

Polad Bülbüloglu

Candidate for Director-General of UNESCO

Leading UNESCO Forward

My Vision

Minimizing the Impact of Politics

Maximizing Efficiency and Relevance

Focus on the Human Dimension

My Pledge

My Vision

Building the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women – this is the ambitious goal of UNESCO. At its core is the conviction that education, the sciences, culture, communication and information can help advance sustainable development in all countries and prevent such negative developments as violent extremism, terrorism and armed conflict. At a time when international interactions are in a state of constant flux, we face new threats and challenges impossible to overcome at the national level alone. In this turbulent times of globalization, the mandate of UNESCO is as relevant as never before. It is through fully-fledged actions of UNESCO that the international community can avoid adverse turns of events. Instability and ongoing conflicts around the world are not only military in nature or driven by economic instability – they are also a crisis in education, science and culture. Their resolution is achievable only with the full support and strong political will of the world as a whole. New forms of solidarity and cooperation are required.

UNESCO's mission has always inspired me. Having been associated with culture, the arts and education my entire life, I know first-hand that people of different cultures and religions and their different perspectives on the world can successfully co-exist and connect through many spheres for the benefit of their peoples, and all humankind. Diversity is not a threat, but an asset of humanity.

Alongside my many years as an active artist performing across the globe, I have a long and distinguished record of national and international public service - as Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Director-General of the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), and Chairman of the Board of the Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (IFESCO) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). And in diplomacy, as Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Russian Federation since 2006.

I believe my extensive first-hand experience across the arts and culture, the management of big organisations and international diplomacy makes me well placed to lead UNESCO forward.

My vision has three main priorities:

1. Minimizing the Impact of Politics
2. Maximizing Efficiency and Relevance
3. Focus on Human Dimension

I. Minimizing the Impact of Politics

The founding idea of UNESCO was the establishment of an organisation dedicated to international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture that stood apart from the political arena and spared no efforts in bringing its Member States together for the achievement of commonly shared humanitarian ideals and goals. Today, however, it is clear that our Organisation has also fallen to the mercy of certain political processes.

It is my firm belief that there is no place for political games when humanity expects solutions from us for the betterment of human existence. We cannot squander our time in fruitless confrontation while humanity faces huge problems, including mass migration and the refugee crisis, the destruction of cultural heritage, and environmental concerns.

Though it may sound paradoxical, the policies and actions of UNESCO as intergovernmental organisation should be kept free from political dispute and be focused instead on the Organisation's mandate, which has been quite clear for more than seventy years now. Our approach should be proactive and intensive, responding to specific challenges relevant to our time.

Less politics means fewer political control We must work with all Member States to secure a sustainable Organisation capable of fulfilling its duties. Political interests should not obstruct our noble goals for humanity, such as access for all to quality education, the preservation of heritage and diversity, and the creation of a better and safer environment for all.

2. Maximizing Efficiency and Relevance

On the one hand we can all agree that the work of UNESCO is more relevant than ever, yet on the other we are faced with decreasing funds and resources. The gap between the rising demand for our services and the decreasing financial resources available is currently the number one problem UNESCO faces. It paralyses the work of the Organisation and reduces the effectiveness of its activities. It is my firm belief that the core strategy of the new UNESCO Director-General should be the elimination of this gap. It is necessary to halt and reverse the progressive paralysis of UNESCO, which limits the efficacy and impact of its work.

UNESCO has great comparative advantages: its universality, its many institutional partners and its competent staff with their unique experience in managing major projects.

In my mind, the path to maximising UNESCO's effectiveness lies in three main actions. First, the work of the Organisation must be optimised in terms of cost efficiency, careful prioritisation, and increased transparency. Put simply, we must be ready to work more efficiently and beneficially within the limited resources currently available.

Second, we all know that the financial problems faced by our Organisation stem from political controversies among its Member States. We must move beyond politics when working for the common good of humanity. Further to this, the business community should be invited to

participate in the noble mission of UNESCO. Here we must take great care to avoid any conflicts of interest.. Extrabudgetary funds from Member States and the business community should be secured in an absolutely transparent manner. Given the current global realities and the problems we are called upon to tackle, these additional funds would be most welcome.

Third, more work must be done on UNESCO's information-sharing strategy. We must help the world understand the immensity of the Organisation's mission. UNESCO was created to be the world's centre for international cooperation through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. This idea must be communicated clearly to everyone. I believe the main burden lies on the shoulders of the Member States where such programmes are being implemented. In other words, UNESCO should not directly carry out these actions, but rather coordinate them in collaboration with Member States and their relevant institutions.

These three paths to maximising efficiency will contribute to the achievement of UNESCO's programme targets and priorities – that is, the shared aspirations of the Organisation's Member States.

3. Focus on the Human Dimension

The main directions of UNESCO activities over the next fifteen years will be defined by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets as outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Education is recognised as vital component for the achievement of all SDGs.. Ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and the promotion of lifelong learning is a direct responsibility of UNESCO and this field should be our priority. Culture, in all its diverse expressions, has a capacity to morally enrich society. The protection of heritage, the struggle against climate change and the development of science and communication are also vital spheres where UNESCO must play an active role.

A special focus must be placed on supporting Africa through capacity-building activities. UNESCO's efforts should tie in closely with the work of the entire UN system for the 2030 targets, and be aligned with the Africa Union's own 2063 development strategy.

While clearly important, the work of UNESCO's field offices should be qualitatively and quantitatively reviewed. .I am not certain that 50-plus stand-alone field offices are the best use of our scarce resources. The possibility of aligning UNESCO's field presence with that of the field offices of other UN system organisations, should be explored., not least in the interest of attaining the SDGs. requiring multi-organisational inputs by their very nature.

Soft aspects of peace and security are often under-emphasised and under-funded. And yet it is obvious that building a culture of peace and non-violence must be central to all that we do – a task to be tackled daily. As articulated by the new UN Secretary-General,, it will also be my commitment to use UNESCO's resources and skills to help prevent and resolve conflicts. UNESCO's long-standing experience both in promoting dialogue among civilisations, cultures, and nations, and in strengthening mutual respect, tolerance and understanding will allow the Organisation to make significant contributions, especially during the present International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). A commitment to non- violence and reconciliation is essential condition for the realisation of peace for all members of society.

I will endeavour to bring about concrete results through a range of dialogue initiatives, as we cannot afford to conduct dialogue merely as art for art's sake.

Dialogue and soft power in a globalising and diverse world must be brought together under UNESCO's roof.

Peace is both an outcome and a key enabler of development. There can be no peace without sustainable development and no sustainable development without peace. If elected, I will do all in my power to promote a culture of peace with tangible results.

Music as part of intangible cultural heritage is a unique tool for uniting nations. As performing artist, I have seen with my own eyes how music can successfully assume the role of a catalyst for engaging citizens in dialogue, and to help ease conflicts.

My Pledge

I am a great believer in UNESCO and in the power of its work for the greater good of humankind.

If you choose to entrust me with leading this precious Organisation, I pledge to work constructively and transparently with all parties and stakeholders – Member States, national commissions, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organisations, the scientific community, the members of countless professional and institutional associations that operate under the auspices of UNESCO, with our many partners within the United Nations system, and of course with our exceptional staff, one of the great assets of our Organisation.

It is our duty to be more efficient at all levels of the organisation in the pursuit of our goals. It is my firm belief that through direct engagement and close partnership with all Member States beyond politics, through hard work and strong will, we can make UNESCO's core ideals a reality.

The efficiency of UNESCO's work must be evaluated through a set of measurable normative indicators. The efficiency of each and every program and project must be reviewed and kept under control. This will lead to a more effective and rational use of resources.

But our main indicator must be the well-being of each and every person on our planet. We need to continue our work to improve access to education for all, to preserve our rich heritage, to save the environment for future generations, to secure universal access to information, science and technology and to realise equal opportunities for everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, religion and gender. This is how we must build the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women.

I can think of no greater honour than to dedicate myself to the preservation and advancement of UNESCO's many achievements and noble mandate.

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