

Hungary's Statement by

Dr. Bence RÉTVÁRI, Head of Delegation, Deputy Minister

Mr President,
Mr President of the Executive Board
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen, and
Distinguished Guests,

Let me to start by congratulating H. E. Mr. **Altay Cengizer** for his election as President of the 40th Session of UNESCO's General Conference. On behalf of the Hungarian Government, I wish you, Mr President, a successful Presidency.

Hungary supports the **EU statement** to be delivered by the EU delegation.

Hungary presents its **candidacy to the Executive Board of UNESCO for the next term**, after a pause of ten years. We look forward to returning to the Board and work together – if elected – with all Member States during our term.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to take this opportunity to call your attention to two very serious and alarming situations and to take a stand *against* the continuous violations of the rights of the Hungarian minority living in Subcarpathia in Ukraine on the one hand, and *for* the helping of persecuted Christians worldwide on the other hand.

A Hungarian community of a hundred and fifty thousand people lives in the Western part of Ukraine, neighbouring Hungary.

They live in very difficult situation, facing repeated violations, limitations on their rights, and atrocities.

Let me cite but a few of these.

1. The so called Law on Education was adopted two years ago in Ukraine that seriously violates the fundamental rights of national minorities. The right of the Hungarian minority to participate in education in their mother tongue was repealed.

2. The Law on Ukrainian language was adopted this year which makes the use of Ukrainian language obligatory in practically all spheres of life except private conversations and church services. They punish the use of the Hungarian language.

3. In Ungvár (Uzhhorod), a city near the Hungarian border, the headquarters of the Hungarian Cultural Association was set on fire last year.

4. It is unacceptable that 15 kilometers from the border of an EU and NATO Member State, the court trial of the criminals is still delayed. Hungarians living there cannot feel secure if such a criminal act may go without calling to account.

5. Hungarian sites of memory, statues and name plates have been damaged by Ukrainian nationalists.

6. On several occasions, Ukrainian nationalists have been marching in Subcarpathia, the Western part of Ukraine, which fears the Hungarian minority.

7. It is unacceptable that participants in the "Petőfi Sándor Program", a cultural initiative for Hungarian communities, have become targets of security service examinations.

8. On the website of a Ukrainian nationalist organisation, the names and addresses of Hungarian citizens living in Ukraine have been made public and they have been accused of violation of the law.

In view of the protection of the rights of the Hungarian minority, we ask UNESCO and its Member States to take action in order to regain the educational and cultural rights of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world's most persecuted religion is Christianity. Therefore the Hungarian Government takes measures for the protection of persecuted Christians in the world.

We launched the Hungary Helps Program in the framework of which we rebuild settlements and build schools, we provide medicines to health care institutions and we support other humanitarian projects as well. Such assistance is provided primarily through the local Christian leaders.

Our basic principle is that **instead of organising migration, we have to stop it.** Hungary takes the aid to countries in crisis instead of bringing the problem to Europe. Persecuted Christians must receive aid in their own homeland.

Hungary hosted the third **Budapest Water Summit** as well in October under the motto 'Preventing Water Crises'. The Summit provided a platform for political decision-makers, representatives of the business and finance sectors as well as the academic community to discuss ways of getting closer to a water-secure world. The key outcome of the meeting was a document entitled "Budapest Appeal," that identifies priority areas on water security and outlines recommendations, as well as solutions for the international community to consider at relevant international fora, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 2021 World Water Forum, and the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Thank you for your attention.