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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Youth and the Internet:

Fighting Radicalization and Extremism

Remarks

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Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO

Permanent Delegate of the Arab Republic of Egypt to UNESCO

UNESCO House

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Your Excellency, Ms Margarita Popova, Vice-President of the Republic of Bulgaria

Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Ms Chafica Haddad, Chair of the Information for All Programme (IFAP)

Ms. Albana Shala, Chairperson of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)

Mr Daniel Zielinski, Directeur de Cabinet du Ministre de la Ville, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, France

Mr Hugues Mingarelli, EEAS Managing Director, European Union

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you on behalf of all Members of the Executive Board of UNESCO, and in my own name, to this international conference ... that will tackle issues relating to **“Youth and the Internet: Fighting radicalization and extremism”**.

This conference, organized in the framework of the Information for All intergovernmental Programme of UNESCO, is most timely as it comes at a crucial stage when leaders and policy-makers are actively negotiating the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which will continue international development beyond the Millennium Development Goals, proclaimed in the year 2000.

The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly next September, foresee the need to provide youth with quality education, thus ensuring decent work opportunities so that each may play an active role in their own self-advancement.

But our societies are facing serious ongoing social and economic challenges that need to be addressed.

Inequality, exclusion, overpopulation, discrimination, chronic unemployment and poverty create the conditions in which social instability can lead to intolerance and violence, which then create – as we witness - fertile grounds for radicalization and extremism.

To overcome these dramatic developments for youth, equality, tolerance, sharing, generosity and mutual respect must be promoted. Youth have the potential, the energy and the power to become agents of change in this increasingly globalized world.

They can be active participants in shaping the future.

As the world increasingly becomes a global village, the use of the Internet and other social media, especially among young people has taken on a totally new dimension.

Access to information and knowledge through the Internet, combined with technological advances and greater connectivity through online communities and social media networks have had a positive impact on today's youth, helping them to connect beyond national borders, and have encouraged young people to explore other cultures and acquire new knowledge and enhanced understanding of others.

But these advances in science and technology have also been used to promote conflicts and violent extremism across the globe.

Radical entities are much more skilled than initially assessed in the use of social media to reach out to marginalized youth.

Addressing and refuting the propaganda that give rise to extremism must therefore be an imperative for each of us as well as national governments and the international community alike.

Quality education for all and global citizenship and cross-cultural awareness programmes can help in this regard.

They can help to foster a sense of identity while also developing the skills and competences needed to lead a fulfilling role in life.

Social integration and equitable opportunity should be the foundation stone upon which society is built. A sense of belonging, both in the real world and in virtual communities must be fostered if we are to tackle the threat that extremism poses.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased to see the presence and active participation of young women and men who will be addressing the conference. Because it is through the sharing of your views that best practices can be promoted and policies can be elaborated, based on real experiences and lessons learned.

I would also like to recognise the participation of **Mr Ahmad Alhendawi UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Youth**, and thank him for attending this major UNESCO event. We all look forward to the wealth of information you can share during the coming days.

Let me also congratulate the organizers of this conference for bringing such a good number of experts, academia, youth networks, and Student Associations together here. Each plays a vital role in promoting the advancement of the needs of young people.

It is my hope that the knowledge shared over the coming days will result in concrete proposals that can be taken forward through the pilot initiatives, which taken together, will act as a learning lab for more effective policy responses in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, young people represent an enormous potential and we need to do everything in our power to channel their energy, and make them a motor of development and social inclusion.

UNESCO's mandate in the Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures must coincide with our common fight to reduce the Digital Divide and promote the Global Education for All Initiative.

It is the young people who will reinvent our culture.

They will take hold of the new technologies and media to allow for their voices to be heard and their needs addressed.

I wish you all the best for a most successful conference!

Thank you for your attention.