



**204<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO Executive Board**  
**European Union statement in the debate under items 4, 5 and 16**

Mr President,  
Madam Director-General,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Director-General at the first substantive meeting of the Executive Board during her tenure and, with this in mind, make some general comments on the objectives that guide our work at UNESCO.
3. Our joint aim is a more transparent, efficient, focused, and accountable UNESCO, which is relevant to the challenges of the day and linked to the rest of the multilateral system, including the rest of the UN. These are key conditions for ensuring that UNESCO has a real and tangible impact on the ground, in particular to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For this goal, we need to continue management reforms and the implementation of the decisions already taken, with a strong focus and leadership by the Secretariat.
4. We need to focus on what UNESCO does best – by centring UNESCO activities around clear core priorities, where it has unique competence and value added, as well as avoiding overlap with areas covered by other international bodies, so it can play a relevant role in the joint effort to achieve the goals we have set globally. This requires discipline and a strategic approach from all of us.
5. We continue to support efforts to focus UNESCO's work on education where it has specific competence and to ensure that its work is made use of by other actors. Equally, we note UNESCO's work on harnessing and advancing science which contributes to the SDGs, managing climate change and ensuring water security. With the widespread destruction of cultural heritage in recent years along with illegal trade of cultural goods, this area of UNESCO's work has put it strongly at the centre of international discussions on peace and security – the announcement of a flagship initiative to revive the spirit of Mosul in February reflects the role UNESCO can play in this regard. UNESCO makes a key contribution to UN's work on preventing violent extremism through activities across all its sectors. Its work on media freedom and safety of journalists, as well as universal access to information are at the heart of international efforts to protect and promote freedom of expression, including in view

of the new challenges in this field. For the EU, human rights and gender equality remain among the cross-cutting principles underlying UNESCO's activities.

6. We need to make these competences better known and used within the UN system, member states and other multilateral actors – which can vastly multiply the effect of UNESCO's work. UNESCO is relevant to today's discussions on peace and security, development and human rights and it needs to make its voice heard and its contribution seen.

7. The EU and its Member States remain a strong and supportive partner to UNESCO and we are ready to work with the Director-General for the objectives set above, at this Board and in the future discussions. We are looking forward to further concrete proposals of the Director-General for transforming UNESCO and are ready to engage in further exchanges on this key issue.

Monsieur le Président,

8. L'objectif de cibler l'action de l'UNESCO et de la rendre plus pertinente avec un réel impact sur le terrain, est un effort partagé par la Directrice générale et les États membres. La réussite d'une telle entreprise doit s'inscrire et s'appuyer sur les réformes menées actuellement par le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies visant à adapter pleinement le système des Nations Unies à la mise en œuvre de l'Agenda 2030. L'UNESCO a un intérêt manifeste dans cette démarche de réforme du cadre onusien. Nous espérons que le secrétariat sera pleinement engagé et associé à ce processus qui contribuera entièrement à renforcer la pertinence, la visibilité et l'efficacité de l'UNESCO. Nous devrions également garder cet objectif à l'esprit dans nos discussions lors de cette session du Conseil. A cet égard, nous accueillons favorablement l'amélioration des outils mis à disposition pour évaluer et analyser les activités de l'UNESCO, tels que le rapport analytique sur l'exécution du programme, le rapport annuel du Service d'évaluation et d'audit (IOS) ainsi que l'analyse et le rapport d'audit du Commissaire aux comptes.

9. Ces analyses, conjuguées à la mise en place de dialogues structurés sur le financement et à l'amélioration de la stratégie de mobilisation des ressources de l'UNESCO, constituent des éléments essentiels contribuant aux efforts de renouvellement de l'action de l'UNESCO. Nous attendons avec intérêt les discussions constructives qui auront lieu sur ces différents points, tout en gardant à l'esprit le contexte de réformes générales menées au niveau onusien.

10. Parmi les points inscrits à l'ordre du jour du Conseil Exécutif, l'UE reste préoccupée par la situation dans la République autonome de Crimée et dans la ville de Sébastopol (Ukraine). La position de l'UE sur cette question reste inchangée. Nous continuons de soutenir

l'attention portée par l'UNESCO à la situation de ce territoire et appelons à un suivi concret des décisions du Conseil exécutif en la matière.

11. As we are starting our work at this session, we are also looking forward to the implementation of the good practices and working methods adopted by the 39<sup>th</sup> General Conference aimed at increasing the efficiency of our deliberations. Their success depends on all of us.

Mr President,

12. Looking forward, we are glad to share with all colleagues that on 23 May 2018, the EU will convene an innovative and inclusive Conference on Youth, Peace and Security in Brussels, in partnership with the UN, including UNESCO, and civil society. The conference will bring together young peacebuilders from and working with the EU, the representatives of the EU and Member States, multilateral and non-governmental partners. Youth remains a cross-cutting priority for us also in this organisation and we are grateful to work with UNESCO in the run-up to the event.

Thank you.