

**Intervention of H.E. Ivita BURMISTRE,
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of LATVIA to the UNESCO
at the General Policy Debate, November 14, 2019**

Mr President of the General Conference, **Madame Director General**,
Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address the 40th session of General Conference
of the UNESCO.

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the
European Union.

Last year Latvia celebrated 100 years since the establishment of its
statehood and this year Latvia celebrates the **30th anniversary of the
Baltic way** – a unique, peaceful mass demonstration, when
approximately two million people **joined hands** to create six hundred
kilometers long human chain through the three Baltic States, uniting
Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in **regaining** their freedom.

This impressive act of **non-violent protest and solidarity** was a living
example of the **culture of peace, democracy** and revival of **freedom
of speech**. As such it has been inscribed in **the International Memory
of the World Register**.

The values, which we stood for, 30 years ago, are still important today
when Latvia stands **proudly in the UNESCO family of nations**.

Latvia is a champion in defending multilateralism, continued engagement and co-operation in all international fora, including at the UNESCO. We strongly believe that in an **interdependent and globalized world**, we can address and resolve global challenges only through multilateral means, including dialogue and international cooperation.

Today we embrace the diverse opportunities of the 21st century, the **transformative power of digitalization** and **new possibilities and freedoms** it brings in education, science, culture, and media.

Latvia is a strong **defender of freedom of expression** – both; online and offline. We place high priority on **media freedom, quality journalism, safety of journalists, women empowerment** in the media, as well as **media literacy**. Through our membership in international organizations and with our financial commitment to the **UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)**, Latvia will continue its active work on these important topics.

We note, with satisfaction, that **youth is taking lead** and contributing energy, passion and creativity in all matters of concern to them. Today young people grow in a world **full with digital media**. Digitalization has changed the way we perceive education. Latvia's newly adopted school curriculum enhances **the use of digital tools in the classroom** to offer new, innovative and more interactive ways of learning.

In our schools we also empower both - girls and boys, to **take up the professions of their dreams**. We encourage young women to **undertake STEM education at universities** to have equal opportunities **in the digital universe**.

Latvia supports the **UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Education Resources**.

We welcome the UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science which will facilitate the process of adopting the Open Science policy on the national level.

While recognizing technological progress and embracing new digital opportunities, we would like the technologies to be developed with a great sense of responsibility and accountability. We should also **remain vigilant to the challenges they may bring** to human rights, safety, privacy, and human dignity.

We praise the UNESCO's commitment to develop a new global standard-setting instrument for **human-centred, ethical Artificial Intelligence**. We also see the UNESCO's essential role in **safeguarding the ethics** of biological research and technologies as well as in promoting gender equality in the international bioethics debate.

Latvia is committed to financially support the UNESCO in the development of **new capacity building tools on gender issues in bioethics** and ethics of science and technology.

Latvia **highly appreciates** the work of the UNESCO on the **Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications** and the inclusive cooperation process with the Member States.

Let me conclude, by expressing our appreciation to Director General for her tireless efforts to advance her strategic vision and transform this Organization to be fit for purpose.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, 30 years after the Baltic way, Latvia joins hands with **all the nations to guard the values of freedom, peace, and democracy.**

These values should be our compass in implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda which is a **map that charts our way to more inclusive and more sustainable future.**

Thank you for your kind attention.