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Vision Document

A Stronger UNESCO for Peace and Sustainable Development in a Changing World

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Since its inception, the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture has always upheld its noble mission to build peace in the mind of men and women. UNESCO will continue to stay the course in peace-building, but it will have to act with other UN agencies and Member States to lead in the five areas of its competences namely education, culture, natural science, social and human science, communication and information.

1. UNESCO needs to make sure that peace prevails and becomes a common denominator in all debates and programs within UNESCO for the Organization represents the shared interest of the entire international community. UNESCO should uphold the results that the Organization and its Members have achieved during the last 70 years in protecting and building peace. Global citizenship education should be realized. Dialogue culture, tolerance, acceptance of difference, respect for diversity should be a universal value that UNESCO continues encouraging nations to strongly facilitate. It would be ambitious to pretend to eliminate all controversies and disagreements in our common agenda, but they need to be tackled in respect for UNESCO's mandate through consensus. This is my top priority.
2. In September 2015, all Member States of the United Nations came together to adopt the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, establishing a transformative roadmap of unprecedented scope and ambition. As the UN intelligent arm, a laboratory of ideas, UNESCO has a major role to translate 2030 Agenda into reality through concrete programs, targeting eradication of extreme poverty, alleviation of suffering and ensuring equality, dignity and opportunities for all. Sustainable development should therefore constitute another denominator for Member States to work together to advance their common quest for a better future. UNESCO's contribution to the 2030 Agenda is my high priority.

UNESCO spearheaded the formulation of SDG4-Education 2030 and has been entrusted with leading the coordination to implement successfully

SDG4. This is an unprecedented opportunity for UNESCO to show to its education partners how relevant its leading role is.

Education for all and universal coverage continues to be an urgent need. UNESCO needs to particularly accompany the countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and E9 countries in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies that improve the supply and quality of inclusive education in rural area. We need to fix the target to bring down illiteracy in the next 4 years. At the same time, we need to develop a barometer to measure illiteracy in developing countries. Beyond this objective, UNESCO ideals of building learning society, learning city and lifelong learning need to be vigorously promoted.

Additionally, education for girls and women stays high in my agenda as women and girls continue to be marginalized and discriminated against. Gender inequality will persist if access to education for girls and women is not secured. Additional favourable conditions should be created by UNESCO to address this challenge.

Now that the world has witnessed fast moving Industrial Revolution 4.0, ICT education must be high on UNESCO Agenda and we should pay due attention to digital education, making it more accessible to developing countries.

Technical vocational education and training (TVET) is an area that should be a UNESCO priority as Member States are badly in need of skilled workers for their socio-economic transformation.

On another aspect, progress has been made in mutual recognition of higher education certificates at regional level but bolder measures need to be undertaken to achieve higher goal through a global convention process so that we can live up to the function of legal standard-setting by UNESCO in education sector.

As the ethical conscience of UN system, UNESCO needs to find ways and means to give back teachers the respect they deserve. Best practices in this regard should be promoted and shared across countries of different cultural, political, historical background.

- 3. Cultural Heritage and Elements** have always been the flagship program, the visibility and image of the Organization. In spite of financial difficulties, this program continues to receive strong support, morally and financially

including extra-budgetary contribution. However, inscription of World Heritage Sites and Intangible Elements is just the beginning of the whole process of conservation and preservation. UNESCO needs to work more for the sake of their sustainable conservation, with stricter monitoring and reporting mechanism and socio-economic development planning.

When a cultural property is in danger or threatened, UNESCO should be the first UN agency to take action. It has accomplished this job with great success and admiration, but there remains much to be done as destruction of cultural properties and heritage is taking place with every passing day, especially in areas of armed conflict. United for heritage (#Unite4Heritage) has always been a very well-received initiative, and it needs more support from Member States. UNESCO should play a more pro-active role in facilitating an open and inclusive intergovernmental negotiation process to protect heritage sites. Better coordination and working in a more coherent manner among the governing bodies of all cultural conventions needs to be a matter of priority.

- 4. Climate Change** is an imperative and inspiring task of our present generation. Climate change affects us all, but more so the **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**. UNESCO needs to play a vital role in building capacity for countries to manage disasters and risks associated with climate change. At least half of UNESCO's efforts related to Climate Change should be directed to the most vulnerable.

The Paris Agreement constitutes a historic turning point in the goal of reducing global warming. UNESCO has proved to be a highly relevant actor in such areas as Water, Oceans, Man and Biosphere and Geoparks, etc. The Organization should work closely with other UN agencies, partners and field offices, designated sites, Category I and II Centers, UNESCO Chairs and Networks to create a synergy and share its success in **science, technology and innovation (STI)** in the fight against climate change.

- 5.** As many countries are going through **social transformation**, UNESCO must firmly entrench universal values and principles, such as global solidarity, inclusiveness, anti-discrimination, gender equality and accountability, for the implementation of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. Sharing experience in the fields of social and human sciences are badly needed, especially for post-conflict countries.

Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Memory of the World need to be high on the Agenda of Information Sector as this is a fundamental human right and our responsibility toward the past.

6. **Gender Equality** has made consistent progress, yet a lot remains to be done. Women empowerment can only be realized when the participation of women in science and in public life is expanded. Ensuring that all programs are designed and implemented as “gender transformative” should be a priority for UNESCO in the years to come. UNESCO should lead by example and continue to strive to ensure gender parity in its Secretariat, at all levels.
7. **The Global Priority Africa:** we need to select important and urgent items for Africa in the context of the overall difficulty of the Organization through targeted interventions and progressively adjusting the program of the Organization so that at least three fifths of its program expenditure directly benefit Africa. This needs to be reflected in heritage conservation, facilitating and fostering economic and social development through the inscription and promotion of African sites and elements.
8. **Advancing reform** should be reflected in making UNESCO an integral part of the whole UN system, creating synergy both vertically and horizontally through its five major fields of competence. We will **build on achievements** that past and present generations of UNESCO leadership, staff and Members States have gained in the last 70 years and move ahead with greater results. We need to work side-by-side with other specialized agencies to incorporate UNESCO's ideas and standards into Member States' strategies for sustainable development.

Throughout the years, **Intersectionality** has been a part of UNESCO's discourse, yet efforts are still required to reduce sectoral silos and to avoid duplication and overlap across UNESCO's action. Removing barriers within UNESCO, connecting with other UN organizations and joining hands with Member States is a way for UNESCO to display its worthiness and to maximize the value of its soft power.

UNESCO is the only UN agency to have a network of **National Commissions** in almost every country. This network allows to maintain a direct two-way link between the Member States and UNESCO, bringing in UNESCO's new ideas and knowledge and vice versa. UNESCO should help National Commissions to serve as a monitor of Member States' priorities. We should

enhance the interaction and cooperation between the National Commissions, field and regional offices and the Secretariat.

UNESCO needs to lead with concrete, tangible contributions by making use of its **comparative advantages** as an interface between policymakers and scientific communities, working with line ministries and the extended UNESCO family for the advancement of its noble mandate.

Over the years, we have efficiently improved our **governing structure and rules**, and even if admittedly we have still a long way to go, we have to ensure UNESCO improves its efficiency and capacity of all the three governing organs. We need to address **immediate needs and crisis** through building support to get things done, but at the same time we should not forgo **long-term plans** for a better future for all.

9. UNESCO must **deal with its financial difficulties** by reducing costs and expenditure and increasing incomes, calling upon private sectors, partners, and civil societies to contribute financially and with expertise. Over the last decades, UNESCO has overcome financial crises and carried out successfully its mission and remains an emblem of humanity conscience, diversity and unity. However, the Secretariat should help Member States to honor timely their assessed contributions, thus allowing UNESCO to perform smoothly its mandate.

The Organization's most valuable assets are the diversity, breadth and depth of **expertise and values of the men and women** that serve the Organization. Any reform needs to ensure UNESCO staff remains attached to the Organization in their hearts and minds as their happiness and well-being is a key driver of the Organization's delivery.

10. **All in all, UNESCO needs to be for the people, of the people, and by the people.** UNESCO's actions need to reach every city, village, and home, to inspire the people to be agents of change, ready to contribute to society as engaged global citizens, and most importantly, to live together in dignity and mutual respect.

I come from Viet Nam, a country which is proud of its past and its successful post-conflict reconciliation and socio-economic transformation. I wish to share Viet Nam's success stories, especially its independent foreign policy of being a friend of all nations. I fully realize the limitations of the post of UNESCO Director-General given the adopted 37 C/4 Document and the

potential adoption of the 39 C/5 Document and humbly subject myself to the Board's instructions and directions.

With the support of all Governing Organs, the extended UNESCO family, public and private partners and especially Member States, together we will be able to make UNESCO a stronger, more relevant, and more effective organization in the service of peace and sustainable development.