

POLAND

Wystąpienie szefa delegacji polskiej podczas 39 Konferencji Generalnej UNESCO  
(Paryż, 3 listopada 2017 roku).

Madam President,  
Madam Director-General,  
Dear Delegates,

Let me start by expressing gratitude on behalf of the Polish government towards Director-General Irina Bokova for her efforts to ensure UNESCO's functioning in a difficult time and to preserve the prestige of our Organisation. Poland will endorse Ms Audrey Azoulay as the candidate for the post of UNESCO's new Director-General. We will cooperate with Director-General Azoulay in her work to reform and improve UNESCO. Let me also thank **Madam Zohour Alaoui** President of the 39th General Conference for ensuring efficient proceedings.

The Government of the Republic of Poland recognises UNESCO's historic achievements in education, science, culture, and environmental protection.

We attach great importance to the activities of the World Heritage Committee. Indeed, it has a positive role in protecting civilizational and natural heritage of mankind. Poland had the pleasure of hosting the Committee's 41st session in Krakow in July 2017.

We welcome the implementation of the scholarship programme, which offers hundreds of students from developing countries a possibility to study at the world's best universities, including Poland's.

My government supports all measures taken by UNESCO to protect the heritage of civilization in conflict and war areas. We commend and support UNESCO-sponsored resolution 2347 of the UN Security Council. It equips our Organisation with new room for manoeuvre in conflict-affected areas. It is a course of action that our country will strongly support as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2018-2019.

We believe it will be possible to save humankind's endangered heritage in conflict areas. Poland is willing to assist countries in need with this regard by sharing its specialists' work, knowledge and expertise.

Dear Delegates,

The “Memory of the World” Programme is our priority. Documentary heritage, as foreseen by this programme, is testament to mankind’s memory and diversity.

We think that UNESCO should not only protect the memory of humanity’s most epic times and legacy, but also make sure that dark and shameful pages of its history are never forgotten, as a warning for future generations. That is why UNESCO should engage, on a greater scale than before, in commemorating the victims of the Nazi and communist totalitarianisms.

Poland has some experience in the matter, which it is willing to share with its partners. Since 2016, the Witold Pilecki Center for Totalitarian Studies has been operating in Warsaw. It documents the crimes of the Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms in Poland. We will lobby for UNESCO’s patronage over this centre.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of the Republic of Poland is of the opinion that the achievements of UNESCO, cannot be put into doubt. However, we cannot conceal that our Organisation needs fundamental reform to keep functioning and remain efficient. The reform should focus on the Organisation as such, its structure, staff, programme implementation and funding, and UNESCO’s budget.

We are opposed to bringing political conflicts to UNESCO. We should be aware of our diversity and cultural differences. UNESCO has always been marked by dialogue between its members and an ability to settle disputes and controversies.

Dear Delegates,

Universality is the most important feature of our Organisation, as Madam Director-General Bokova has perfectly put it. That is why we regret the United States’ decision to withdraw from UNESCO. We are gratified to note that despite its decision, the USA is going to retain an observer status in UNESCO and take part in a number of its projects.

Dear Delegates,

Let me finish by underlining that UNESCO and its mission have Poland’s unqualified support. It is our deep conviction that by working together, we will be able to deal with the challenges facing our Organisation.

***Opracował: Jarosław Spyra (8011).***