, à Rome, le 2 mars dernier.

Sa Sainteté a justement salué l'action de l'UNESCO pour le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux, l'importance de l'éducation dans la lutte contre l'exclusion et l'intolérance.

Et nous devons avoir les moyens de faire vivre ce dialogue au quotidien, sur le terrain, auprès des jeunes.

Vous avez condamné avec force les attaques terroristes contre le musée du Bardo, en Tunisie.

Vous avez évoqué vos propres initiatives que je salue pour adopter des résolutions fortes, sur le futur de l'UNESCO, pour la protection de ce patrimoine si important pour l'humanité, pour le dialogue et la paix.

C'est un besoin vital des sociétés et dans de nombreux domaines, nous sommes les seuls à pouvoir y répondre, avec les chefs politiques et religieux, avec des rabbins, des évêques, des imams que nous avons réunis ici, à l'UNESCO, ou récemment à Bagdad, avec notre sœur l'ISESCO.

Notre rôle est d'élever des remparts contre la haine et l'extrémisme, par l'éducation, la culture, la connaissance, le dialogue interculturel.

La distinguée représentante de l'Italie l'a parfaitement résumé en rappelant qu' « aucun progrès durable ne peut être atteint si les individus ne possèdent pas les moyens d'accéder aux connaissances et à la culture. »

Et il faut évoquer ici la question de la liberté d'expression, car notre plaidoyer pour la liberté d'expression est aussi un plaidoyer pour la liberté d'accéder à l'éducation et la culture.

Voilà notre stratégie.

Cette stratégie s'incarne dans des programmes phares, que nous devons avoir les moyens de mener à bien, en vue de l'agenda post 2015.

Notre défi consiste à revoir nos méthodes pour qu'en effet la pertinence de notre mandat se traduise encore davantage en bénéfices concrets et en résultats tangibles.

L'UNESCO doit avoir les moyens de remplir cette mission, en gardant à l'esprit la sagesse de Martin Luther King, dans son discours de réception du Prix Nobel, si justement rappelé ce matin par le Distingué représentant de Belize ;

« La vérité désarmée et l'amour inconditionnel auront toujours le dernier mot. Et le bien, même temporairement vaincu, est plus fort que le mal qui triomphe. »

Je vous remercie.