

Discours du Président bulgare

**Mr. President of the General Conference,
Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board,
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today, we were supposed to gather here on a joyous occasion – the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Sadly, the agenda has changed.

On November 13th Paris, the city of light, went dark. Paris, the city of music and laughter, went silent. Shock and terror reigned on the streets. More than a hundred innocent people lost their lives in deadly terrorist attacks. Parisians are people who enjoy and celebrate life. Parisians are masters of their souls. They cherish the freedom of being themselves, of choosing their friends, regardless of the color of their skin, religion, culture or origin. Liberté, égalité et fraternité are the very foundation of their and our way of life. We all choose the world culture and heritage to be shared, cherished and celebrated as Parisians do.

The morning after the attacks, the people of Paris and the world went out on the streets, saying firmly “no” to fear, refusing to change who we are and what we believe in. We all choose life, because we are all Parisians. We all choose light, we choose freedom and joy because we are all Parisians.

Dear friends,

Terrorist attacks all over the world have shown that violent extremism transcend national borders. No one is immune and no one is safe. It is time to act together and address the root causes for terrorism and not only the consequences. No one on our planet is born a terrorist. Terrorists are created. Social exclusion, inequality and lack of access to basic human rights are what fuels hatred and division. There are many young people that have no jobs, no perspective and no goals in

life. Radicalism is just a step away. Today's social integration policies need to be improved and become more inclusive. Marginalization has no ethnicity, religion or skin color. We must adopt policies and measures that would prevent the radicalization of marginalized groups and ensure their better integration in local societies through education, dialogue and active citizenship.

Marginalization is what allows extremist and radical groups such as Daesh to penetrate into our societies and strike where it hurts the most – our values, our way of life. Marginalization contributes to ongoing conflicts in different parts of the world and fuels the spread of radical ideologies.

Terrorist fighters will be certainly defeated by the international antiterrorist coalition. but the ideology of terrorism cannot be defeated by weapons. It could be defeated by better ideas, education and tolerant societies. Only by putting aside short-sighted national interests and by uniting against this global menace, we will win this fight. No doubt we will win the war against terrorism. But most importantly we need to win the peace in the conflict areas. We need a comprehensive, multilateral and all-inclusive approach. Close cooperation is needed not only between governments and law enforcement institutions, but also with civil society, local communities, media and the private sector to ensure durable and viable solutions. The international community has to upgrade the UN Global Counter-terrorism strategy and once again reaffirm its commitment to the fight against terrorism. An urgent adoption of a new result-oriented Road map is of utmost importance. It is time we invest more efforts in institution building, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Providing an economic perspective on site for conflict-affected societies is of primary importance. This is the responsibility of the entire international community. Having recovered from two world wars, United Europe has the experience and the capacity to be the leader of this international effort.

Our democracies certainly are not perfect. They do not always function well. But it is democracy that makes us strong, free and human. Our strength is unity and shared values. Our weapon is integration. Only integration makes human progress possible. We

need more, not less integration in Europe. The modern history of Europe is a history of cooperation, diplomacy and technological progress, not of wars and conflicts. The modern history of Europe gives a unique example to the world that peace is only possible when nations reach such a high level of integration and cooperation that makes future war impossible. Nations are strong not because of their armies and weapons, but because of their talent and culture. The success of a country is not measured by territory and moving borders, but by the success of ordinary people. In this difficult moment we certainly need a strong political leadership and active citizens. We need leaders who understand that differences should be resolved peacefully. We need leaders that support that upgrade and not destroy the international order. We want to see principles, not interests to prevail on the global stage.

Dear friends,

UNESCO is a unique organization and has an important role to play. We have all the right tools - promoting cultural and religious dialogue, preventing youth radicalization through education for all, sharing scientific knowledge for the better future of mankind. For seventy years “building peace in the minds of men and women” has been UNESCO’s mission. The “diffusion of culture, the education for justice, liberty and peace” - its *raison d’être* (*резон д’етр*). Throughout the years this unique organization has become the leading international forum dedicated to the protection of mankind’s spiritual and cultural heritage. It has helped address numerous challenges through dialogue and compromise. It has taught us to respect and promote human dignity and equality and to cherish cultural and religious diversity. It is time to invest more efforts and resources in education and cultural diversity in order to ensure just and sustainable future of every one.

The deliberate destruction of world cultural heritage sites by terrorists is a severe blow to human civilization. Let us pay a special tribute to UNESCO, for its tremendous work in protecting the cultural heritage

in Iraq, Syria and all over the world and fight globally the illicit trafficking of cultural artifacts.

Dear friends,

Five years since its beginning, the conflict in Syria continues to represent a major threat to international peace and security. The ongoing hostilities in several conflict zones have forced millions to leave their homes on a perilous journey to safety. Instead of being in the classroom, thousands of children are crossing the Mediterranean, putting their future on the line. Hundreds of thousands are currently at Europe's doorstep asking for nothing else but the right to live in peace and dignity.

Unfortunately, nationalism and populism in Europe are on the rise again. Feeding on people's fears, nationalistic parties are currently growing stronger, promoting intolerance, hatred and xenophobia. Let us not allow them to use last Friday's attacks for a short-term political advantage. Closing our borders now for those that are different from us, whose life is in danger and forgetting Europe's core values will be the biggest mistake of United Europe. If we do that, it means terrorists have won. It means that Paris will never be the same – a city of bright lights, of tolerance, of mutual respect and multi-cultural dialogue. Modern patriotism not nationalism is needed now. A wise and respected President, the President de Gaulle once said: "Patriots are those who love their country, nationalists are those who hate the different."

Seventy years after the end of the Second World War, we must not repeat the mistakes of the past. The Second World War was made possible by "the suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world", "by the denial of the democratic principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect". We must never again allow such a tragedy. History needs to be remembered and told accurately. Media and education institutions share a responsibility for upholding the culture of remembrance and having it be an integral part of the global perspective of young generations. UNESCO plays a critical role in this respect.

Dear Friends,

Let us never forget what means to be a Parisian – freedom to be who you are and the shared belief that we are all born equal to live as brothers. We must not forget that in every society there is always someone who would prefer the sword to the pen. That there will be always fanatics who will try to kill innocent people in the name of God. But a brutal murder has nothing to do with God. Because God was wise enough not to allow anyone to believe they can dominate over the others. We are all born equal, born in peace, to live in peace and to work for peace. God is teaching us that every life matters, no matter of Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jews or other.

The events that shocked Paris caused a wave of solidarity. Together, united, the citizens of Europe openly stated that they will stand to protect human life, dignity and freedom. Let us support every initiative against fanaticism, xenophobia and antisemitism. Sometimes even the smallest efforts is enough to drive away the darkness and bring back hope and light. Even the worst of evil will be stopped when people with different religion, ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds, unite and firmly Say "No" to hatred. We are impressed by the words of the young Muslim man Lassana Bathily (Уасана Батили) who saved several innocent lives during the hostage crisis earlier this year in Paris: “We are brothers. It is not a question of Jews, Christians or Muslims. We are all in the same boat and we have to help one another”.

Today, just across from my office in the very hart of the Bulgarian capital Sofia there are temples of different religions - a well preserved 4th century early Orthodox church, an Orthodox cathedral, catholic cathedral, a Mosque and a Synagogue, that is the biggest on the Balkans. They have all coexisted peacefully for centuries. This a great example of tolerance, of wisdom and respect for diversity. Multiculturalism works in Paris, works in Sofia, works in Europe and all over the world. Let us all, politicians and civil society never forget that is up to all of us to shape the world we live in. Let us not stop making it a better place.

The only way that brings us forward is through reconciliation and understanding, through tolerance and respect for diversity. Aggression, nationalism and populism do not bring any good future. Let us choose the civilized way, the European way. Let us give a positive example to the world. Let us never tolerate injustice. Let us never stop investing our hearts and energy into creating a world where cultural diversity is treasured, tolerance is shared, and humanism is held high. This will be the best way to commemorate the lost innocent lives in terrorist attacks in Paris and all over the world.

May they rest in peace!