



*Statement by Ferit HOXHA
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Albania to Unesco
at the Plenary Debate of the 210th Session of the Executive Board*

3 December 2020

Mr. President,
Dear Colleagues

This long and extraordinary year is drawing to a close leaving behind a feeling of deep bitterness caused by so many difficulties and challenges.

We have seen our daily lives change and thrown more and more into a virtual world; we have witnessed the severe economic downturn everywhere with dire and longlasting consequences; we have grieved the premature loss of friends and colleagues, and we have deplored the heavy toll that this severe crisis has put on the most modest and the most vulnerable.

On the good side, the organization has stood firm and has shown its resilience and we pay tribute to its role and efforts in all its fields competence ; more than anything, we have been amazed by an unprecedented world-wide effort in a never-seen-before-drive to finding a vaccine to stop covid-19. Everything seems to indicate that such efforts are paying off.

This is yet another lesson confirming that when there is a genuine will, there is a real way ; this also shows, if ever we needed another proof, how important and timely the initiative on Open Science is.

Education and science have historically been at the core of global efforts for development and progres, and their imprtance is only confirmed nowadays. In this respect, we underline our support for the consolidation of the IBE in Geneva and call for a swift implementation of the new mandate recently approved.

Monsieur le Président,

Comme si la pandémie et ses conséquences sévères ne suffisaient pas, certains de nos pays Membres ont dû, malheureusement, traverser et faire face à d'autres difficultés.

Je souhaite réitérer ici toute notre profonde émotion, notre solidarité et notre soutien à la France suite au terrible assassinat de Samuel Paty, professeur à un collège pas si loin d'ici, assassiné sauvagement en raison de l'exercice de sa profession, la noble profession de l'éducation.

Nous nous révoltons contre les attaques aux universités et l'assassinat d'étudiants en Afghanistan ; Nous exprimons notre colère et notre révolte contre les actes terroristes commis à Vienne comme nous nous insurgeons contre de tels actes commis partout ailleurs.

Rien, absolument rien, ne saurait excuser de tels comportements inacceptables. Notre organisation, forte de ses 75 années d'efforts en faveur de la paix afin que les défenses de celle-ci soient élevées dans l'esprit des hommes, doit crier haut et fort son indignation. Il nous faut un positionnement clair, fort et raisonnant en faveur de la dignité humaine, de l'éducation de tous, pour bâtir des sociétés plus justes, libres et en paix.

S'il y avait un lieu qui est par définition l'antonyme de la violence, c'est précisément l'école, et il en va de notre devoir et de notre responsabilité de la protéger et la promouvoir.

L'Albanie s'aligne à la déclaration prononcée hier par l'Allemagne au nom des Membres de l'Union européenne à ce sujet.

Mr. President,

In a few days, the World Press Freedom Conference will take place in the Netherland. We hope the event will live up to the great expectations in providing a strong message in support of free, independent and professional press, as an irreplaceable vital tool for healthy societies.

Especially during this year amidst fear and uncertainty due to the sanitary situation, every day bears witness of the fact that free and reliable information have an irreplaceable role in helping us understand the world, be better citizens and build better lives.

If history has taught us anything it is that authoritarianism, oppression and dictatorship have always thrived in obscurity and darkness. The safety of journalists, their fight for independence and the truth must therefore be our common concern.

Mr. President,

Yesterday, the DG announced its candidature for a second term in office.

We have not waited for this particular moment to assess the performance of the current leadership during the last three years.

As we have done in several prior occasions, we highly appreciate the fact that today, Unesco is in a better shape, more visible, more active and ambitious to implement its mandate and deliver, as an organisation on its own, but also as an important entity within the UN System.

The process of strategic transformation is underway and we look forward to the impact for the Member States. Obviously, more needs to be done to properly respond to the identified needs and priorities, especially in the light of the severe impact from the Pandemic. But we are convinced to be on the right track ; this course should be maintained and further strengthened and we are fully confident in the ability of the DG to lead the organisation for another term.

Finally, Mr. President, we congratulate Greece for introducing an item regarding the impact of climate change on cultural heritage. It is high time we devote due attention to this important issue for all of us.

Thank you