

Statement by Mr. SERGIY KYSLYTSYA
Head of the Delegation of Ukraine,
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine,
Representative of Ukraine to the UNESCO Executive Board
at the Plenary meeting of the 201st session of the UNESCO Executive Board
(Paris, 24 April 2017)

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Board,

It is a matter of fact that these days the world is an increasingly dangerous place to live in, warranting more than ever concerted and effective efforts of the international community in meeting global challenges of nowadays. And still, the culture of neglect and apathy is observed now and then in different parts of the UN body, pushing the member states to run business as usual in order “to avoid politicizing the UN activities”.

Within the present adverse financial situation, there is no other way to keep UNESCO among the major contributors to these efforts but to keep reforming our Organization on the go.

Ukraine supports the activities of the Director-General and her team aimed at dynamic transformations of UNESCO, which enable it to assert its unique role in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Media freedom is undoubtedly one of the key priorities in this context.

We are grateful to the UNESCO Secretariat for taking an active part in the International Conference on Safety of Journalists and Public Order held in Kyiv last February on the initiative of the Government of Ukraine. Trainings for security forces based on the UNESCO manual presented at the Conference would be of great need in Ukraine. We find it expedient to include these trainings in cooperation plans with international organizations, in particular, UNESCO.

Speaking on the safety of journalists, I would like to commend the Sweden’s initiative to include provisions on specific risks and dangers facing women journalists into the relevant draft decision. We also support the amendments of the Swedish delegation on the implementation of the SDG 16.10 on access to information, proposed by the Global Forum for Media Development.

Ukraine strongly condemns ongoing brutal and deliberate destructions of cultural heritage sites in Syria, Iraq and other conflict areas.

We fully support the activities envisaged in the proposed Action Plan on the implementation of the Strategy of Reinforcement of UNESCO’s Action for the

protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict.

I would like to congratulate France and Italy as well as all other Member States with the recent adoption by the UN Security Council of the historic resolution 2347 on the protection of heritage, which underlines UNESCO's coordinating and leading role in this field.

Distinguished members of the Board,

Following on a very passionate statement by the distinguished representative of Netherlands evocating concerns about the children who may find themselves in the hotbed of war in the near future, I would like to underscore that for over three years, Ukraine has already been living under illegal occupation by the Russian Federation of parts of its territory, namely the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Within the atmosphere of total unaccountability and even impunity of the occupation authorities due to absence of comprehensive human rights monitoring there have not been any positive changes in the situation on the occupied peninsula in UNESCO's fields of competence.

Quite on the contrary, the situation there keeps aggravating proving that six consecutive decisions on the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) adopted by the Executive Board are ever more topical.

By depriving the Ukrainians and the Crimean Tatars of their rights to safeguard and promote their culture, to have free access to information, to express their views and requests, including those of cultural and educational nature, the occupation authorities are obviously squeezing out of the peninsula all those whose cultural, religious, linguistic background does not match the patterns of the totalitarian society.

The examples of violation of basic principles of international law and fundamental human rights and cultural needs are numerous and seem barbaric nowadays, unbelievable to happen in the very core of the European continent in the 21st century.

That's exactly what the international community rightly and consistently condemns. This was once again confirmed by the UN General Assembly Resolution 71/205 "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (Ukraine)" adopted on 19 December 2016.

I would like to draw the particular attention of the Board to the International Court of Justice Order issued just few days ago by which the Russian Federation has been obliged to safeguard the rights of the Crimean Tatars community to preserve its representative institutions including the Mejlis and to ensure the availability of Ukrainian-language education in Crimea.

The voice of UNESCO should also be heard and clearly discerned among the voices of the most respected collective actors in the world arena. We note with

satisfaction that our Organization is eager to do its practical steps in elaborating an adequate response to this challenge.

Last December Ukraine started consultations with the UNESCO Secretariat on the introduction of a direct monitoring activity by the Secretariat on the follow-up of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. We have already made our first steps in assessing the scope and modalities of this task. I do hope that soon we will be able to draw the common vision of the practical parameters of UNESCO direct monitoring in the occupied Crimea.

Monsieur le Président,

Nous nous rendons tous bien compte que le temps passe vite et qu'inévitablement une nouvelle page dans l'histoire de l'UNESCO sera ouverte dans six mois. Cependant, il nous reste encore six mois et nous espérons que grâce à nos efforts communs nous serons en mesure de remplir les pages de l'année 2017 de réussites qui auront un impact historique et serviront de référence clé et d'indice pour la future gouvernance de notre Organisation.

Merci pour votre attention.