

**ADDRESS BY H.E. AZIZ ABDUKHAKIMOV, THE DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER THE OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN, TO THE 40TH
SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO**

(Paris, November 13, 2019)

Mr. President of the General Conference,
Mr. President of the Executive Board,
Madame Director General,
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Ahmet Altay Cengizer on his assumption of the presidency of the General Conference and to wish him every success in this responsible post.

We are confident that with the newly elected members of the Executive Board, the vice-presidents, the new chairpersons of the Commissions and other Bodies, UNESCO will strengthen the means of action and budget, and significantly contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals in all regions of the world.

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak from the tribune of UNESCO General Conference. It is a unique platform to critically evaluate the work done during last two years and jointly develop UNESCO's medium and short-term strategy in the fields of its competence.

If we analyze the trends in Central Asia over the last two years, we can see that our region has faced tremendous positive changes through continued integration and rise of regional cooperation including in the framework of UNESCO. In particular, Uzbekistan, under the leadership of President Mirziyoyev, has decisively entered a new phase in its development in all areas, including in science, education and culture. Our country attaches great importance to the participation in this noble Organization's work. We have twice served in the UNESCO's Executive Board and we are running to the Board again in 2023.

We are also very pleased to see a very positive trend in the expansion of cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO. Here, I would like to emphasize the visits of H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the

President of Uzbekistan, to UNESCO headquarters in October 2018, as well as of Madame Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General, to Uzbekistan in August 2019. The bilateral talks on the highest level have laid the foundations of a new era in our cooperation. We introduced a systematic approach and started working closely in the framework of the Cooperation Program between the Government of Uzbekistan and UNESCO and the Action Plan for 2018-2021.

It is particularly important for Uzbekistan to expand cooperation with UNESCO in preserving incomparable cultural and historical heritage of Uzbek people. In this regard, we attach great significance to the outcomes of the 43rd Session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2019 in Baku, during which we presented large-scale plans for the preservation of cultural heritage of Uzbekistan.

I would like to inform you that the Government of Uzbekistan has already begun to implement specific measures for the comprehensive protection, conservation and restoration of cultural heritage sites. As one of such steps we adopted a law, which reinforces the responsibility for violation of legislation on protection of cultural heritage. We are committed to implement all recommendations of the World Heritage Committee on Uzbekistan.

We also call for a closer cooperation with UNESCO in preparing new sites to include in the World Heritage List and the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. We are especially proud of that the number of objects of Uzbek intangible cultural heritage, inscribed in the Representative List, is rising year by year.

I would like to share my delight that during the 14th session of Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to be held in Bogota, Colombia, in December another piece of intangible culture - Lazgi (Khorezm dance) will hopefully be inscribed in the Representative List. In the upcoming years we are also planning to promote the inclusion in the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage the Bakhshi Art (tradition of epic poetry and singing) and some examples of Ethnic Sports that arose and developed throughout centuries in the territory of Uzbekistan.

As Madame Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General, rightly mentioned during her recent visit to Samarkand, "Heritage is a bridge between our generations, between our societies. This is exactly what we should share with the whole world and transmit to other generations." In that sense we would like to express sincere gratitude to UNESCO for its support in organizing festivals and forums, such as the Sharq

Taronalari International Music Festival in Samarkand, the International Maqom Art Forum in Shakhrisabz, the International Bakhshi Art Festival in Termez, International Festival of folk art and handicraft in Kokand.

We support UNESCO Secretariat's efforts to boost collaboration with the National Commissions for UNESCO and delegate greater authority to Organizations' country offices. In this context, I would like to underline the effective work done by the UNESCO Office in Tashkent during the past years. The Government of Uzbekistan will continue to create for UNESCO Office all necessary conditions for its successful and fruitful functioning.

Dear Mr. Chairman!

In conclusion, I would like to stress that, despite financial and other challenges, like any other international organization, UNESCO has a crucial role to play in today's world, as building peace and stability is becoming very hard while conflicts on the basis of extremism and violence, interethnic and inter-religious hatred are growing. The efforts taken by UNESCO are more important than ever in promoting relations based on cultural diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding. In this regard, we should unite our strengths and pay greater attention to education to upbringing our youth in a spirit of peace and tolerance.

Uzbekistan always stands ready to further widen cooperation with UNESCO in fulfilling its core mission, which is - to leave a better world for the generations to come.

Thank you.