

SLOVAKIA

President of the General Conference,
President of the Executive Board,
Director General,
Excellences, Dear colleagues,

At the outset, I wish to express Slovakia's alignment with the Statement of the European Union, delivered today.

It is a great honor for me to address this distinguished gathering, where so many interesting ideas and suggestions were brought together throughout the past days. And yet - the intellectual reservoir has not been exhausted and many intellectual challenges remain to be solved.

We should not miss the unique chance to reunite in the most crucial matters, while celebrating the 70th anniversary of UNESCO. The challenges we are facing today are reminding us of the utmost relevance of implementation of the UNESCO's founding principle to build peace in the minds of men and women, as much as 70 years ago.

Our expectations shall rely on ourselves, the member states and their citizens, on the solidarity of people worldwide, people ready to spread literacy, knowledge and respect for human values and legal systems. That will make our organization strong enough to handle successfully the challenges we are facing every day. In this perspective, Slovakia is committed to support the organization in all areas of its portfolio.

Slovakia highly appreciates the adoption of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", one month ago and recognizes the efforts of UNESCO in leading the preparatory process of the Post-2015 Education Agenda. The new agenda, fundamental for educational, environmental, social and economic challenges and for the transformation of societies towards sustainable growth, is an important basis, which needs to become gradually implemented everywhere. In this context, we should not forget the less advantaged people, and we should provide them the conditions necessary to them for the same quality education, lifelong learning opportunities, including higher education, universal human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

Slovakia is ready to take an active part in the implementation of the new program, under the auspices of UNESCO. We welcome the universality of the agenda by involving both developed and developing countries. One of the concrete examples of the Slovak engagement in the developing countries is Kena, a traditional partner of Slovakia in the development cooperation. Many Slovak NGOs operate in the area since the mid-90s and the Slovak Aid Organization since 2003. The projects include education, rural development, agriculture and health service.

Nevertheless Slovakia has excellent experts in the field of Science Technology and Innovation capacity. Scientists, who have achieved a number of high-quality results in the research on quantum technologies and information, are ready to join the international initiatives by linking the academic research with industrial use. Supporting the philosophy “research without barrier” the Slovak researchers are looking forward to assist also in the program Horizon 2020.

Slovakia, as a party to the Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, and a proud member of the committee, highlights the importance of the founding principles, especially at this critical period of failure of humanity.

Slovak Republic strongly condemns the recent deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and elsewhere, and has decided to make a substantial contribution to the Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. We also support the UNESCO call for solidarity UNITE4HERITAGE as an important signal to not only unite for a strong cause but also to fight against the unacceptable cultural purge, by promotion of cultural pluralism.

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Distinguished colleagues, let me conclude my intervention by inviting all of us to Re-Think UNESCO by starting at our own working place - in our own countries. We have the experience, the tools and the responsibility. And that is our young people who are at stake.

Thank you for your attention!