

**38<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO  
PARIS, 3 – 18 NOVEMBER 2015  
ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS,  
MR COSTAS KADIS, MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Madam Director General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Firstly I would like to congratulate the new President of the General conference His Excellency Mr. Stanley Mutumba Simataa, Deputy Minister of Information and communication Technology of the Republic of Namibia, and also, by praising the out-going President, Hao Ping, vice Minister of Education, Chairperson of the Chinese National commission for UNESCO, for his successful mandate.

For seventy years, UNESCO has been conducting pioneering work worldwide. Its vision to build lasting peace is still pertinent and highly significant in addressing contemporary challenges. Cyprus fully embraces the key objectives, which govern UNESCO's mandate.

Recently, we have all been witnessing the irreparable destruction of World Heritage Sites in war-torn countries and the serious violation of fundamental human rights. Cultural heritage does not only concern monuments, but mostly human values and identities. We are all responsible, therefore, for protecting this heritage against all possible threats. Unfortunately, Cyprus' cultural heritage still suffers extensively from the results of war and military occupation, with the fate of thousands of invaluable archaeological, historical, ethnographic and ecclesiastical artifacts remaining unknown. Cypriot cultural goods, as a result of looting and illicit trafficking, are frequently located in auction-houses and art markets abroad. Fortunately, some of our efforts to repatriate such cultural goods have been successful. The Republic of Cyprus has signed numerous bilateral agreements with other countries, willing to join forces in the effort to protect cultural heritage and combat illicit trafficking.

As far as cultural property from Iraq and Syria is concerned, the competent authorities of Cyprus are on high alert, especially due our geographical proximity to these countries. Moreover, as of September

2015, Cyprus is a member of the Subsidiary Committee of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, fostering creativity and protecting the diversity of cultural expressions, through promoting regional and international cooperation, are also of paramount importance. Cyprus acknowledges the role of culture, cultural expressions and creative industries as driving forces for development. We greatly share the vision of UNESCO, the UN and of the EU for a more integrated approach towards culture, aiming at mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and economic development.

Furthermore, the preservation of natural resources and the biodiversity of our planet are essential in building sustainable societies based on equality and respect. A great achievement for our country is the recent inclusion of Troodos Mountain in the Global Geoparks Network, as a significant example of geodiversity.

At the heart of every transformative process lies education. UNESCO has paved the way for the promotion of "Education for all" and we believe it should continue to play a leading role in the post-2015 education agenda. Yesterday, the Education 2030 framework for Action was formally adopted during the special high level meeting. In this regard, Cyprus will continue and expand its efforts toward inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. Quality education requires professional and committed educators at all levels. Consequently, Cyprus has developed and adopted a series of policies focusing on the quality of our teachers.

Mr. Chairman,

In concluding, I wish to reiterate our commitment to contribute to the realisation of UNESCO's mission, which is peace-building through education, culture and science. In Cyprus there is an ongoing negotiation process aiming to reach a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is fully committed to this process; a process, which, should it be concluded successfully, will give unprecedented impetus to peace and sustainable development in our country and the region, and thus it will be in line with UNESCO's objectives and values.