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Canadian intervention in plenary during the General Policy Debate

Her Excellency Elaine Ayotte

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Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Canada to UNESCO**

Check Against Delivery

Madam President,
Madam Director General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations is the only forum we have to address collectively today's global challenges. It is the convenor and enabler of global solutions. Canada supports the UN Secretary-General in his vision for the UN and its reform: a UN that is more responsive at all levels.

Today, UNESCO remains an essential part of the UN. It needs to connect to overall reform efforts. It needs to focus on its areas of comparative advantage. It needs to demonstrate results. It needs to enhance its credibility. It needs to regain its serenity.

It also needs to be adequately supported by its Member States. For this reason, Canada pays its assessed contributions in full, on time, and without pre-conditions.

Madam President,

I have the honour of representing a country whose values are widely echoed in UNESCO's mandate. Our prime minister, Justin Trudeau, and his government believe in the equality of all people, regardless of gender, origin or sexual orientation.

Canada recently adopted a feminist international assistance policy. For us, equality between genders is not only about justice and social equity, it is also, and above all, the best way to reduce poverty and build a more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous world.

UNESCO must redouble efforts to promote gender equality in the implementation of its major programs, including by developing better intersectoral expertise.

In education, UNESCO has established itself as the platform to monitor the implementation of SDG 4 of Agenda 2030. Canada would like to emphasize the

importance of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, based in Montreal, as well as the Global Education Monitoring Report, as essential tools to report progress on our commitments.

Women in science is another key topic. Early in her career, our new governor general, Julie Payette, received grants, which enabled her to become an astronaut. Most notably, she was a flight engineer on the space shuttle Endeavour. Special attention must be paid to women beginning scientific careers. The Governments of Canada and of Quebec therefore proudly support UNESCO's efforts to promote a new generation of women scientists, particularly in low and middle-income countries.

A safe environment for journalists and media workers is a cornerstone of democracies. Here, UNESCO is the lead coordinator for the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Again, an approach that focusses on gender is essential as women journalists are doubly vulnerable and are often victims of bullying and other forms of violence.

Equally essential is the promotion of an accessible and barrier-free Internet that is based on human rights and a multi-partner governance model.

UNESCO also has a crucial role to play in the implementation of the United Nations' Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. *L'Appel de Québec*, which was launched following the Quebec-UNESCO conference on Internet and the Radicalization of Youth in the Fall of 2016, encourages all stakeholders to fight this phenomenon.

If we do not involve youth, the fight against violent extremism is lost. This is why Canada applauds UNESCO's work to empower youth. Our national commission and UNESCO also highlighted the importance of teachers and their training during the Week for Peace and Sustainable Development, which was held in Ottawa in March 2017.

Canada is pleased to recognize UNESCO's work as part of its cultural conventions. These conventions are essential for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. In the digital age, the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of

the Diversity of Cultural Expression is also a priority for the Government of Canada, and for the Government of Quebec, which has been active within our delegation for 11 years.

Madam President,

No country on this planet can walk away from the reality of climate change. UNESCO must continue work in its areas of expertise. Indigenous and Northern communities are particularly affected. Ten years after the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO is finally positioned to fully implement and respect this Declaration. Firmly engaged in a process of reconciliation with its own indigenous peoples, the Government of Canada looks forward to UNESCO's enhanced engagement with Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

Unfortunately, racism and anti-Semitism remain scourges which afflict all societies to various degrees. It is for this reason that Canada is working with UNESCO to advance learning about why, and how, the Holocaust and other genocides can happen.

Madam President,

Allow me to pay tribute to Irina Bokova, gender equality champion. In her many contributions as head of UNESCO, Mrs. Bokova demonstrated an unwavering commitment to cultural heritage as a factor of peace and the foundation of nations' cultural diversity. This commitment was consecrated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347.

Finally, I would like to give a warm welcome to Audrey Azoulay as Director-General. Ms. Azoulay can count on the Canadian Delegation to accompany and support her on the path to making UNESCO more effective and more relevant in the UN system.

Thank you.