

**210th session the Executive Board**

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National Statement

Item 2

**Magdalena Marcinkowska**

Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Poland to UNESCO

**Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board,**

**Mr President of the General Conference,**

**Madame Director General,**

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honored to present on behalf of Poland the national perspective regarding UNESCO challenges in the Plenary Debate of the Executive Board session. Before I continue, first of all allow me to thank Madam Director General and the Secretariat for the great work done in this exceptional time of pandemic. We welcome with satisfaction Madame's Azoulay commitment in continuing the UNESCO reform and transformation and her readiness to submit her candidature for the second term. Secondly, I would like to express Poland's support for the statement of the European Union.

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it's also an unprecedented economic, social and human rights crisis perceptible in every country around the world. Solidarity and cooperation are crucial values and are needed even more than ever. Despite very difficult and demanding situation, UNESCO has lived up to the expectations placed. The health crisis had a direct implication on the preparation of the Organisation's Draft Medium-term Strategy and the Draft Programme and Budget. What we see as the most important is to reaffirm in these proposals the need for solidarity with those most vulnerable

and most affected. We welcome with satisfaction the human rights-based approach in the C/4 and C/5. The preliminary proposals are aimed at UNESCO's actions on assisting Member States in achieving the full implementation of Agenda 2030 in the Organization's field of competence and in contributing to a sustainable and inclusive recovery. However, the pandemic situation is still unpredictable. Therefore UNESCO should plan its activity so as to be able to flexibly and timely react to changing circumstances.

We agree with the proposal that we should focusing more on UNESCO's leadership and comparative advantages within the UN system such as the laboratory of ideas and clearing house. Both in the context of the pandemic and beyond, and more broadly in the light of ongoing civilizational changes, UNESCO is a key note promoter and defender of human rights, human dignity and humanistic approach.

*Mr Chairman,*

The reports on items 4 and 5 present a good opportunity to look into both the strengths and challenges of the Organization. UNESCO's priorities and activities should be pointed out among the strengths. They include conventions and other standard setting instruments, and programmes such as the Memory of the World Programme which, as we do hope very much, is on the way to become fully operational again in 2021, with its international Register.

In many respects, the deep changes triggered by the pandemic only emphasise the crucial importance of such UNESCO's priorities as promoting the right to education – and, in this context, quality education. It is also important in terms of overcoming negative effects of knowledge fragmentation and its social impacts like anti-science movements and crises of trust in science. In view of all these contexts we expect with even greater hope the decision concerning the renewal of the establishment of the European Regional Centre for Ecohydrology in Lodz.

*Mr Chairman,*

Nowadays we are constantly reminded of the importance of freedom of expression, safety of journalists and pluralistic, democratic and trustful media for peace, democracy, dialogue and people's wellbeing. Poland deeply appreciates the UNESCO's activities, especially the DGs

Reports on the Safety of Journalists and UNESCO's role regarding the UN Action Plan on this matter. We strongly support UNESCO engagement in the World Press Freedom Conference organized in Hague next week.

In the context of freedom of expression Poland would like to express concerns about the systemic violations of this human right in Belarus which escalated this year. We urge the Director-General to continue monitoring the situation and to take appropriate action.

We wish also to express our concerns regarding the Situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. We would prefer to discuss it during this part of the session. We are looking forward to take action on this issue as it is of utmost importance to continue monitoring of the situation in the region.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In the context of COVID-19 crisis, the relevance of UNESCO's mandate after its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary is confirmed with a new strength, especially in such areas as: universal access to high-quality education, knowledge and culture; human rights and ethical reflection on social, and technological changes, including AI; promoting dialogue, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and protection of cultural heritage, including the one in Emergencies. As I emphasized at the beginning of my statement solidarity and common efforts is now more needed than ever.

Each of us represents a concrete country and region. However the world is looking at us for the solutions and effective remedies regarding the nowadays challenges. Executive Board has always been a forum for diverse views, but we were always able to unite when necessary.

I would like to end quoting Henry Ford famous saying: *Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is a progress; working together is a success.*

*Thank you.*