

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

**40<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of UNESCO**

**National statement of the Republic of Bulgaria**

**delivered by Mr. Boil Banov, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria,  
Head of Delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria**

**13<sup>th</sup> of November 2019**

**Dear Mr. President of the General Conference,**

**Dear Mr. President of the Executive Board of UNESCO,**

**Dear Madam Director-General of UNESCO,**

**Your Excellencies,**

**Dear delegates,**

First of all allow me, Mister President of the General Conference, to congratulate you on your election and wish you success in this responsible mission. I am confident that you will lead our deliberations with wisdom and competence, seeking consensus and following the ideals and principles of our organisation.

My delegation associates itself with the statement on behalf of the European Union to be delivered later in the debate.

This session will mark the next important stage in UNESCO's history with crucial decisions enabling our Organization to keep its vital role in the implementation of the new and ambitious United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development.

We are all witnessing that the world around us is rapidly changing. Unfortunately, the direction is not always that we all want. This is why UNESCO must be in step with the new changes and challenges. Moreover – our organization must anticipate them, propose and implement corrective measures and outrun them.

Allow me to underline the fundamental preconditions that will ensure the vitality of the organization, its further modernization and its adaptation to the rapidly ongoing changes.

The first precondition is related to our interaction, to our common approach to the concept of multilateralism. Today, more than ever, we must protect the rule-based system of multilateral diplomacy, at the heart of which is the United Nations and whose integral and important part is UNESCO. The principles of multilateral cooperation, mutual solidarity, dialogue and understanding could propose timely and adequate solutions to the global challenges.

Second is the reform process of UNESCO, which we called the Strategic Transformation. We welcome the progress made on the three pillars of this process. We attach particular importance to the successful implementation of the **Partnership Strategy** as well as of the **UNESCO Communication Strategy**, especially for the inclusion of young people by using digital opportunities.

Third, we must ensure the UNESCO's capacity to deliver its programs, to increase their effectiveness and to strengthen its leadership in implementing the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Bulgaria supports the budget scenario and the program 2020-2021 that will allow UNESCO to have a stable, predictable and result-oriented future and to be a modern, effective and efficient organization.

Bulgaria welcomes the progress made in stabilizing the financial situation and mobilizing extra-budgetary funds. Through voluntary contributions to UNESCO-BULGARIA Funds-in-Trust, we aim to contribute to the implementation of the Organization's global priorities on Gender Equality and Africa.

We appreciate UNESCO's initiatives to elaborate new normative instruments on the ethic dimensions of **Artificial intelligence** and the recommendations in the field of **Open education**. This important normative work sets the framework for our common expectations for our future.

**Dear Colleagues,**

Bulgaria attaches paramount importance of education as enabler for achieving sustainability and prosperity. The key priorities of education on which Bulgarian institutions actively work, are the **promotion of creativity, critical thinking,**

**promotion of innovations in and through education, providing assistance in developing the unique potential of young people and empowering them to become responsible and creative global citizens.**

One of our main commitments is to ensure better inclusion of children and students in the system of pre-school and school education and to prevent dropping out of school in line with the Bulgarian international engagements. We are elaborating specific policies for promoting competencies for global citizenship, including in a digital environment, fostering a livelihood in peaceful and cohesive societies.

Bulgaria has strong traditions and experience in protecting tangible, intangible and underwater cultural heritage as well as in the implementation of the relevant UNESCO conventions. We recognise that the wide scope and seriousness of the new challenges that threaten cultural heritage require the efforts of the entire international community in its protection and safeguarding. We express our readiness to engage in the common efforts to develop good practices and fruitful interactions for the implementation of international principles for preserving and managing cultural heritage. Through the activities of the **Regional Center for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southeastern Europe in Sofia**, Bulgaria fosters the cooperation in this area, especially at regional level.

My country supports the digitalization and digital conservation of cultural heritage as an integral part of the process of its promotion and protection.

Bulgaria recognizes the important role of UNESCO as a laboratory of ideas and as an engine for the development of science. Bulgaria has always considered both fundamental and social sciences as a key UNESCO's priority. We welcome the initiative for the elaboration of **Recommendations on Open science**. We believe that the access to innovations is an important element of this concept and support the proclamation of **2022 the year of fundamental sciences**.

Bulgaria relies on the contribution of UNESCO in the establishment of a **Regional Center for Sustainable Technologies in Southeastern Europe**.

We would like to express our strong interest in the activities of the Organization in the field of social sciences and we fully support the application of ethics in science and technology.

Bulgaria supports the "Memory of the World" program and its further development without politicization.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that, as a member of the Executive Board Bulgaria will continue to seek consensus on key issues related to the development of our Organization and for the effective implementation of UNESCO's program activities.

Finally, allow me to conclude my intervention with a quote from the greatest Bulgarian poet **Ivan Vazov**, whose one hundred /100<sup>th</sup>/ Anniversary of his death has been included in the UNESCO anniversary list and will be celebrated in 2021. "You cannot quench what's not for quenching!"

Our mission is to kindle the fire of human knowledge and culture and to transmit it to the future generations.