

PRESENTATION OF THE HEAD OF MONTENEGRIN DELEGATION, ALEKSANDAR BOGDANOVIĆ, AT THE 40. SESSION OF UNESCO'S GENERAL CONFERENCE (18 November 2019, PARIS)

Esteemed President of the General Conference,
President of the Executive Board,
Esteemed Director-General,
Your Excellencies,
Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Speaking at the 40th session of UNESCO's General Conference, as the head of the delegation of Montenegro, is a remarkable pleasure. The General Conference provides a unique opportunity for the presentation and understanding of individual policies of member states and allows us to create a global picture of the needs, aspirations and opportunities defined by our countries in those areas that are under the jurisdiction of UNESCO.

I congratulate the newly elected chair and, in particular, I would like to praise the work of the Director General Azulay for her committed work in reforming our organization. Also the Secretariat of the Unesco deserves praises and gratitude both from our national, but I believe also from a wider perspective.

Excellencies,

I believe that the Plenary Session presentations, and all other events which will take place during the 40th Session of the General Conference, shall be duly taken into account and that the Unesco will once again successfully offer a relevant, multi-lateral framework to address all important issues, in accordance with the key founding principles of UNESCO, which have been cultivated with dedication for more than 70 years.

Montenegro, as in all international organizations, fully aligns itself with the EU declaration.

For us, as the frontrunners in the negotiation process, but as well as for the other EU candidates and potential candidates strengthening ties between Unesco and the EU, and reinforcing cooperation with the European Commission when elected would also be a huge asset.

We congratulate all the members for achieving consensus on the budget. We see this sign as an essential step in securing the outcome we desire from Unesco. In the world which is facing an unprecedented crisis of leadership, Unesco needs to remain our common bright face in the mirror. We have to show unity on conventional rights and obligations, and mutual respect.

Montenegro firmly believes that today's challenges can be solved by reinforcing and promoting multilateralism as a concept of shared values. We would like to encourage additional coordination with different multilateral fora with the aim of achieving goals in the fields of rule of law and promotion and protection of common values.

Montenegro was particularly active in the field of protection of journalists and promotion of media freedoms, as well as in actions dedicated to counterfeiting illegal trade of cultural goods. These projects implemented in cooperation between Unesco and the above-mentioned organizations contributed to our aspiration to become the next EU member state. And we had a pleasure to, on the other hand, to give our support in achieving strong coordination, partnership and confidence on very important topics.

We see a strong potential in using Unesco's tools to foster progress in the Western Balkans, since the Region is still suffering populist and nationalistic approach in different matters. Unfortunately, populism and demagogy are undermining efforts to secure sustainable and peaceful environment. As a Nato member Montenegro remains a dedicated promoter of regional cooperation based on mutual respect.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentleman,

this is the year when we are remembering, with great sadness, the devastating earthquake that affected the coast of Montenegro exactly 40 years ago. The earthquake caused the death of 101 person, and immeasurable damage to cultural heritage. Many families had to relocate to temporary housing. However, this unfortunate event does not invoke only negative feelings, since we also cherish the moving moments of solidarity, assistance, and empathy. Montenegro will never forget unselfish assistance and the support provided in those hard times. The support of UNESCO was extremely important, since that unfortunate event draw world's attention to the outstanding unvierval value of Natural and Culturo-Historic Region of Kotor, which this year celebrates its 40th anniversary on UNESCO list.

Through the earthquake in 1979, nature had reminded us of its unforgiveness and the futility of our attempts to combat it. It gave us a dramatic reminder that we can only act preventively or try and mitigate the effects of its occasional strikes. However, the climate change we are facing today, taking current floods in Venice as one of the extreme examples, reminds us and warns us that we still have not found the best way to act. We require more dedication and more powerful actions, not only with regard to the preservation of world heritage sites, but also with regard to environmental protection in general. I would like to use this opportunity to point out how important the Paris Agreement is and to state that Montenegro is one of the countries that ratified the agreement.

Just like the devastating earthquake of 40 years ago reminds us of the issue of natural disasters in general, I believe that the solidarity felt at that time in Montenegro ought to be experienced today by other countries, whose peoples face migration, exile, poverty, and extremely harsh living conditions. I wish to remind you that both international and national and material and intangible heritage is in danger and I would like to appeal to UNESCO, as a part of the UN system, to continue its efforts to mitigate the consequences of such events, since we are unable to prevent them.

In this respect let me commend all the activities planned and implemented by Unesco, which are in line with the 2030 Agenda. We are particularly grateful and happy to witness an important increase on this lines.

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Last year was marked by an intensive and fruitful cooperation with Unesco. Montenegro will remain a credible and dedicated partner for cooperation within the Organization and will continue to prefer dialogue which is respecting

Please allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Venice and their Antenna in Sarajevo, which continuously provide a unique platform for programming, regional and friendly cooperation between countries of Southeast Europe.

Modern times impose new challenges, which are ever more complex and diverse. However, with the development of science and the improvement of the system of education and culture, we have access to innovative solutions and creative ideas that bring all of these areas together, making UNESCO a unique, diversified system in which all links contribute to the basic guiding principle, which is “Building peace in the minds of men and women”.

Please do count on Montenegro voice, efforts and tireless dedication to our common values and standards.

Thank you for your attention.