

DELEGATION OF FINLAND

The 38th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO

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Check against delivery

Mr. President

Mr. Chair of the Executive Board

Madam Director-General

Distinguished Delegates,

Congratulations on your election as President of the General Conference. We also wish to thank the outgoing President and the Chair of the Board.

Finland concurs with the EU statement.

Excellencies,

Human rights matter. Education matters. Gender equality matters. Freedom of expression matters.

They are some of the key components of the new Sustainable Development Agenda.

I wish to congratulate the Director-General for UNESCO's active input in the preparatory work.

In celebrating the 70th anniversary of UNESCO, we must face our challenges with the same determination our predecessors did in 1945.

Finland welcomes all constructive efforts that pave the way for peace and security. UNESCO is well placed to make its contribution.

Finland is committed to support UNESCO in this important work. Despite the challenging economic situation, Finland is proud to be able to continue its voluntary contribution to UNESCO, especially in the sectors of education and communication.

The holistic and cross-cutting nature of **Agenda 2030** is encouraging. It is not short on ambition and concerns all of us.

It is the largest antipoverty push ever and it is an immense boost for UNESCO's future programme; It gives a huge opportunity to re-design the programme and calibrate the expected results and indicators.

One of UNESCO's main advantages is its broad mandate. And for UNESCO to succeed it will require not only resources but, among others, policy coherence, stronger governance and inter-sectoral linkages.

As to relevance, we hope for action towards even more concrete and applicable policy recommendations. Evaluations are done, but there is still need for follow-up capacities across the board.

Today, events are moving with high speed, often outpacing the efforts of organizations built for another age – 70 years ago.

A rejuvenated UNESCO must therefore be fit to respond to changes, and efficient governance is key. We believe that the recommendations of the governance audit deserve a holistic and careful study. This is also an area that we will be promoting as a Member of the Executive Board 2017 onwards.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of us face inequalities, both within and between our countries. Agenda 2030 supports a more people-centered approach – one with provisions also for people with disabilities and youth.

Young people are not only policy objects. They must be allowed to be active, contributing citizens.

I am concerned by the wave of intolerance and the spread of radicalization and violent extremism – to which particularly young men are prone. We need to look into groups at risk, the vulnerability of boys and young men and migrants as well as the rights of women and girls. We need to invest in global citizenship education, including multi-literacy, and education for sustainable development.

To Finland, education comes first. I wish to thank UNESCO for its leadership in coordinating the Education Agenda. It quite rightly brings learning and quality to the forefront.

No one should be denied the right to education, but still, girls continue to draw the short straw. More needs to be done to secure education of women and girls.

We are pleased with the commitment in the Framework Agenda to inclusion and equity and the call for well-educated teachers. Equal opportunities are fundamental.

Education provides skills for employment, for decent work, a way out of poverty. Therefore, it is also one of Finland's priority fields for our voluntary contribution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Technology transfer and water related questions on the Agenda 2030 are highly relevant for UNESCO's next programme. They depend on scientific knowledge and capacity to deliver.

Finland strongly supports an integrated science approach.

Finland values UNESCO's work for freedom of expression, press freedom, safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. They are essential for the next programme – as is equal and open access to knowledge and information. The "Connecting the Dots" outcome document provides a solid building block for Internet related issues.

I am pleased to confirm that Finland will continue its support to the International Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC). Finland proudly hosts UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day event next year and I am happy to welcome you all to Helsinki in May.

UNESCO has undisputable global leadership in issues of cultural diversity and heritage protection. We are all terrified by the destruction of cultural heritage. Finland, not only as a Member on the World Heritage Committee, supports UNESCO in this area, including the campaign #Unite4heritage. We all have a shared responsibility. To rephrase the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "Violence is never justifiable, it is not inevitable and where the underlying causes are addressed, violence is entirely preventable".

We have come together to make UNESCO fulfill its global mandate in tandem with Agenda 2030. We have the elements and we will all be held to account.

What counts now is to move from promises to real change.

Thank you.