

ADDRESS

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STATE SECRETARY

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE
AND SPORT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

39th Session of the GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO

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Madam Director-General,
Mister President of the General Conference,
Mister President of the Executive Board,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the 39th Session of the General Conference and share with you some views regarding the important challenges that stand before UNESCO today.

On behalf of the Government of Slovenia, and on my personal behalf, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Director General, Ms Irina Bokova for her efforts as the head of our organization. During her mandates, she was tireless in her aspirations for the reform and efficiency of UNESCO and we warmly thank her for that!

At the end of Ms Bokova's mandate and speaking at the General Conference, which shall elect our new Director General, it seems appropriate to focus on the future of UNESCO. Of course, Slovenia fully associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union.

By many, UNESCO is perceived as an important and esteemed specialized global governmental organization with paramount issues of the human development at the core of its mandate: education, science, culture, knowledge society. However, this is also the reason for its vulnerability and susceptibility to the demands of today's time and the globalized world as well as to the changes in the agenda of the international community. **UNESCO can face these challenges only by swift and efficient reaction. This, however, shall be achieved only through a more flexible organizational structure and program, and with stronger support from the international intellectual community.** The strength of UNESCO was and still lies in its moral and intellectual solidarity – and again, we would like to underline the comparative advantage of the network of UNESCO National Commissions; they are the

perfect tool, for both UNESCO and its Member States and deserve their appreciation and support.

The task that lies before UNESCO in the future is to preserve its universality, supported by reform of the financial management, the central services and the program management. UNESCO must be an operational organization with efficient governance and we look up to our new Director General to continue with the reforms of the organization and to retain its intellectual openness.

This is a time of financial distress for UNESCO which, of course, puts a big strain on the organization and its Secretariat. However, these challenges should be seen also as opportunities, leading us to foster a more focused organization.

UNESCO needs reforms and in this perspective, among other issues, Slovenia welcomes the nomination of Audrey Azoulay as new UNESCO Director General. This is also, why Slovenia actively fulfills its mandate as member of the Executive Board since we wish UNESCO to be an organization with the focus to meet global challenges instead of spreading its resources too widely.

Many of UNESCO's core values are closely linked to what the world needs for development:

Without Education, we cannot solve the challenges of the future. Without cooperation in Science, we cannot optimize development. Without Culture and Cultural Diversity, we cannot liberate ourselves from narrow-mindedness and thus we counteract the struggle for peace. Further, the Free Exchange of Ideas (as is stated in the constitution of UNESCO) is a solid foundation for peace, cooperation, development and economic growth.

Slovenia welcomes the new approach to base the 39 C / 5 Budget on an integrated budget framework. We believe that the integrated budget framework will foster the Structured Financing Dialogue in order to successfully mobilize extrabudgetary funds.

Slovenia highly appreciates the continuous consultation process between the UNESCO Secretariat, the program sectors and Member States during the elaboration of the Program and Budget for the period of 2018 to 2021.

The tense financial situation of UNESCO will inquire increasing efforts in fund-raising. Slovenia considers it therefore of paramount importance that UNESCO develops an effective fund-raising strategy and that the activities undertaken by different program sectors in this regard are as transparent and harmonized with each other as possible.

Slovenia welcomes the strong focus UNESCO is placing on the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals that touch the very core of UNESCO's mandate.

Slovenia especially supports the leading role of UNESCO within the international collaboration and coordination of activities to implement SDG 4 on Quality Education.

Therefore, we appreciate that the Program and Budget for 2018-2021 include important measures in the field of education, inclusivity, intercultural understanding, global citizenship and the protection of cultural property.

Dear Colleagues,

At the present session of the General Conference, we will have the opportunity to discuss the way forward regarding the international collaboration in the field of Open Educational Resources (OER) and the adopted results of the 2nd World OER Congress that took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, last September. International collaboration on OER is one of the ways to implement SDG 4 on Quality Education. A comprehensive report about the 2nd World OER Congress as well as the two adopted outcome documents: the LJUBLJANA OER ACTION PLAN as well as the MINISTERIAL STATEMENT are made available and Information Document to the Agenda of this General Conference.

However, I would like to share with you some information about the Congress, organized by UNESCO and the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in close collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, Creative Commons, the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO and the UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for OER and Open Learning (Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia) with the generous support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

In preparation for the 2nd World OER Congress, six Regional Consultations and two international surveys on OER were organized by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in close cooperation with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia and again with the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the national authorities in the six host countries: Malaysia, Malta, Qatar, Mauritius, Brazil and New Zealand.

The 2nd World OER Congress, which has brought together 500 participants from 100 countries, marked 15 years of growth and development in open-licensed learning and teaching resources since the term “OER” was first coined at UNESCO in 2002. The theme of the 2nd World OER Congress – “OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: from Commitment to Action” – reflects the pivotal role OER can play toward achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and above all Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education.

At the Congress, a ministerial panel comprised of 14 Ministers of Education and Higher Education underscored the need to develop greater diversity of languages for learning materials, policies to develop capacity of and partnership with teachers, and the need for both online as well as offline access options to broaden the reach of OER.

Please allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the UNESCO Education as well as Communication and Information Sector for their excellent cooperation; I would also like to highlight the valuable contribution of the Knowledge Societies Division in preparing and organizing this successful event. As well, our thanks go to all partners involved in the organization, especially the Commonwealth of Learning, Creative Commons and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

As a strong supporter of UNESCO, Slovenia expects a lot – in areas upon which so much of our well-being and societies depend and thrive: from building Education for All to advancing freedom of speech, the free exchange of ideas as well as free and independent media. The human rights perspective is invaluable, as is gender equality.

Before concluding, please allow me to express one more important topic:

Slovenia would like to enhance the empowerment of young people. Looking ahead, we propose to focus not only on formal education and job creation but also on human rights education, democratic and global citizenship, on education against racism and intolerance and on education to prevent violent extremism. UNESCO has biggest potentials in this field.

Therefore, Slovenia wishes to empower UNESCO's Youth Forum taking place before every session of the General Conference. We believe that the Youth Forum in its current format is still not an "integral part" of the General Conference, as stipulated by 32 C / Res 82.

We do not propose immediate political participation of youth, which is, after all, one particular stakeholder group within UNESCO. On the contrary, we seek for more effective means of making the voice of youth to be heard, while using the Youth Forum as an opportunity of building the capacity of youth.

In cooperation with the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO, the Slovenian UNESCO Youth Network organized a preparatory youth meeting for the European region some weeks ago. The meeting resulted in a list of "European UNESCO Youth Recommendations" which were presented at this year's UNESCO Youth Forum and will be presented by young delegates during the session of the SHS Commission.

I strongly wish that UNESCO will continue to perform its role in the future and that this General Conference will again be a meeting place of different cultures, systems and beliefs with one common goal: to build the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women,

which can only be achieved by maintaining the humanist perspective and perception of ourselves and the world around us!

Thank you!