

## **STATEMENT**

**by the Head of the Delegation of Ukraine,  
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,  
Representative of Ukraine to the UNESCO Executive Board Sergiy Kyslytsya  
at the General Policy Debate  
of the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference  
(November 5, 2015 Paris, France)**

**Mr. President,**

**Madam Director General,**

**Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board,**

**Distinguished Heads of Delegations,**

This session is very special. And this is not only due to the 70th anniversary of UNESCO. It is first and foremost because the Organization marks this date while in a state of deep qualitative transformation.

The second decade of the 21st century turned out to be extremely rich in new challenges that UNESCO should quickly and adequately respond to. They are so closely and increasingly intertwined with political issues that this sometimes even stirs discussions on whether some most burning and urgent issues fall under UNESCO's mandate or whether they are purely political.

For Ukraine, especially as a newly elected non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, UNESCO is one of the main cornerstones of the UN system, and if this pillar turns out to be weak, the UN building will eventually shatter. Ukraine welcomes the recent adoption of the new Post-2015 Development Agenda as well as Sustainable Development Goals contained in Agenda 2030.

We unequivocally support efforts being undertaken by the Director-General and the UNESCO member-states in the context of a major reform under current circumstances.

We are confident that in order to keep UNESCO up with the pace of history the strong UNESCO's leadership devoted to the UN values and with an outstanding integrity to be able to withstand external influence, the leadership which is able and ready to face the complex challenges of the new millennium is imperative and vital.

Ukraine stands up for the proposals contained in the relevant decision of the Executive Board, including the establishment of an ongoing governance mechanism to be implemented via intersessional meetings attended by observer states.

The new objectives have underlined the special significance of education, which is at the heart of the mandate of our Organization. We stand ready to continue our work in accordance with the outcomes of the World Education Forum 2015.

Ukraine is ready to make every possible contribution aimed at reinforcing the strategy and action for countering violent extremism through education and on the protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict.

I would also stress the strong commitment of my country to the protection and preservation of the environment resulting in harmonization of our legislation in order to consolidate and increase our presence in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and for an assertive policy towards renewable energy.

Next year will mark a sad anniversary - 30 years since the Chernobyl tragedy.

At the 70th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations the President of Ukraine Mr. Petro Poroshenko addressed the UN Secretary General with a proposal to hold, in April 2016, a special session of the General Assembly dedicated to this date.

### **Excellencies and colleagues,**

Speaking about the noble goals and tasks of our Organization I cannot avoid mentioning a part of the world where the principles of UNESCO are flagrantly violated and people are deprived of their basic rights due to occupation by a foreign state. The testimonies we hear every day prove that Russia's temporary occupation of Crimea continues to lead to massive and systematic violations of fundamental rights and freedoms of the Ukrainian citizens living on the peninsula.

The latest example is the Decree signed by the Head of the Russian Government on October 17, 2015 by which 220 Ukrainian cultural sites in Crimea were illegally enlisted as the federal property of Russia. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this step was undertaken just three days after the approval of the Decision of the Executive Board on the follow-up of the situation in Crimea.

This unacceptable situation is further exacerbated by the total information blackout imposed by the occupying authorities that have rendered practically impossible consistent monitoring by international organizations.

This is why we appreciate the efforts made by UNESCO and in particular by Madam Director-General in order to break this information blockade and to ensure that UNESCO is indeed playing the leading role in restoring justice and defending human rights in the spheres that fall under its mandate. The follow-up of the Information meeting on the situation in Crimea which was held on June 2, demonstrated that the Organization is ready and able to adequately respond to the most complex and delicate challenges facing the modern world.

However, it should be noted that any agency of the United Nations' system must be fully dedicated to the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, not only in theory but also in practice, since any activity of the organization is measured by its concrete acts and practical results. It is absolutely clear that achieving this goal is possible only through consolidation at all levels – both of Member States and the leadership of the organization.

Taking into consideration the new decision on Crimea (Ukraine) adopted by the last session of the Executive Board, we will spare no efforts in order to facilitate the full use of UNESCO potential in order to prove that the credibility and democratic power

of our Organization can overcome the power of violence and injustice currently ruling Crimea. We are looking forward to practical action of Director-General to establish a monitoring mechanism at the institutional level in line with the decision.

I would also like to underline that only some days ago, on October 28, Russian security forces conducted a search of the premises of the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow. In the evening of the same day the director of the library, a Russian citizen, was detained and charged with incitement of hatred or enmity under the Criminal Code.

Such arrogant and unmotivated actions contain discrimination on ethnic grounds and disregard the right of the Ukrainian community to enjoy the freedom of access to information in the native language and meeting cultural needs.

### **Chers représentants de notre famille mondiale de l'UNESCO,**

Cette conférence générale aura à débattre de questions d'importance toute particulière, directement liés à l'actualité internationale immédiate.

Nous sommes tout à fait d'accord avec la vision de Madame la Directrice Générale, du rôle de notre Organisation «qui existe précisément pour rappeler que c'est dans l'urgence qu'il faut justement ne rien céder sur les droits humains, sur la dignité humaine, sur le respect des libertés fondamentales. C'est lorsque les droits sont bafoués qu'il faut les rappeler avec davantage de force et de conviction ».

Aujourd'hui plus que jamais l'UNESCO peut et doit fournir une réponse concrète et efficace aux défis actuels dans tous ses domaines de compétence.

**Merci de votre attention**