

Mr President,  
Mr President of the Executive Board  
Madam Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, and  
Distinguished Colleagues,

Allow me to start by congratulating H.E. Mrs Zohour Alaoui for her election as President of the 39th Session of UNESCO's General Conference. On behalf of the Hungarian Government, I wish you, President Alaoui, a successful Presidency.

Let me point out that Hungary aligns itself fully with the **EU statement to be delivered by the EU delegation.**

We welcome the recognition of the importance of cultural heritage and cultural diversity as platforms towards the implementation of Agenda 2030. Hungary is committed to the **protection of cultural heritage** in its tangible and intangible forms and we recognize its inherent link with national and local identities. We share the view that safeguarding heritage is not only about protecting civilization, it was also vital for security, and plays a key role in restoring peace and resolving conflicts. The unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, religious sites and artefacts may constitute war crimes and even – in special circumstances – crimes against humanity and must be brought to justice. We welcome the efforts of UNESCO in alerting the international community and the International Criminal Court to ensure that crimes such as the in the deliberate destruction of nine mausoleums and the secret gate of the Sidi Yahia mosque in the World Heritage site of Timbuktu (Mali) do not go unpunished.

We place great emphasis on providing special **assistance to countries in conflict, post-conflict and crisis situations** as well as on strengthening resilience through preventive action.

Allow me also to highlight in this context UNESCO's *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Actions for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict and for the Protection of Culture in Emergency Situations related to Natural Disasters*. Hungary fully shares the human rights based approach and the objective to recover the loss of cultural heritage and diversity as a result of conflict, expressed in the Action Plan.

The historic presence of Christianity in certain regions of the world is essential to cultural diversity and it has to be preserved. This is why Hungary actively supports the ongoing efforts in conserving ancient **Christian manuscripts in Iraq**, including those saved at the onset of the takeover of Mosul by Daesh, the restoration of over 30 churches in Lebanon, the restoration project of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem as well as the restoration of the Aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. We also finance projects in **West and Central Africa** to conserve and promote World Heritage sites in Nigeria, Congo, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Burkina Faso in order to enhance the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in this region. *(Saját eredmények)*

Due to Hungary's geographical location, the issue of **water** is extremely important for us. More than 90 per cent of our waters originate from beyond our borders. These waters occasionally cause devastating floods, the sources of which are extraneous to our country. Moreover, for Hungary it is apparent that when it comes to our shared water resources, we have shared responsibilities. For this reason, for us, **bi- and multilateral international cooperation in water affairs** assumes critical importance. We believe that water connects all the SDGs, from

poverty eradication to food security. In this regard, the President of the Republic, Mr. János Áder, has convened two successful Water Summits in Budapest, which have produced a set of practical recommendations for action. We also plan to host a third Summit in the coming biennium. Given the severity of the issues at stake, it is now more important than ever to address the major gaps in our international efforts to combat the global water crisis. To this end, we support the reformulation of the global water governance architecture by creating an intergovernmental body within the UN, one which is devoted to water matters with a view, inter alia, to strengthening coordination and cooperation amongst the various UN agencies so as to better serve the needs of Member States. UNESCO should take a leading role in water science and education. We noted with satisfaction that the Executive Board recommended to this General Conference a specific Main Line of Action aimed at strengthening the impact of the International Hydrological Programme. It is imperative that IHP takes the lead in working out appropriate solutions for climate adaptation. UNESCO has a very important role in this and we stand ready to actively support its work.

Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist and musical educator **Zoltán Kodály** is celebrated in association with UNESCO this year. We are proud that this anniversary was preceded by the inscription of the *Safeguarding of the folk music heritage by the Kodály concept* to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Hungary attaches great importance to musical education and to artistic education more broadly as an important component of inclusive and good quality education. Artistic education is a boost to academic achievement, to social and emotional development, to civic engagement, and to equitable opportunity in our schools and in our societies at large.

Finally, let me also **thank Madam Irina Bokova** for her tireless work in guiding the organization in very difficult times. She is not only the first Director General to come from our electoral group – Group II – but is also the first woman to serve in this position since the creation of UNESCO. The new Director-General will have to make proof of great leadership in a particularly difficult moment for our Organization. We wish success to her and to all of us. We need to remain united in the face of adversity.

Thank you for your attention.