

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**STATEMENT DELIVERED  
BY  
H.E. MR. NABI AVCI,  
MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
AT THE 38<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE  
(6 November 2015, Paris)**

Excellency Mr. President,  
Chairman of the Executive Board,  
Honorable Director General,  
Excellencies Ministers, Dear Colleagues and Friends,

First of all, I would like to congratulate You Mr. President, upon your election, and reassure you of Turkey's full cooperation during your tenure. I would also like to thank the out-going Chinese Presidency.

As I did two years ago, this time again, I would like to address you in my mother tongue Turkish, a language spoken by more than two hundred million of people around the world. I am assured by your positive reactions the previous time that my choice would be in conformity with UNESCO's principle "unity in diversity".

Honorable Colleagues,

Today, in my country we are laying the "poet of fineness" Mrs Gülten Akin to rest. As seen in her following lines, UNESCO's spirit is well reflected in Gülten Akin's poetry :

"It's a shameful thing !  
As Camus says...  
To be happy all alone...  
Voices and other voices !!  
Where are the voices of the world?

May God bless her spirit.

Dear Friends,

We are gathered yet again in this august body, as we commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNESCO. New threats lie ahead on the path that we have started walking together 70 years ago with the aim of building peace in the minds of people.

Fault lines dividing nations, religions and cultures are becoming more visible.

The global social harmony is threatened by growing radicalism and abyss between religions, ethnicities and cultural communities. As a matter of fact, there is an escalation in hatred and marginalization of “the other” even in countries with strong democratic traditions. It is also alarming that the votes of political parties depicting immigrants as a source of unrest, unemployment, crime, poverty and other social problems are in the rise.

Turkey and Spain have had launched the “Alliance of Civilizations”. It is timely for UNESCO to explore ways to contribute to the strengthening of dialogue between civilizations, through actions under the “Decade for Rapprochement of Cultures”.

When I took the floor before this august assembly two years ago, I have underlined the need for reform to increase UNESCO’s effectiveness. I have furthermore emphasized the need to keep the reform process going and expressed our full support for Director General Bokova in her efforts. I have also reiterated to the Director General our continuing commitment to reform when she was in Ankara for her first official visit of the 70<sup>th</sup> year. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Director General for helping us to carry UNESCO into a more dynamic setting, despite serious financial constraints.

Dear Colleagues,

Education should remain at the core of our efforts in countering violent extremism and terrorism. In this respect, we find “Education for All” (EFA) platform and the “Global Citizenship Education” program quite helpful. We also fully endorse the goals and projects promoting girls education and gender equality. Meanwhile Turkey will continue vigorously supporting UNESCO’s Priority Africa programs.

“2030 Education Agenda – Framework for Action”, which we have recently adopted, is another manifestation of UNESCO’s leading role in the global education efforts. UNESCO’s Education programmes and networks i.a. ASPnet, UNESCO Clubs and UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs, are pillars of quality education for all, intellectual cooperation; as well as participation. Turkey will take part in and foster those programmes.

UNESCO is at a turning point in the field of culture. Cultural heritage is facing the worst ever threat in time. It is fundamentally important to protect the universal heritage of civilization that is exposed to the threat of annihilation both by the evil forces of terror and violent extremism.

As the Chair of the World Heritage Committee, we are aiming at result-oriented deliberations on this issue during the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee between 10-20 July 2016 in Istanbul.

Dear Colleagues,

For Turkey, UNESCO is a House of mutual understanding and tolerance. The implementation of decisions adopted in this House should not be delayed. Those decisions taken about Palestine under this roof, have the potential to facilitate solution through UNESCO's soft power and cultural diplomacy. 'Now' is the time to take action. "Tomorrow" may be too late.

Another important issue, which should not be left behind, is the migration crisis that is growing like an avalanche. As a result of the open door policy that we have pursued since the outset of the crisis, Turkey is now hosting over 2 million Syrian refugees. Without any tangible support and contribution from the international community, we have been providing shelter, security, food, education and healthcare, by investing over 7 billion Dollars from our national budget. Turkey is proud of fulfilling its humane duties and responsibilities.

Dear Colleagues,

Turkey has announced its candidature to the Executive Board for the period of 2017-2021. We believe that we will be able to contribute intellectually, as well as through deeds and concrete actions to the work of the Organization and add momentum to it through regional and international cooperation. We count on your confidence and valuable support.

Thank you.