

**Speech of the Republic of Korea**

**General Policy Debate of the 40th session of the General Conference**

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Madam Director-General,

Excellencies, distinguished guests,

At the outset I wish to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Altay Cengizer on his assumption of the Presidency of the General Conference. I am confident that the 40th session of the General Conference will be a resounding success under his leadership.

In 1945, in the aftermath of World War II, UNESCO was born out of the hope to build world peace through international cooperation in the fields of education, the sciences and culture.

And the Republic of Korea's journey with UNESCO started just 11 days before the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Today the Republic of Korea has become a success story of how international cooperation could transform a war-devastated country into a major contributor to the very Organization which helped to rebuild itself.

Mr. President,

Nowhere is it truer than on the Korean Peninsula that the defences of peace should be built in the minds of men and women.

The Republic of Korea will continue its endeavor to achieve permanent peace in the Peninsula, based on three principles: zero tolerance for war; a mutual security guarantee between the two Koreas; and co-prosperity through a peace economy.

President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea proposed, at the UN General Assembly in September, the idea of transforming the Demilitarized Zone into an international peace zone. The DMZ, dividing the two Koreas, paradoxically has become an ecological treasure trove and a symbolic space embodying both tragedy of division and pursuit of peace.

We hope to work together with the DPRK and UNESCO, amid blessings of the international community, to inscribe the DMZ as a UNESCO World Heritage site, once peace is established between the two Koreas. I would like to express my appreciation to Madam Director-General for her invaluable support for this peace project.

We would like to continue to explore many more avenues of cooperation, taking firm and steady steps toward building peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. President,

Concerning documentary heritage, the ROK strongly supports the original values and purposes of the Memory of the World.

We will continue our active participation in working group discussions to ensure that the ongoing comprehensive review will strengthen the freedom of expression and access to information by all.

In light of the collective decision-making process long-cherished by this Organization, we hope to find the best mechanism which does not permit a veto power for anyone.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Korea believes that UNESCO needs to strengthen its leadership in education, particularly with regard to SDG4-Education 2030.

We believe that UNESCO has the best expertise to promote global educational agenda and to pursue the global normative work. We urge UNESCO to redouble efforts to set the strategic priorities, preparing for the future education discourse, while strengthening coordination with other international organizations.

On natural sciences, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 will be another watershed moment for ocean protection and management. The Republic of Korea is fully committed to this initiative. In addition, we proposed an establishment of a new Category II Centre, Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas, for better management of those sites to achieve SDGs.

On communication, I am pleased to announce that the ROK will co-host with UNESCO the 2020 Global Media and Information Literacy Conference and Youth Forum in Seoul in October next year.

The ROK has organized international conferences on heritage interpretation every year since 2016, seeking for harmonious coexistence of different historical perspectives and interpretations of world heritage.

We are also supporting an expert meeting and related thematic study to better understand sites associated with memory of recent conflicts. In this line we proposed to establish a new category II center in Korea, the International Center for the Interpretation and Presentation of the World Heritage Sites.

Finally, Mr. President,

I would like to reiterate Korea's support for UNESCO's continued reform. We hope that the outcome of the ongoing strategic transformation will further strengthen UNESCO's abilities to implement the relevant 2030 agenda and SDGs.

During the past 70 years of cooperation with UNESCO, Korea has not only benefited from UNESCO's assistance and expertise in education, sciences and culture, but also from sharing universal values upheld by the Organization. The Republic of Korea will continue to work with UNESCO onward and toward promoting peace based on moral and intellectual solidarity of humankind.

I thank you Mr. President. /End/