

Statement of Mrs. Liana Ruokytė-Jonsson, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania,
at the 39th session of the General Conference of UNESCO
Paris, November 2, 2017

Mister President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO has always been an indispensable part of the United Nations system, a fundamental element in the international architecture of organizations that provide us with a platform to address the global challenges that we face today. It is absolutely vital to reaffirm our commitment to the shared principles of global collaboration and dialogue and work together to solve the problems that we meet along the way.

At the same time, and especially at the time of rising regional tensions, it is important to remember that global issues cannot be reduced to national agendas. Global problems need global solutions and in this regard UNESCO has played and continues to play a significant role in this endeavour. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Director General Mrs Irina Bokova for her efforts and determination while leading UNESCO.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNESCO has been a relentless and consistent force in paving the way for a free flow of ideas. Only two years ago we declared the International Access to Information Day, and, since, its cause has rallied many determined partners, including Lithuania. A coherent narrative on the importance of access of information as a powerful enabler to achieve the sustainable development goals has been emerging: unhindered access to information and communication empowers people, be it by providing them with more choice and opportunities, or by keeping their governments accountable.

Media actors, in particular journalists, are natural partners of our Organisation in empowering individuals, by way of promoting their rights, most notably the freedom of expression. We need to make sure that journalists are free and safe to carry out their mission which is vital in this globally connected world.

Lithuania condemns prevailing violations of international commitments throughout the world. Since 2014, we have been witnessing a deteriorating human rights situation in Crimea, Ukraine, including in the fields of competence of our Organisation. Therefore, Lithuania recognises the importance of UNESCO's active and direct involvement in solving the relevant challenges.

For its part, Lithuania continues to work on the implementation of the 1972 and the 2003 Conventions which lie at the heart of the Organisation and cover both the fields of culture and tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We remain committed to the importance of safeguarding and transmitting cultural heritage to the generations to come.

UNESCO continues to face great challenges because of its unsustainable financial situation. Lithuania strongly supports the efforts to improve UNESCO, both here in Paris and across the field offices. There is still a need for more transparent, efficient and accountable programme delivery. Strong and skilled leadership of the Organisation is indispensable. In this regard, Lithuania places its trust in the nominated Director General, Ms. Audrey Azoulay, and remains determined to work together to contribute to our shared future.

Thank you for your attention!