

Statement by H. E. Mr. B. Biškupić
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To be presented at the 34th General Conference of UNESCO

Distinguished Mister President of the General Conference,
Mister Chairman of the Executive Board,
Mister General-Director,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished Mr. President, allow me to express my congratulations on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Croatia for being elected as the President of the General Conference.

Let me start by expressing our support to UNESCO as well as to the other UN organisations, in the continuance of the initiated reforms and clear defining of the Organisation's priorities, as well as the UNESCO's important role within the UN. The fundamental role of education, science, culture and communications is one of the main conditions for the maintenance of peace, social cohesion and sustainable development of the world. We also give our full support to the Millennium Development Goals, recognising the fact that there are many parts of the world are still being threatened by wars and poverty and that there are no conditions for achieving same opportunities for everyone.

Mr. President,

Croatia expresses its strong support to the Organisation's normative work, and we are happy to confirm that, since last General Conference, we ratified the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Convention against Doping in Sport. Besides being one of the first countries to ratify a great number of UNESCO's conventions, we have actively participated in the drafting of many of them. In June this year Croatia was elected in the Intergovernmental Committee for the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and we will continue to cooperate with other member countries of the Committee in order to bring this important Convention to life.

Mr. President,

I'm happy to report that we have had intensive and fruitful cooperation with UNESCO in every area of activities and especially in culture where we would like to put a special emphasis to our candidacy for the inscription of Stari Grad Plain on the island of Hvar on the World Heritage List, which will be taken into consideration next year at the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Canada, as well as the candidacy of Lonjsko polje for mixed site, which is in the last phase of preparation. As a country which has unfortunately experienced the horrors of war and difficult post-war restoration of both tangible and intangible heritage we especially recognise the value of the protection of heritage and the responsibility we have towards the future generations. The continuation of post-war restoration and the return of illegally taken objects of cultural heritage remains one of our priorities and we are ready to share our experiences within UNESCO.

Recognising the importance of intangible heritage, which is prescribed by the 1999 Law on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Goods, we have been actively working nationally on its protection and promotion. National Register of Intangible Heritage counts with over a hundred of intangible property expressions from which we will candidate our most prestigious expressions for the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

As the third country to sign the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, Croatia is committed to promote and protect this type of heritage and it founded the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar which will provide the possibility of education in the field of conservation and restoration of underwater findings and in that way contribute to the international cooperation. We are grateful to the UNESCO's Executive Board and member countries for the support given for the attempts of the Republic of Croatia to promulgate the International Centre for Underwater Archaeology as the UNESCO Category II Centre. We are also grateful to the Secretariat for the support and advice during the preparation of the candidacy.

Mr. President,

Recent educational reforms carried out at all educational levels and outlined in the Education Sector Development Plan 2005 – 2010 have taken into consideration the Millennium Development Goals and the six *Education for*

All goals. Specific priority areas in the Development Plan, among others, include: enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education at all levels; stimulating the continuing professional training of teachers and other education sector employees; promoting education for social cohesion and economic growth and development.

With significant budgetary increase for the education sector the Government is providing free textbooks for all primary school students, as well as subsidies for free textbooks, transportation and dormitories for the secondary school students in order to increase their percentage.

Within the tertiary education sector the three priority goals of the Bologna process have been implemented:

- Creation of a Quality Assurance System;
- Introduction of a Two-Cycle System;
- Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications.

Universal access to education is not the only prerequisite for establishing inclusive knowledge societies. UNESCO has for years been successfully fostering human rights education, intercultural education, multilingualism and education for sustainable development. In 1999 the Croatian Government established the National Committee for Human Rights Education which is an educational framework for human rights/civic education, intercultural education, as well as education for sustainable development. The National Committee for the UN Decade for the Education for Sustainable Development has been established with the aim of fostering this form of education. We are glad to report that UNESCO Associated Schools have been utilized as a vehicle for implementing aforementioned educational programs.

Mr. President,

The “Science and Technology Policy of the Republic of Croatia 2006 – 2010” presents a vision for the development of the Science and Technology sector in Croatia which would enable the transformation of the country into a society of knowledge.

The priorities and interests of the Republic of Croatia correspond to UNESCO's policy documents. Scientific research should contribute to the welfare of citizens and to the benefit of the environment. Being a Mediterranean country, Croatia has a special responsibility towards water in general and in particular the Adriatic Sea, and has been taking comprehensive measure to protect its waters. Different activities carried out by UNESCO such as IOC (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission), GHEOHAB (Global Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Bloom), GOOS (Global Ocean Observing System) Early Tsunami warning programmes, the World Climate Research programme are enhancing these policies where our experts are actively taking part. Croatia also participates in the work of IHP (International Hydrological Programme) and we hope to renew our mandate in this important Committee.

We have also reactivated our National Committee for MAB (Man and Biosphere) Programme where we are actively undertaking the activities for protection of the eco-system along rivers Drava and Mura as a new trans-boundary Man and Biosphere reserve, in cooperation with Hungary and Slovenia.

By initiating a National programme of scholarships for young women scientists named „For women in science“, a very successful cooperation between UNESCO and L'OREAL has been continued. We are proud to inform that three Croatian women scientists have already been granted by international scholarships of UNESCO and L'OREAL.

UNESCO's recognition of important anniversaries in Croatian and world science has been warmly welcomed. This year we are eagerly awaiting to confirm the 500th death anniversary of sculptor and architect IVAN DUKNOVIĆ (Iohannes Dalmata), and the 500th birth anniversary of comedigrapher and lyricist MARIN DRŽIĆ, which will be celebrated by different events in Croatia and abroad.

In social and human sciences Croatia's priorities are linked to human rights, enhancing multilingualism and intercultural dialogue.

The battle against doping in sports in Croatia has been enhanced by adherence to the World Anti-Doping Code and the International Convention against Doping in Sport. On the basis of the newly introduced Sports Act in

2006, Croatia has established an Anti-Doping Agency in February 2007, thus translating the goals of UNESCO Convention in our legal system.

Through the membership in the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication and the foundation of the National Committee for UNESCO's Information for All Programme, Croatia will continue to contribute to active discussions and projects on both national and international levels. The development of the information society and services has recently become the topic of many legislative, normative and strategic initiatives and activities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, covered by the programme named E-Croatia. By using the National Programme of Digitization of Archival, Library and Museum Materials, Croatia wishes to stimulate and support a systematic and equitable approach to the digitalisation of materials in cultural institutions. These activities are partially carried out through the newly founded National Memory of the World Committee, where our first candidature is being prepared.

Mr. President,

Croatia has been actively cooperating with all the countries in the region, and we give our full support to the UNESCO's Venice Office in its efforts to stimulate the cooperation South-East Europe. To back up the aforementioned, we would like to emphasise some successful meetings in the organisation of which UNESCO participated, such as the Fourth South East Europe Heads of State Summit held in Opatija in 2006 entitled "Communication of Heritage", the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South Eastern Europe - A Bridge towards a Shared Future, and several other initiatives aimed to ensure continuity of cooperation and synergy of all the existing activities as well as to promote UNESCO's goals.

In the forthcoming period of two years we are hoping to widen the scope of regional, European and broader European cooperation and to carry out new innovative projects in the field of education, science and culture in order to support peace throughout the world.

Thank you.