

## 204th Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO – National Statement of Finland

9 April 2018 pm  
Plenary, items 4, 5 & 16

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Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
Madam President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director-General,  
Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

Finland aligns itself with the EU statement.

This is the first substantive session of the Executive Board with the current term of Finland as its member. As committed and longstanding partner of UNESCO, Finland is happy to take this opportunity to deliver some of our views on the organization. We also welcome the Director-General who has started her term with a firm and constructive approach.

In many ways, the international community is at a turning point, marked by positive developments such as commitment to the ambitious Agenda 2030 to the implementation of which all efforts are needed. In order to turn opportunities and challenges into success, we need a strong UNESCO, we need an effective UNESCO, and we need a credible delivering UNESCO.

It cannot be highlighted enough that UNESCO plays a key role in achieving the goals of the Agenda 2030. Within the UN family, UNESCO has a unique mandate, covering a wide range of issues from protection of cultural heritage to promoting the safety of journalists. Ensuring quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all is at the core of the Agenda 2030, and one of the priorities of Finland. Right to education is a cornerstone of our societies. Education is essential in responding to global challenges such as poverty, inequalities, climate change and violent extremism. Gender equality, innovations as well as skills for life and work, are promoted through education.

To be credible, UNESCO must continue to be a proactive voice for the promotion and protection of human rights in all its areas of competence. Economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights are at the core of UNESCO's mandate. Realization of the rights of women and girls is a longstanding priority for Finland, and we will continue promoting gender equality across all of UNESCO's work. Increased transparency and broad based interaction with the civil society are likewise important topics for Finland.

To make the most of UNESCO's mandate, clear concentration on the organization's core competencies is essential. UNESCO needs to capitalize on its comparative advantages, striving for an integrated and results-based approach. Furthermore, UNESCO's efficiency and effectiveness need to be better fulfilled through its regional and country presence. In order to achieve this, it is important that UNESCO is in alignment with and follows closely the reforms underway within the entire UN system to deliver on the Agenda 2030.

Finland strives for a sharper, more focused and unified UNESCO. In order to maintain its relevance, developing and reappraising the working methods of UNESCO are important. Recommendations of the Working Group on Governance, endorsed by the previous session of the General Conference, are now to be implemented. Finland invites the Secretariat as well as all Member States to take actively part in this work.

Finland remains highly concerned about the financial situation of UNESCO, but sees the current challenges also as an opportunity for positive development. For example, we welcome warmly the integrated budget framework which gives better visibility of the organization's global resources. Regarding UNESCO's financing, we still need better predictability and a robust resource mobilization strategy. The Structured Financing Dialogue, as part of the QCPR process, is a significant step towards this endeavor. Finland, with other Nordic countries, was happy to participate in a pilot for this new approach, and we very much look forward to the upcoming

event in September. We are confident that this platform will be a valuable instrument for finding new partnerships, synergies and inter-sectorial practices.

Much has been achieved during previous years in terms of making UNESCO more relevant and effective. While challenges remain, we see this session of the Executive Board as an excellent possibility to step up the reform of the organization and to develop further the important work done by UNESCO. In this collective mission, we look forward to working closely with all Member States, with the Director-General and the Secretariat.

Thank you.