

**Statement by Prof. Dr. Radovan Stanislav Pejovnik, Representative of the
Republic of Slovenia to the Executive Board of UNESCO
at the 204th Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO
Paris, 9 April 2018**

Mr President,
Madam Director-General,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address you today at this 204th Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO. Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU.

Allow me to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the Director-General, Madam Azoulay at her first appearance before the Executive Board. We are impressed by your energy, enthusiasm and determination to contribute to the work of UNESCO. The beginning is promising and with close communication and coordination we can together build a great future for our Organisation.

Mr President,

Let me start by pointing out **Slovenia's key short and medium term priorities** in UNESCO.

Firstly, Slovenia remains a strong advocate of **multilateralism** with the United Nations at its core; its preservation should be our common overarching priority. UNESCO deserves an important place in this endeavour.

Secondly, we should **return our focus back to the roots of UNESCO**: education, science and culture. In this context UNESCO should to a greater extent use the potential of professional experts from Member States and involve them early on in the drafting process of the documents.

And *thirdly*, we should be mindful of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** as all challenges and sustainable development goals can only be met by joint efforts.

Time to implement the 2030 Agenda is rapidly passing by. It is for UNESCO to take the lead with regard to the implementation of SDG number 4: "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning". When it comes to education we should be ambitious - UNESCO has already established some expert bodies, among them the International Bureau for Education, category 1 centre. Together we can develop new approaches and methods for their effective and most useful outcomes. In this regard I would like to recall the importance of the **Open Educational Resources (OER)**. Slovenia hosted the 2nd World Open Education Resources Congress in September in Ljubljana and looks forward to working towards adoption of the recommendations on OER at the next UNESCO General Conference. In this programme empowering and engaging youth is important cross-cutting priority for Slovenia as well.

Within the 2030 Agenda UNESCO plays a central role also in the **sustainable use of water** which should be recognised and clearly defined in the UN water architecture.

Culture, protection of cultural heritage and reconstructing what was lost in conflict areas plays an important role in achieving many of the SDGs. UNESCO's work in these domains contributes significantly to international peace, security and stability.

Freedom of expression and gender equality are well recognized within the UNESCO mandate. However, there is a need for UNESCO to further promote both throughout the UN system as important aspects of human rights on the basis of its Action Plan on Human Rights as well as its Guidelines on freedom of expression.

Through **preventing violent extremism** we see an unambiguous contribution of cross-sectorial value of UNESCO and we commend that UNESCO is recognised as one of the key players.

Mr President,

UNESCO should be more result oriented with regard to the implementation of the **reformed integrated programme and budget**. Proposals should be linked to new projects, especially when having transparent and well defined structured financing dialogues with voluntary contributors. We also have to realise already agreed decisions. Therefore UNESCO has to implement the recommendations on governance and other recommendations suggested by External Auditor and the Internal Oversight Service, which have not been implemented yet.

Taking into account the on-going UN reform process, UNESCO needs to strengthen its presence in multilateral environment, among others by coordinated participation in reform discussions through its offices in New York and Geneva. Networking has a special meaning in a modern world and we appreciate and support the **UNESCO field office network** which should keep strong connection with the headquarters and national commissions.

Mr President,

Slovenia remains strong supporter of UNESCO and its mandate. UNESCO is of paramount importance for our life and the future of our children. Some issues have impeded our work in the past and new challenges are rising ahead of us. When dealing with such challenges we need to keep in mind that everything is hard before it gets easy.

Before concluding, let me take this opportunity to call on all Members of the Executive Board to put forward additional effort and commitment to meaningful dialog, goodwill and especially to focus on the core mandate of UNESCO. There is no place for further politicisation of the Organisation. Slovenia remains a firm partner of UNESCO with the focus on the outcome and not the obstacles.

Thank you.