

UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE (40TH SESSION) 2019

UK AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS, MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER

Mr President, Madame Director General, Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

UNESCO's mission matters: to build peace in the minds of men and women; to champion the promotion of universal values; to lead the "fight against ignorance"; to work to tackle prejudice and extremism: to promote education for all; to protect and defend our cultural heritage, including against the ravages of climate change; to equip humanity to handle the dilemmas posed by rapid technological advances; to lead the fight for freedom of expression; and to foster dialogue and understanding. I am only one voice amongst many to say this here at this General Conference. And as others have acknowledged, saying it is one thing, making sure we deliver on these noble but challenging objectives is what counts.

The United Kingdom is proud to have been a founding member of this organisation and is pleased to continue to play its part in – and take responsibility for – UNESCO's important work. Allow me to reflect on some of what UNESCO means for the UK today:

On **Education** the UK is a determined champion of UNESCO's contribution towards SDG4. We are providing voluntary funding over multiple years for the widely respected **Global Education Monitoring Report** as well as for **UNESCO's Institute of Statistics**. We have been privileged to work alongside the Director General and other partners in reaffirming support for **12 years of quality education** for all children with a focus on the hardest to reach girls. Our *#LeaveNoGirlBehind* and *#SafetoLearn* campaigns continue. UKAid is supporting the *Gender at the Centre Initiative* which will pilot in several African countries the strengthening of national capacity on gender responsive education planning. At the G7 Development and Education Ministers' meeting in July, we announced a **Teaching and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Charter** in order to empower young people with the knowledge and skills they need for the labour market, with a particular focus on the Sahel.

In the field of **Science**, the UK is pleased to contribute both to the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** and the **International Hydrological**

Programme (IHP). Awareness is growing daily of the fundamental importance of the planet's oceans and our fragile ecosystems. UNESCO's contribution to international work on these issues is highly valued. We believe that through UNESCO and the IOC, Member States can achieve collectively what they cannot achieve on their own. But individual efforts remain vital. The UK's Maritime 2050 strategy (2019) foresees work to map the ocean floor, aligning clearly with the **Ambition of the Decade** and **Seabed2030** and providing an essential contribution to tsunami propagation modelling in support of the IOC's mandate. Furthermore the UK's 25 year **Environment Plan** will extend the marine protected areas in UK waters supporting the IOCs Marine Management programme. Our commitment to provide 0.7% of GDP to support Official Development Assistance (ODA) aligns with the IOC's **Capacity Development initiatives** and UK funding of our Climate Linked Atlantic Sector Science (CLASS) supports the IOC's GOOS initiative. Through the **IHP** we are working to develop advanced water management in parts of the developing world, thereby contributing to the 2030 agenda and UK research programmes continue to make an active contribution to IHP efforts.

UNESCO has been instrumental in ensuring that for the first time in history, the vital role of **culture** in achieving sustainable development was formally recognised in the international development agenda. The UK welcomes the increased emphasis on the cross-cutting role of Culture in sustainable development and achieving the SDGs by integrating cultural policy work with Convention work and on results-based reporting. As the only United Nations agency with a mandate for culture, UNESCO is centrally placed to lead on the implementation of culture in the 2030 Agenda, and the UK will continue to support its lead in relevant goals including SDG 11. We look forward to the inaugural meeting of the Culture Ministers' Forum.

The UK recently ratified the **1954 Hague Convention**. This has helped to raise the profile of cultural property protection and the work that UK agencies and organisations are doing at home and with partners around the world. UK Defence has been putting in place the structures required to ensure that the Armed Forces deliver against the obligations of the Convention, including a Defence CPP Policy, doctrine, education and training. A military **Cultural Property Protection** Unit was established in 2018.

The UK is delighted by the Inscription of Jodrell Bank Observatory on to the **World Heritage** List in Baku in July this year. We appreciate the recognition that this site, pivotal in the emergence of radio astronomy, fills what was previously a gap on the list - and embodies the full range of UNESCO values, through Education, Science and Culture.

A word Mr President on two other important aspects of UNESCO's work:

The UK will continue to contribute to UNESCO's **Anti-Doping** efforts to preserve fair and equitable sport and to protect young people involved in sport in relation to the International Convention against Doping in Sport 2005.

UK Anti-Doping is working to increase the participation rate of devolved governments, crown dependencies and overseas territories in anti-doping convention global consultations and efforts led by UNESCO, particularly in advance of the 2021 update to the World Anti Doping Code. We are increasing the involvement of women and young people (both athletes and the wider community) in anti-doping training using values-based education, contributing to global research on artificial intelligence and gene doping, and supporting the improvement of compliance monitoring of the convention.

And on Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom, the UK is proud to support the work of the IPDC and IFAP. We were pleased to co host, with our Canadian partners and with UNESCO, the London Conference on Media Freedom in July this year, and delighted to launch in partnership with UNESCO and more than 30 other countries the Global Coalition and the Global Media Defence Fund. We look forward to continued cooperation in this vital area over the months and years ahead.

Finally Mr President, it would be remiss of me not to mention the National Commissions. They do an invaluable job. They do it well. They deserve our respect and our gratitude. I am delighted that the UK National Commission continues to play such a constructive part in UNESCO's work. The Commission serves as the hub for the UK's UNESCO designations, works with world-class volunteer experts, and provides policy advice, contributing nationally, internationally and here at UNESCO.

I will conclude, Mr President, with a reference – as your immediate predecessor made in her excellent remarks last week - to the formal adoption of UNESCO’s Constitution 74 years ago on 16 November 1945. Those now famous words attributed to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee: “That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” should remain our guide and our beacon. And if we are to achieve this goal and fulfil our individual and collective responsibilities then we need to embrace the particular strengths of UNESCO – its diversity, plurality and universality. In this organisation our **multilateralism** needs not only to be championed, but to be demonstrated actively by each and every one of us.

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