

National Statement by Turkey 204th Session of the Executive Board

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madame Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to start by extending a warm welcome to Madame Director General to her first meeting of the Executive Board. We are looking forward to hear her vision and her in-depth consultations with Member States. I take this opportunity to express Turkey's confidence to our new Director General and wish her and her senior management team every success in their endeavours.

Last two years we were busy with identifying the priorities of UNESCO and working to set the new Program and Budget and to improve the governance of the Organization including human resources management.

There is every reason for us to expect this term to be "the year of implementation and action". As a new Member of the Executive Board, Turkey will make every effort to ensure the implementation of the decisions adopted at the last General Conference.

We are pleased to see that some of the recommendations are already in place. The first meeting of the Preparatory Group has already been a success. Let me take this opportunity to thank both our Chair, H.E Denise Houphouet-Boigny and Co-chair Mr. Jesus Enrique Garcia. We were able to discuss all agenda items in a comprehensive and inclusive manner.

To attain a transparent, focused and accountable Organization which demonstrates its relevance, we need a common resolve to work together. It is vital for everyone that UNESCO's impact on the ground in terms of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is felt and appreciated.

While we continue to reform the house, we should refrain deviating from UNESCO's core priorities and unique competences. Education, which has always been a major pillar of our strategic direction, is more critical at this time when we bring our coordinated support for the realization of the goals that the SDG4 embodies.

Equally, UNESCO's work on safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage remains all the more relevant. So, we applaud Director General for launching "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" initiative for the reconstruction of the Old City, both its physical infrastructure and restoring the dignity of its people. This initiative deserves our full support as it puts human dimension at the heart of our efforts for sustainable reconstruction.

Thanks to UNESCO, the relationship between the radicalization of youth and the role of social media in this process has been on the agenda of the Organization for some time. Though empirical studies are almost none, it is brought to our attention that social media may play an active role in the violent radicalization process. Given the importance of young people as citizens and our future, we encourage UNESCO to continue the good work in this area to find out the reasons and explanations of online violent radicalization of some youth and the ways to address this emerging challenge.

We must keep in mind that reform is an ongoing process. Indeed, there are a number of areas where we see the need for further improvement. One such area concerns the “Field Office Network.” We welcome Madame Director General’s decision to identify the Network as one of the four key areas for improvement. After all, the Network consumes half of the human and financial resources of UNESCO.

It would be worthwhile if UNESCO looks for ways to improve the working relationship and modalities between the field network and the headquarters in order to render the network accountable in line with C/5.

The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy will be key to the execution of the Programs. While we welcome UNESCO’s performance with regard to the gender balance at the Secretariat, we regret to see that underrepresentation is still an issue for the Organization. We therefore appeal to Madame Director General to make every effort to change this trend and ensure that Member States are fairly represented at the Secretariat.

We take note with appreciation the Director General’s proposal for a strategic transformation of UNESCO.

We recognize and appreciate the élan of the Director General, and in particular, her initiatives concerning Artificial Intelligence and Ethics on the one hand and the Revival of Mosul, are both important and as she had already neatly described, "projets mobilisateurs" which we will be happy to support.

Thank you.