



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# 40<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee Opening Ceremony

Address

by

**H. E. Mr. Stanley Mutumba Simataa**

President of the 38th session of the General Conference of  
UNESCO,  
Deputy Minister of Information and Communication Technology  
of Namibia

Istanbul, Turkey

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Your Excellency, Mr Deputy Prime Minister,  
Excellencies Minister of Culture and Tourism of Turkey,  
Mr Mayor of Istanbul,  
Madam Director-General,  
Madam Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee,  
Mr Chair of the Executive Board of UNESCO  
Excellencies, Distinguished Members of the World Heritage Committee,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to be with you today and would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Turkish authorities for generously hosting the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee, and actually allowing this session to happen in a safe and smooth atmosphere.

First and foremost, I wish to express, on behalf of the UNESCO Member States our deepest sympathy for the families of the victims of the recent spate of terrorist attacks that took place throughout the world – stretching from

Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and particularly here, in Istanbul. Notwithstanding these tragic events, we are gathered here today, as nations under the banner of UNESCO, and can reaffirm the strength of the United Nations' solidarity.

Almost half a century after its establishment, the UNESCO 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage remains a major international instrument to collectively safeguard both the tangible cultural and natural heritage of humanity. At a time of ever increasing threats to natural and cultural sites, the Convention is a key tool to empower the international community to safeguard, protect, promote and transmit our heritage to future generations.

Not only does it allow to testify to the richness of the natural and cultural diversity of our world through the World Heritage List, but also compels Member States, at all levels of governance to monitor how well sites, monuments, historic city centres, cultural properties as a whole are being preserved.

Cultural heritage epitomises our identity. Therefore, the State Parties of the World Heritage Committee play a cardinal role, not only in ensuring the effective implementation of the World Heritage Convention, but also in promoting a vision of an enduring world heritage and cultural diversity.

Collectively, we have the responsibility of transmitting this vision to young generations, to imprint in the minds of young people, the consciousness of this indispensable need of protecting and preserving our common heritage.

In this regard, the youth have a special responsibility and I am pleased to note that they have a dedicated role in the Committee, through the World Heritage Youth Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This biennium bears a special duty since, at the last session of the General Conference, Member States established the "Working Group on the Governance, Procedures, and Working Methods of the Governing Bodies of UNESCO" to enhance the functioning of the Organization and entrusted me with its Chairmanship.

Albert Einstein once said that, "*once we accept our limits, we can go beyond them.*" The last session of the General Conference decided that, **now** is the time to go through this process.

As Chair of the Working Group, I am pleased to note that, in accordance with the Resolution taken by the General Conference, a dedicated item to examine the working methods of the Committee has been inscribed on the agenda of the present session. The outcomes of the debates the Committee on the question of governance will form the basis of the Working Group's recommendations on the desired governance architecture of our Organization – recommendations, which will in turn be reported to the General Conference in the Fall 2017.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the time when the international community is beginning to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO has the sacred duty to ensure that favourable conditions are created to effectively support Member States in the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In concluding, I wish you very rich and fruitful debates throughout the present session.

I thank you for your attention.

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