

Remarks by the Head of the Georgian Delegation
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Ms. Khatuna Totladze
to the 40th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO

President of the General Conference,

Madame Director-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, I am pleased to address the 40th session of the General Conference. We recognize the importance of the reforms the Organization has been carrying out for the past challenging years and express our readiness to provide full support to its future work.

We all agree on the indispensable role of UNESCO in preserving international peace and security through cooperation in the fields of its competence. At the same time, we expect UNESCO to be more responsive and proactive than ever.

In this respect, we mostly welcome the strong focus on Strategic Transformation of UNESCO that ensures greater efficiency and contribution of the Organization in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Herewith, the successful outcome of the process is grounded on multilateral collaboration within the UN and effective dialogue with all its member states. I am confident that only through shared

responsibilities and joint efforts we shall be able to respond to the world's major challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We fully share new approaches and ambitious steps towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Quality education is crucial for the development of societies. The National strategy on Education and Science of Georgia for 2017-2021, as well as the comprehensive education reform is ensured by Government initiative to gradually increase funding of the sphere of education to 25% of the Georgian budget and 6% of the total GDP by 2022.

Using information and communication technologies in education is an essential part of modern study. In this respect and as a part of complex education reform, Georgia works with UNICEF and UNESCO on creating new cooperative relations. Our further efforts will be focused on supporting competency based learning.

The ICT has a high impact on youth, plays a crucial role for their learning, skill development and ensures their better adoption to the modern challenges.

Our approach to the policy development in the field of ICT largely determined project's design created to acquire for World Book Capital in 2021. With a focus on innovations and

use of modern technologies it is intended to have a positive impact on literacy rates among young people and instigate their interest towards books.

I am very pleased that upon the decision of the Director General, Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, for the first time, gained this prestigious title. So you are all warmly welcomed to Tbilisi to be part of this special event for Georgia and not only.

We continue our firm and fruitful cooperation with the World Heritage Center. For the first time, Georgia nominated Natural Heritage site “Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands” to the World Heritage List.

If granted the prestigious status, the site will enhance the recognition of Georgia’s protected areas and improve social-economic conditions of local population.

Cultural and creative industries are among the fastest growing sectors in the world. Cultural Strategy 2025 adopted by the Government of Georgia acknowledges the role of cultural and creative industries for economic growth.

As a party to the 2005 Convention, Georgia continues to advance in the effective implementation of the document. We are pleased that Georgia is among first beneficiaries of the EU/UNESCO joint project urging the further development of creative and cultural industries in Georgia.

Dear colleagues,

Just about a week ago, we all celebrated the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Today, thirty years later, we see the return to the dividing lines. The ongoing creeping annexation, installation of barbed wire fences along the occupation lines to cut off remaining links between the war - divided societies, significantly affect the livelihoods of the local population

We are deeply concerned of the situation in Georgia's occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Deliberate eradication of cultural heritage as an attempt to erase Georgian traces, looting and illicit trade of cultural artefacts, grave human rights violations, including prohibition of education in native language for the ethnic Georgians, double our concerns and highlight the vital need for urgent counter-action.

Our society considers the UNESCO as a key stakeholder and strongly expects its efficient involvement in the process especially regarding the monuments of cultural heritage.

With this in mind, it is noteworthy that with only joint efforts of the international community it is possible to eliminate targeted violations in different parts of the world.

Thank you very much for the attention.