



**38th session of the UNESCO General Conference**

*EU statement in the General Plenary Debate, 7 November 2015*

Mr President of the General Conference,  
Mr President of the Executive Board,  
Madam Director-General,  
Distinguished colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and the Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,<sup>1</sup> Montenegro and Albania.

Mr President, Madam Director General, as the United Nations and UNESCO are celebrating their 70th anniversaries this year, we would like to reiterate the EU's full support and commitment to this crucial organisation. The challenges facing us now are of no less importance.

In September we adopted the 2030 Agenda - a common plan of action to transform our world for the next fifteen years. It builds on our achievements in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, including those which have become a reality through the support of UNESCO.

The Agenda reinforces our renewed intent to move our collective commitments forward on every front of UNESCO's mandate. The comprehensiveness of this agenda reflects the complexity and interlinkages of today's challenges. We all have the responsibility for its realisation. The EU is fully committed to play its part. We will implement the new universal agenda at home and will continue to promote sustainable development worldwide in its economic, social and environmental dimensions, with a particular focus on countries most in need.

UNESCO has an important role to play in translating the goals into concrete action, while ensuring its coherence with the efforts of the entire UN system. We recall in this regard the request of the Executive Board to pursue reform efforts in order to continue strengthening UNESCO's competitive edge and organizational delivery capacity to support Member States in delivering on the Agenda globally, regionally and nationally. The EU, whose current support to UNESCO amounts to nearly 70 MEUR, remains committed to working closely with the Organisation in this effort.

L'UE réaffirme sa profonde préoccupation au sujet de l'augmentation des attaques délibérées contre le patrimoine culturel. Nous soulignons l'importance de la Stratégie visant à renforcer l'action de l'UNESCO et le respect des autres décisions des Nations Unies à cet égard. Nous notons également le besoin d'une coopération plus efficace entre l'UNESCO et les autorités nationales pour remédier au manque de données de terrain fiables, comme il a été souligné dans la Décision 197EX10 de la dernière session du Conseil Exécutive.

L'UE s'engage à poursuivre sa collaboration étroite avec l'UNESCO et soutient les efforts que celle-ci mène, en lien étroit avec l'ensemble de ses partenaires clés, en vue de protéger le patrimoine culturel et la diversité culturelle et de faire face aux menaces liées au terrorisme et à l'extrémisme violent. Conformément à la résolution 2199 du Conseil de sécurité, l'UE a engagé les mesures appropriées pour prévenir le commerce illégal de biens culturels; ce trafic illicite d'œuvres d'art contribue directement au financement de l'EI (DAECH) et d'autres organisations terroristes.

As a party to the Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, the EU underlines the continued relevance of its founding principles such as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including artistic freedom, and the importance of their further implementation in the context of technological and digital change.

The EU welcomes the Education 2030 Framework for Action to mobilise efforts to reach SDG 4. We will continue to support education efforts globally, recognising the crucial role of education in achieving multiple goals across the Agenda 2030, including the Goal to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. The EU supports governments in over 40 countries to provide quality education and learning opportunities for all. Since 2004, its contribution has helped 300,000 new female students to enrol in secondary education. We continue to support a number of partners, including countries most in need, within the framework of the Global Partnership for Education.

We underline education as a human right and its importance in combating violent extremism and promoting development, peace and security and human rights. The EU finances the UNESCO Net-Med Youth project in order to promote young people's participation in democracy, to provide education for Syrian refugees in Jordan and to support the education sector reforms in Iraq.

Freedom of opinion and expression are the fundamental rights of every human being. The EU will continue to uphold these rights online and offline and to condemn all violations of these rights, including attacks against journalists and bloggers both in the framework of multilateral organisations

and its bilateral relations. The EU continues to support concrete actions in this regard, e.g. through funding to the programme by Reporters Sans Frontières to protect journalists and bloggers.

We underline the importance of concerted action within the UN, including of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, led by UNESCO. We welcome the decision adopted by the Executive Board at its 196<sup>th</sup> session on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and the UN Security Council resolution 2222(2015) on the protection of journalists in conflict situations. The upcoming UNESCO conference in February with the participation of news organizations will provide a unique platform for dialogue on journalists' safety.

We remain concerned about the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine) and look forward to the follow-up of the Board's request for continued collection of information as well as for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism on the situation.

Noting the steps taken to increase UNESCO's efficiency, we recall that its capacity to respond to the pressing challenges and to implement the 2030 Agenda depends on its effective management, sufficient budgetary resources as well as increased mobilisation of the transparent and diverse extrabudgetary resources. In terms of improved, more reactive, flexible and inclusive governance we are looking forward to assessing the impact of the decisions of the latest session of the Executive Board, as well as to the follow-up of resolution 96 from the 37th session of the General Conference.

Enfin, nous nous félicitons de la décision adoptée par le Conseil exécutif à sa 197<sup>ème</sup> session sur la Lutte contre le changement climatique/COP21. Nous encourageons l'UNESCO et ses Etats membres à se mobiliser sur les enjeux du changement climatique, notamment sur la recherche de solutions, et à participer activement à la mise en œuvre des conclusions de la COP21 puis de la COP22, afin de poursuivre la réalisation des objectifs de l'agenda 2030.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process*