

**Speech of H.E Mr. Anar Karimov, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Azerbaijan to UNESCO, at the General Policy Debate of the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of UNESCO**

**UNESCO Headquarters**

**07 November 2015**

Dear President of the General Conference,

Dear Madame Director General,

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr President for his election and express my heartfelt wishes for successful presidency. Allow me also to thank the outgoing president Mr. Hao Ping for an excellent work during his mandate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO has passed through 70 years of honorary pathway, with the sacred goal of “Building peace in the minds of men and women”. Several legal instruments were established, important conferences were held, and messages were sent all around the world in order to stronger protect and promote culture of peace, to establish and ensure the continuity of intercultural dialogue, make better access to education for all, preserve environment and thus create better social and economic conditions for citizens of the world without difference of their race, religion or ethnic background.

Unfortunately, we are still witnessing wars and conflicts, extremism, radicalization, destruction of cultural and religious heritage and the international community cannot stay indifferent vis-a-vis such violence. We are glad that UNESCO through its existing mechanisms and resources spares no efforts to keep this issue higher on agenda. In this regard, we welcome the campaign Unite4Heritage launched by the Director General, as well as elaboration of the strategy to reinforce UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict.

We are living through historical moments, when United Nations just recently adopted new Sustainable Development Goals with the aim to achieve better and safer world built upon sustainable economic and social development. I'm confident that with its expertise and knowledge on Education, UNESCO will successfully lead the international community to achieve the targets incorporated in SDGs.

Distinguished delegates,

Azerbaijan attaches great importance to cooperation with UNESCO. This cooperation has become more intensive after the signing of the Framework Agreement on Cooperation between UNESCO and Azerbaijan in July 2013. Azerbaijan decided to sign this agreement with the primary aim to support UNESCO in its difficult time to advance its activities in core areas. This includes supporting UNESCO in such priority areas as education for all, girl's education, safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage, science and innovation technologies, disaster risk preparedness and many others.

Let me give you a few examples of the projects are being implemented within the Framework Agreement. Several projects on girl's education in Eastern African countries, as well as project to support TVET sub-sector through CapEFA Programme in Liberia. Avicenna Virtual Campus in Central Asia - a large scale programme for teacher training in science and technology.

While mentioning all these activities, I am delighted to underline tremendous support of Her Excellency Mrs Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, in making these projects possible, as well as in promoting the message of UNESCO and its core values worldwide.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Situated on the crossroads of civilizations, cultures and religions, Azerbaijan became a place of intercultural dialogue. And we are proud of that. The World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held in Azerbaijan this year for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time is one of the best examples of the commitment of my Government in promoting inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. I would like to thank UNESCO, as official partner of the Forum, for its support and contribution to the success of this important event.

However, it is with profound regret I must add that peace, security and stability in our region continue to be endangered and UNESCO's principles and values remain

violated by an ongoing military occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan by armed forces of Armenia. In fact, the deliberate acts of destruction of cultural heritage in different parts of the world is not something new for my people; such and similar acts have taken place many years as a result of cultural cleansing policy by Armenia. Not a single historical monument, mosque or cemetery testifying centuries' old historical presence of Azerbaijani population escapes destruction or desecration in the occupied territories and in Armenia itself. And what is more surprising that while being involved in all these crimes, and being a unique mono-ethnic and mono religious country in a very diverse region, Armenia is trying to teach others about diversity and tolerance. Dangerous and very flabbergasting logic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is regretful that instead of using this forum to spread a message of peace and dialogue, yesterday we heard again hate and intolerance.

We are celebrating 70 years anniversary of UNESCO and the importance of UNESCO is more relevant than ever and we still believe that the whole international community should stand together in achieving all goals that are ahead for creation of safer world for humanity with sustainable peace, prosperity and development.

Thank you