

Brazilian Speech 210th Session of the Executive Board

Mme. Director-General,
Mr. President of the Executive Board,
Mr. President of the General Conference,
Dear colleagues,

I congratulate you all for the efforts undertaken to make this meeting possible. By agreeing to hold this virtual session, we have displayed flexibility and willingness to overcome difficulties and to fulfil our mission.

But the most challenging part begins now. The Medium-Term Strategy and the Programme and Budget discussions offer us an opportunity to redesign UNESCO's future, adopting an intersectoral and interdisciplinary approach and an integrated set of Strategic Objectives encompassing different UNESCO sectors and disciplines. The Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 is in the right direction. In this sense it is also central to outreach and diversify partners, so that UNESCO will be better structured to optimize resources and achieve more effective results.

We should look not only for greater synergy among UNESCO's areas, but also between headquarters and Field Offices, not losing sight of the specificities of our regional and national branches, which offer an invaluable contribution to the organization's action in the field.

As always, Education is central to any strategy we decide to adopt. Despite the new challenges, illiteracy remains by far our greatest problem and should be reflected in our strategy as UNESCO's main priority: there are still more than 750 million illiterate adults in the world. Besides that, 53% of children at primary school age have learning deficit in low and middle income countries and 7.6 million girls are at risk of not coming back to school after the COVID-19, not to mention the millions of children with no access to distance learning during school lockdowns. When it comes to education, we must act with a sense of urgency and with a forward-thinking mind. In this sense, we commend the commitments of the 2020 Global Education Meeting Declaration.

In a digital world, investing in education also means to reduce the digital gap between and within countries. The importance of amplifying communication, democratizing the access to digital technologies, and preparing citizens to fight the spread of fake news and hate speech, particularly racism, could hardly be exaggerated. I should like to emphasize that Artificial Intelligence can be a powerful tool in this task, provided ethical dimension is assured – we must, therefore, give UNESCO's recommendation on IA our full support. We also appreciate the efforts undertaken by the CI sector to guarantee the safety of journalists – a crucial pillar of democracy.

While referring to hate speeches, I should like to commend UNESCO's report on the much-needed strengthening of actions against racism - a most pressing issue of our time,

one which is at the very heart of UNESCO's mandate. The organization's voice should be heard more often on the theme.

Brazil has always been relentless in its fight against racism. We support the idea of treating racism as a transversal theme, involving different programmes and sectors of UNESCO, and favour the establishment of partnerships between UNESCO and research institutions to produce data and academic studies on public national policies against racism.

We have always been enthusiastic supporters of the Slave Route project, whose new strategy will put emphasis on the effects of slavery in contemporary societies and the promotion of intercultural dialogue, one of our core missions.

Culture, as we know, was the first victim of COVID-19. Brazil recognizes UNESCO's efforts to mitigate the impact of the sanitary crisis on the cultural sector, through initiatives such as Resiliart, and welcomes UNESCO's Action to Protect Culture in Emergencies. In a time when several events across the globe threaten our cultural heritage and diversity, UNESCO's increasing activism is not only most welcome, but necessary. We also appreciate the organization's preparedness and efficiency in responding to catastrophes, as demonstrated in the recent "Li Beirut" initiative.

We also seize the occasion to celebrate the 50 years of the 1970 Convention against illicit trafficking and the 40 years of the Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist.

Mr. President,

With the new COVID vaccines on the horizon we cannot emphasize enough the importance of UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science. It was an attitude of openness, a willingness to cooperate and exchange views that led to the scientific breakthroughs making the vaccines possible. To strengthen Member States' scientific systems and to bridge the scientific gaps between countries was never more urgent.

Even as we foresee the end of the pandemic, however, its consequences on the very fabric of our societies will probably last much longer than the disease. Countries will still be facing economic disruption and the increase in inequality and poverty throughout next year, as well as less palpable but equally dire effects such as psychological trauma, mistrust in institutions and lack of confidence in science, freedom, and democracy. It is our duty, both as states and as members of this organization, to be alert and face the challenges of a post-COVID world with the same resilience we have shown so far.

I thank you all.