

MONTENEGRO

Statement of HE Ambassador Milorad Scepanovic, Chief of Delegation of Montenegro at the 38th session of the General Conference of UNESCO (06 November 2015, Paris)

Distinguished President of General Conference,
President of Executive Board,
Distinguished Madam Director General,
Respected delegates,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I address the 38th session of the General Conference on behalf of Government of Montenegro, in the year when we commemorate 70th anniversary of UNESCO.

Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegate of Namibia on appointment as new President of the General Conference and to assure you on Montenegro's firm support in your work. Also, I would like to express gratitude to former President of General Conference, delegate of China for his work during the previous period.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

We have gathered here today in order to define future plans and activities of the Organization, with the intention to preserve the principles on which the Organization is based, as well as to improve dialog, which is today, more than ever, required in the world of great challenges in all areas of our cooperation.

These 70 years of UNESCO have been of the utmost significance to all of us, and there are some dates of our common and, at the same time, individual history that deserves to be particularly emphasized today. UNESCO's presence in Montenegro is recognized in many aspects, and its positive impact is felt more than ever. In the year when we honor the 70th anniversary of UNESCO, we would like to remind about solidarity and assistance that Organization has provided in 1979, when Montenegrin coast was struck by a devastating earthquake. More than thirty five years ago Kotor, which is UNESCO World Heritage Site, was restored also due to the great assistance of UNESCO experts. For us in Montenegro, this is a clear reminder of the mission of UNESCO, reaffirming importance of the presence and support of international community in similar circumstances.

Preservation of cultural and natural heritage today seems even more difficult, and it is our joint task to improve mechanisms for its protection and conservation, which are adapted to the new challenges. All these years we have been working to create conditions for a dialog among cultures, and nations, based on respect of common values. It is encouraging that we continue to persistently work in order to preserve and improve our mission. I use this opportunity to express gratitude to the Madam Director General and

her team, who managed to preserve quality of work of the Organization in the years marked by numerous difficulties.

With the adoption of the universal, ambitious and transformative 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, we have committed to resolving key challenges of today, such as peace building and eradication of poverty, climate change, and ensuring healthy environment, with respect of fundamental human rights and freedom. Montenegro has actively participated in the process of negotiation of the new development agenda, and we will give our full contribution to its implementation and achievement of its crucial objectives - ensuring sustainable development and human dignity for all.

Distinguished colleagues,

At the last session of the Executive board, Montenegro has completed its four-year mandate, which was a great opportunity for national institutions to participate in creation and implementation of UNESCO policies. This was enormously valuable experience for Montenegro, bearing in mind that this was our first membership in the governing body of UNESCO. We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. President of Executive Board for his contribution and support, as well as to all member states, particularly Electoral group II, with whom our team closely cooperated during last four years.

Montenegro celebrates 70th anniversary of UNESCO by a number of festivities, which will be organized this month in the Old Royal Capital Cetinje, a town that will soon be, as we believe, on the List of World Heritage Sites.

Cetinje is a town with long history and tradition, whose values and influence exceed national and regional boundaries. Protector of freedom, holder of six hundred years old tradition of printing and publishing, promoter of literacy in the region of Southeast Europe, whose Europeanized ambience and spirit were created under the extremely unfavorable historical and economic circumstances.

This month in Cetinje we celebrate 10 years of the adoption of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions, convinced that the preservation of diversity, multiculturalism, and dialogue are priorities that have to be rooted in national policies and strategies. Recently completed UNESCO project "Indicators of the impact of culture on development," recognizes all the values and the potential that culture as a policy for itself conveys. We would like to particularly express our gratitude to the Regional UNESCO office in Venice, which gave immense contribution in the realization of this and other significant projects.

Respected participants,

Culture is and has to be recognized as a method to connect, a bridge that was built way before the dreadful conflicts that plagued the Balkan region recently. Cultural policies in the countries of the region are coordinated, and UNESCO with numerous activities gave full contribution to the rapprochement of our

policies. There are numerous examples of joint action of the countries in Southeast Europe. I will underline the important project of common nomination of Stećci - medieval tombstones, which four countries in the region (Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia) nominated for the World Heritage List. We are convinced that the outstanding universal value of these historic monuments will be internationally recognized. Also, we have new trilateral project of Montenegro, Italy and Croatia in the nomination of "The Venetian fortifications between 15th and 17th centuries" for the World Heritage List. There are many examples that demonstrate the importance and necessity of joint action not only in the field of preservation of the common heritage, but also in the fields of science, education, environment, communication, and information.

I believe there is a consensus in this room that special attention has to be paid to education and science, which have rightful place in the post - 2015 development agenda. Ensuring equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, as well as developing knowledge societies and scientific and technological innovation for achieving sustainable development goals, have to be our common priority.

It is of crucial importance to undertake additional efforts to increase number of children and adolescents with equal access to quality education, as well as to develop policies aimed at improving the youth position in the society. Active engagement of young people will contribute to economic development of countries, but also influence prevention of conflicts, and target the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and violent extremism. Over the last decade there has been increasing global awareness of the impact of conflict on education systems and the importance of education for children and youth as part of post conflict reconciliation and peace-building process. By endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, Member States can actively engage in addressing the impact of violence and conflict on education, which presents urgent humanitarian, developmental and wider social challenges. Education that promotes the rights and responsibilities of students, especially participation and active citizenship, can provide long-term benefits for society.

Also, we warmly welcome the UNESCO contribution in ensuring protection, promotion and fulfillment of freedom of expression and freedom of press, as two inseparable elements of a democratic society.

Montenegro will firmly continue to implement values of UNESCO and promote its mission, thus contributing to regional and international initiatives, important for preserving the culture of peace and dialogue, as our main goals.

In conclusion, I would like to once again reiterate Montenegro's readiness to further improve cooperation with UNESCO and its member states in the forthcoming period towards promoting its values and principles in all areas of the Organization's work.