

**Policy Statement by
Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Yoshimasa Hayashi
at the 39th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO**

Madame President,
Madame Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

Madame President, first, I would like to express my congratulations to you on your election as President of the General Conference.

Expectations for UNESCO in diverse and complex world

Madame President,

While the world is becoming ever more diverse and complex, and there has been a greater need to respond to global issues, the role of UNESCO, to build peaceful and sustainable societies, is becoming greater than ever. Under this circumstance, this 39th General Conference session will be an important opportunity to appoint a new Director-General and decide the future direction that UNESCO should take. Japan is firmly committed to work closely with UNESCO under the leadership of the new Director-General.

Promotion of SDGs in Japan

Madame President,

The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, are our common commitment to the world to be achieved by 2030. It can only be realized through close collaboration between developed and developing countries. Under Prime Minister Abe's leadership, all the ministers are working together to achieve the SDGs through both domestic measures and international cooperation.

Promotion of SDGs through education and science

Madame President,

To achieve the SDGs, we must move toward the common goal of building sustainable societies, for which there are no simple solutions, by breaking down the silos between sectors.

Japan has been active in promoting Education for Sustainable Development, ESD, which aims at fostering leaders for sustainable societies through cross-sectoral efforts, and thus, contributes to the achievement of all 17 goals. Japan will continue to support the implementation of the Global Action Programme, GAP, and the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD. It is vital to formulate a post-GAP strategy for ESD to facilitate the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. Japan certainly has high expectations for UNESCO's efforts in this regard.

In science, creating synergy through collaboration among projects is crucial for solving global problems. Japan hopes that UNESCO will address multiple SDGs by incorporating the cross-sectoral approaches of Sustainability Science. This includes collaboration between Ocean Science and Water Science, in which UNESCO has salient expertise, to counter climate change and natural disasters, and between the Man and Biosphere Programme and the UNESCO global Geoparks to encourage harmony between people and nature.

Japan will further advance its efforts in these areas, and will continue to offer our expertise gained through our contributions to gender equality and Africa, areas UNESCO puts high priority on.

Culture and communication

Madame President,

Today, it has never been so important for us to reaffirm that UNESCO's mission, namely, to contribute to peace and security by promoting cooperation among the peoples of the world. Deepening cross-cultural understanding, is crucial to fulfill the mission, and also, constitutes a basic principle for the SDGs.

Through the Conventions on the World Heritage and Intangible Heritage, UNESCO has contributed to protecting and passing down those heritages under international frameworks, and thus has contributed to the valuing of cultural diversity.

By protecting and providing access to documentary heritages, the Memory of the World Programme is also important for sharing knowledge to enhance mutual understanding. In this regard, Japan welcomes the consensus decision of the recent Executive Board, which requests the Director-General to engage in a comprehensive review of the Programme in cooperation with Member states. Japan will continue to play its part in the comprehensive review as a responsible Member of the Organization.

We would like to collaborate with the new Director-General so that UNESCO can move in the primal direction, guided by its founding principle, that is, "it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed". Japan will continue to proactively contribute to UNESCO's efforts to promote friendship and mutual understanding among Member States.

Japan's private-sector UNESCO activities

Madame President,

In 1947, soon after UNESCO's formation, the world's first UNESCO Club was launched in Japan, even before Japan became a member of UNESCO. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the grassroots activities of UNESCO Clubs in Japan. Devastated by the war and greatly desiring peace, the Japanese people saw UNESCO as the embodiment of hope, and supported UNESCO for its contribution to world peace. The Japanese government and citizens will continue to support UNESCO as a model of hope for the world. I renewed our determination when I visited the recently renovated Japanese Garden, namely the Garden of Peace.

Conclusion

Madame President,

Finally, I would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to Madame Director-General Bokova for her efforts over the past eight years.

I also sincerely hope that, under the new Director-General, reforms of UNESCO will further accelerate. I can assure you that Japan is fully committed to promoting friendship and mutual understanding among the UNESCO Member States through education, science, and culture.

Thank you for your attention.