

Statement of H.E. Mr. Mohammad Farhadi
Minister of Science, Research and Technology of the
Islamic Republic of Iran
General Policy Debate: 38th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO
4 November 2015

Excellency, Mr. Stanley Simataa,

Sincere congratulations to you on your election as President of the 38th session of the General Conference. I wish you the best in your important task.

Mr. President,
Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to congratulate you upon the occasion of the 70th anniversary of UNESCO. From its inception, UNESCO has been a place in which to expand cooperation among cultures and faiths, and this policy has brought many valuable gifts to humanity. 70 years after UNESCO's foundation, we have a good opportunity to wisely view the past in order to trace the future and prepare the force and importance of this great unique world organization.

This House is to, among many other tasks, promote cultural diversity. Therefore allow me to continue in my mother tongue, Persian.

Translation in English for dear interpreters:

UNESCO was born in the hope of becoming the pioneer in opposing ignorance, violence, intolerance and war; today more than ever, the world cries for peace, moderation, prudence, and genuine dialogue for the sacred sake of justice, equality of educational opportunity, sustainable development and the culture of peace. Today, the world needs to confront the negative phenomena of extremism and violence. The Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its deep concern over the loss of human life and the displacement of people, as well as the widespread, unprecedented destruction of cultural heritage in countries in West Asia and Africa with the intention of cultural cleansing through violence and extremism. Terrorism is now also financed by the sale of artifacts. We support UNESCO's efforts in assisting the concerned governments to protect their cultural heritage and proclaim our readiness to collaborate, in the spirit of the rich concept of the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in this House.

On the other hand, adolescents and children are among the most vulnerable of society; in this context of conflict and the destruction of heritage sites, some computer games propagate hatred and psychologically prepare children for violent behavior. I propose that UNESCO launch a worldwide campaign in the framework of "Unite for Heritage" to create and disseminate free virtual games promoting love of cultural heritage with different educational tools.

Excellencies,

Social and human sciences are also a field which is entrusted to UNESCO. Iran is proud that it has proposed and sponsored the Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science, approved during the 32nd session of the General Conference, a unique initiative which highlights the critical importance of ethics in our fast moving and technologically enamored world. Ethics in science and value education go hand in hand in building a resilient and sustainable world. The ethical aspects of scientific and technological development, especially in the field of cyberspace, have increasing importance as far as international protocols are concerned. Allow me to add that tonight the Avicenna Prize will be presented to the current laureate, Professor Shinwari of Pakistan.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

We honour the efforts made to achieve Education for All, a large part of whose goals have been attained; we have also done our utmost in this regard. We hope that through collaboration we can strive to attain the goals of the global education agenda, Education 2030, especially the free exchange of information without discrimination. For this purpose, it is necessary that UNESCO support policies aimed at preventing scientific discrimination in education and access to the most advanced sciences, and enable the countries of the South to access educational and scientific resources, through which they can attain higher levels of science and technology in the framework of South-South and South-South-North cooperation and thus achieve the right to education.

My government strongly supports the development of a global convention for the recognition of higher education qualifications and believes it to be a positive step towards reducing the scientific gap between North and South, facilitating South-South-North cooperation and enabling the circulation of elites and the intellectual capital of developing countries.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Global climate and environmental changes have pronounced effects, especially in regions like West Asia which are facing a severe shortage of water resources; in addition to extensive consequences to the technical and economic infrastructure of the countries of the region, they have a social and cultural impact. We believe that regional and international cooperation for the conservation management and optimal utilization of joint water resources in arid and semi-arid regions is essential. Supporting trans-boundary biosphere reserves in cooperation with UNESCO can help achieve these goals.

I urge UNESCO to design and follow up studies for the three axes of environmental sustainability, justice in energy, and worldwide cultural development and research by 2050. In order to achieve the 2014-2024 objective entitled “Energy for All”, UNESCO should support training in, development, production and use of all renewable energies, especially in rural areas. In this regard we propose and donate the creation of a UNESCO Prize for Renewable Energy, which would be a material and moral support for the development and use of these resources in developing countries.

The post-2015 development agenda emphasizes low cost internet access for all in the LDCs by 2020. My country also supports UNESCO’s actions to enhance the access of Peoples with Disabilities to ICTs. In view of its mandate, UNESCO is requested to offer applicable guidelines to meet the ethical and social challenges introduced by ICTs, such as the lack of respect for privacy and the expansion of extremism on the Internet and through ICTs, which have unfortunately in recent years been used by extremists to promote hatred and violence and even to recruit to terrorist operations. We also underline the necessity of promoting linguistic diversity in cyber-space in order to enable multilingual content use, and promoting free access to scientific information resources.

Considering the importance attached by UNESCO to social inclusion with emphasis on youth and women, and especially women with special needs, we wish to underline the importance of their empowerment, with a special focus on women’s skills education. We announce our readiness to cooperate with UNESCO and its partners to achieve this objective. The active presence of the Tehran Cluster Office, which I really admire, can particularly enhance this cooperation in the region.

Madam Director General,

I admire your efforts to promote UNESCO ideals in the approved post-2015 UN development agenda, ideals which are all traced in UNESCO’s DNA, the beautiful term you used in your speech yesterday. I would like to take this

occasion to recall the approved proposal of President Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 68th UN General Assembly in 2013, namely a “World against Violence and Extremism - WAVE”. It is in the UNESCO DNA, I believe. He will participate in the Leaders’ Forum on 16th November to further focus on his above mentioned proposal.

Thank you for your attention.