

ADDRESS / STATEMENT

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TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO

**201st Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO
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**Statement at the 201st Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO
19.4. – 5.5.2017**

**Madam Director General,
Mr President of the Executive Board,
Mr President of the General Conference,
Excellencies, distinguished Colleagues,**

It gives me great pleasure to address the 201st Session of the Executive Board and share with you some views regarding Slovenia's activities and priorities.

First of all, Slovenia fully associates with the statements made on behalf of the European Union. As a strong supporter of UNESCO, Slovenia expects a lot – in areas upon which so much of our wellbeing and societies depend on thrive: from building Education for All to advancing freedom of speech, the free exchange of ideas as well as free and independent media. The human rights perspective is invaluable, as is gender equality.

This period is of extreme importance, since a new program and budget will be adopted at this year's General Conference. Slovenia fully supports all efforts being made by the Director General and the Secretariat for the next stages of the reform and reorganization process in UNESCO.

During our mandate, Slovenia focuses on several issues.

Slovenia's main priority lies in the field of Education by fully supporting the Education 2030 Agenda to which Slovenia will contribute with its experience and expertise in the development of Open Educational Resources (OER). The Slovenian Government fully acknowledges and supports, that education is UNESCO's priority of priorities. It is an essential human right. It is also an engine of economic success and a catalyst for reaching the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda.

We are all witnessing ground-breaking developments in the field of education. Society is becoming more complex and more informed, and the education systems have a significant role to play. There are new forms of education, online and free. Knowledge is increasingly available to all, everywhere and at any time. Education is also becoming increasingly "open" and connected with other areas of the state and society, think of smart cities, citizen science, etc.

All UNESCO Member States have received a letter of invitation by the Director General of UNESCO to participate in the 2nd World Congress on Open Educational Resources (OER) which will take part in Ljubljana (Slovenia) from 18 – 20 September 2017. The theme of the Congress will be "OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: from Commitment to Action", reflecting the role that OER must play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development universally

adopted by all Member States of the United Nations, in particular its Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education.

The 2nd World OER Congress hosted by the Government of Slovenia will mark 15 years since the term “Open Educational Resources” was first coined at UNESCO, and five years since the inaugural World OER Congress took place at UNESCO’s Headquarters resulting in the 2012 Paris OER Declaration. The Congress will bring together Ministers of Education, senior policy makers, expert practitioners, researchers and all relevant stakeholders. The Congress aims to make the transition from commitment to action. The global community will identify strategies to harness the potential of OER for achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030.

I would be sincerely honoured to welcome Ministers and experts also from all Member States of the Executive Board since Slovenia truly believes that UNESCO shall maintain and enhance its leading role and position in the framework of international collaboration in OER!

Second, Slovenia would like to enhance the empowerment of young people. We propose to focus not only on formal education and job creation but on education for human rights, democratic citizenship and on education against racism and intolerance. UNESCO has biggest potential in this field.

Therefore, Slovenia wishes to empower UNESCO’s Youth Forum taking place before every Session of the General Conference. A number of National Commissions for UNESCO and delegates to the last Youth Forum in 2015 have consulted in order to make suggestions for further improvement of the Youth Forum in 2017. Joint analysis and proposals we have made available to the Secretariat last year. Most importantly, we believe that the Youth Forum in its current format is still not an “integral” part of the General Conference, as stipulated by 32 C/Res 82. We do not propose an immediate political participation of youth, which is, after all, one particular stakeholder group within UNESCO. On the contrary, strictly upholding the intergovernmental nature of UNESCO, we seek for more effective means of making the voice of youth heard, while using the Youth Forum as an opportunity of building the capacity of youth.

Third, regarding the program and budget for the next period and taking into consideration the difficult financial situation of UNESCO, Slovenia supports the program and budget focused on the UNESCO contribution towards achieving the Sustainable development goals at large, and promoting the 2030 education agenda. Such prioritizing is mainly the responsibility of Member States that have to support difficult decisions to discontinue programs and activities in which UNESCO has no comparative advantage or contributes no added value. Permanent dependence of certain programs on purely extrabudgetary resources sincerely hamper the organization’s capacity to deliver in some of the most important fields of its mandate.