

Mr. President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General of UNESCO,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, Paris and the rest of the world stood still for a minute of silence. We all stood in liberty, equality and fraternity (*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*) and we always will. We join efforts in defence of our values, our principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

We are not afraid and we will not be frightened.

There is no justification for violence. Terrorism has no religion, race or nationality, but it also knows no borders.

That is why, we have a responsibility to stand united in the face of aggression. Stand united in defence of our world order.

The 70th anniversary of UNESCO is an opportunity to note our achievements, learn from our mistakes and prepare for the challenges we face today.

Never before have so many people enjoyed such high standards of living or benefited from so much cooperation.

At the same time, the past few years have taught us that progress can be reversed.

Wars, conflict and terrorism spread instability. Increased international effort to **promote peace, human rights and democracy** is essential.

The new United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda should address these principles and lead the change.

Today, three spheres of UNESCO engagement deserve particular attention:

- 1) **education**
- 2) **freedom of expression, and**
- 3) **protection of heritage.**

First of all, education. Lasting peace, sustainable development and eradication of poverty all depend on access to education.

Radicalism and hate flourishes where education fails.

A growing number of children and young people are **out of school in countries affected by conflict and wars.** Additional resources need to be mobilized for this purpose.

In the 21st century **child marriages** are still widespread. This phenomenon deprives young girls of access to schooling and better life. Ending child marriage is a global challenge. Better education for girls and young women is an answer to it.

UNESCO's commitment to twelve years of free, publicly funded, quality education, of which at least nine years are compulsory, needs to become a reality before 2030.

Education is a fundamental human right of which nobody should be deprived.

The second area of concern is **freedom of expression.**

People must have the right to speak freely and journalists must be able to report their stories without fear. The free speech is our weapon in the fight against terrorist propaganda.

When a crime against a journalist is committed, it is an attack on human rights.

Recent violence against journalists in the occupied Crimea (Ukraine), the Middle East or in the heart of Paris only confirms that we have reached the

point of no return. Efforts of the media community, of member states and of international organizations have to be united in order to stop it.

It is for this reason Lithuania initiated in the UN Security Council a resolution that urges Member States to ensure accountability for crimes committed against journalists in situations of armed conflict.

Thirdly, we must unite for **heritage**.

We are outraged by the attacks against cultural heritage in Syria and in Iraq. These are unprecedented acts of barbarism and attacks against the core values of humanity.

It is our duty to help protect our common world heritage by expanding and deepening cooperation and to seek accountability when international norms are severely violated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, more than ever we need a united response and action to protect our values and principles.

We need UNESCO that can act through cooperation and partnership.

A UNESCO that can promote peace by ensuring access to education, defending freedom of the media and protecting our heritage.

These are the obligations that we have to the memory of those that lost their lives in Paris and to our future generations.

Thank you.