

## **Address by Minister Paradis to 37th Session of the UNESCO General Conference**

**November 9, 2013 - Paris, France**

### **English version**

I would like to begin by saying how proud I am to be representing Canada at UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization].

And especially at the head of a delegation that includes our National Commission, as well as the Council of Ministers of Education, represented by Marie Malavoy, Quebec's Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport.

For seven years, the Government of Quebec has been actively contributing to the Permanent Delegation of Canada. That is a testament to our diversity and unity.

Over the past two years, UNESCO has accomplished some wonderful successes. But the past two years have also brought some considerable challenges.

UNESCO was dealt a severe blow following the decision to admit the Palestinian delegation into the organization, which resulted in an unprecedented cash-flow crisis.

Canada rejects efforts to politicize UNESCO and believes that UNESCO is always stronger when there is consensus.

It would be preferable to focus on carrying out our mandate and to avoid divisive debates that impede our ability to achieve those objectives.

Out of necessity, the crisis prompted UNESCO to better define its priorities.

Canada is especially encouraged that an order has been established for budget priorities.

Though generally comfortable with the results of this exercise, Canada would like to stress the importance it places on the core values of human rights and freedom of expression.

More specifically, Canada remains vigilant about any attempt to erode international standards related to freedom of expression, including in cyberspace.

Canada believes that the multi-stakeholder Internet governance model has greatly contributed to the increase in freedom of expression, innovation and trade throughout the world.

This must be protected.

We congratulate UNESCO for its support of an open Internet model involving multiple stakeholders, and we welcome its work on implementing the action lines of the World Summit on the Information Society that were entrusted to it, including the ethical dimensions of the information society. Canada, however, is not convinced that there is a need to initiate an exercise to develop a new normative instrument.

We are disappointed that the program review did not result in the termination of certain activities.

This is especially so since this will have a negative impact on flagship programs, such as the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

For those reasons, we remain doubtful about the large number of new initiatives that are on the agenda of this General Conference.

We believe there is a real risk of stretching things too thin, particularly in the current budget context.

We are now at the beginning of a new stage that will require significant effort to tighten up activities even further around a more limited number of priorities and to implement results-based budgeting at UNESCO.

Accountability and a periodic assessment of progress are key elements of sound management, whether here at UNESCO, more broadly in the UN system, or in our own cooperation programs.

Winston Churchill once said: "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

The Millennium Development Goals are simple and straightforward. They have brought measurement and accountability to the fore.

Canada has made clear and concrete commitments that support achieving the Goals. But most important, it has carried out these commitments.

Canada met its commitment to double aid to Africa, reaching \$2.1 billion. And it doubled its overall commitment to aid, reaching \$5 billion.

We have also improved the effectiveness of every Canadian aid dollar. Since March of this year, all of our aid has been untied.

Canada's commitment to transparency and accountability was recently recognized by Publish What You Fund.

Canada believes the new post-2015 agenda must similarly set out a strong measurement and accountability framework.

Canada believes that the poorest and most vulnerable people should continue to be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda.

This includes the unfinished goal of improving women's and children's health. Improving the health of mothers, newborns and children, as well as reducing the number of preventable deaths, are top priorities for Canada.

Canada is leading a global effort—the Muskoka Initiative—to reduce maternal and infant mortality, and improve the health of mothers and children in the world's poorest countries.

We must invest in opportunities for women and young girls to ensure they are fully involved in life in all spheres of our societies and in all UN countries.

I would like to conclude by addressing you, Madam Director-General. Canada welcomes all of the efforts your team has made, assures you of its full support, and congratulates you on your nomination to a second term.

Thank you.