

National Statement by Sweden at the 202nd session of the UNESCO Executive Board, October 2017

Sweden aligns itself to the EU statement.

Sweden's four year mandate in UNESCO's Executive Board is coming to an end: four years during which we have made an effort to combine initiatives with concrete action and to work in an inclusive manner together with colleagues from all regions.

We have seen a remarkable change and reform over the last four years at policy level here in UNESCO. Key policies are in place, which will lead to increased transparency and a more developed culture of evaluation and learning and ultimately to more results on country level. Now we need a strong effort to implement and consolidate these policy decisions so that we see real change. In our eyes an ambitious reform of UNESCO's presence on country and regional level is the piece of the puzzle still missing.

Our joint reform efforts over these four years have resulted in important decisions such as the integrated budget, the structured financing dialogue and a strengthened results framework with an improved gender equality mainstreaming. To us the decision at this Executive Board session on the new Human Resources Strategy is a further important element for the broader reform package.

Sweden is a strong supporter of the United Nations system. The broad support for the UN Secretary-General's reform agenda illustrates the importance we attach to an effective United Nations, its role at the center of multilateralism, and as a platform for the delivery of our common commitments. This is also why Sweden engaged actively in the Working Group on Governance here in UNESCO and we welcome its results. We want to see a robust implementation model to ensure that the proposals from the Working Group on Governance are implemented, since that would signify a changed working culture in UNESCO.

UNESCO should connect to the overall ongoing reform efforts in the United Nations reform agenda, especially in the light of Agenda 2030, where UNESCO has an important normative role to play. Sweden fully subscribes to the principles for reform articulated by the UN Secretary-General: a country-level and people centered perspective, gender-parity, decentralized responsibility and decision making, and reformed budget procedures.

Therefore we are deeply worried about how Member States view their multilateral commitments today, including how they honor our joint system of funding through assessed contributions. In Agenda 2030 Member States commit to a well-resourced UN and we must not fail to do so. In addition to uphold the principle of assessed contributions this also means that the budget level in UNESCO must be safeguarded for increases in inflation and statutory costs. Since the integrated budget consists of two sorts of funding it is furthermore important to be able to distinguish between "regular budget" and "extrabudgetary resources".

The Swedish extra budgetary framework with UNESCO has evolved over the years. Today it is a multiannual agreement amounting to 54 million USD over four years focusing on UNESCO's unique added value as a normative actor with a rights based approach and in direct dialogue with Member States around the world.

Ensuring the safety of journalists is a priority for the Swedish Government. A safe environment for journalists, media workers and social media producers is a corner stone in democratic societies. Here UNESCO has a unique mandate within the UN, which includes the lead coordinating role of the

implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. A clear gender focus is essential since women media workers are facing double vulnerabilities and frequently are victims of intimidation, threats and violence. The 2030 Agenda and in particular SDG 16.10 provides an important platform for the continued work.

Despite a strong political commitment to enhance journalists' safety – as manifested by an increasing number of resolutions in different UN fora – we see a negative trend with violence, hate, threats and intimidation towards journalists. Therefore, it is not enough with the focus on the killings of journalists. UNESCO must work with all the elements as listed in SDG 16.10.1.

The Swedish Government recently presented a National Action Plan to protect journalists, media workers, artists and authors as well as elected officials. All these actors use freedom of expression as their most important work tool. The Plan presents a number of actions by the Government to tackle the negative development and to ensure a continued democratic debate. Our cooperation with UNESCO in this matter has benefitted our domestic work and we encourage other Member States to develop national initiatives for comprehensive action in this field.

The 2030 Agenda provides the pathways to achieve the peaceful, sustainable and equitable societies we want. All countries – rich and poor - share the responsibility of turning this promise into a reality for millions of people around the world. It will not be done by governments alone. All stakeholders from across society have a part to play. That is why we need a stronger dialogue with the NGO community in UNESCO's governing bodies.

Measuring our progress against the Sustainable Development Goals will be essential both for decision making and accountability. Sweden has therefore developed a set of national goals, linked to the SDGs and our national budget. On the global level Sweden will continue to work with the High Level Group in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in order to create a platform for Member States and UNESCO to share experiences and discuss challenges ahead.

In this area, UNESCO has a decisive role in supporting and coordinating the implementation of the SDG 4 on Education, and Sweden fully supports the efforts of UNESCO to reinforce the framework of global, regional and national educational stakeholders. The programme Capacity Development for Education has been specifically designed to promote development through education, and serve as an important example of UNESCO's role in empowering ministries and public agencies with the capacities to improve their national education systems.

Resolution 2347, adopted on 24 March 2017, was an important step for the international community in order to protect cultural goods from destruction looting and trafficking. As a member of the Security Council, Sweden was proud to be a part of this important decision. We welcome UNESCO's actions for the preservation of cultural heritage and to fight illicit trafficking of cultural goods. Nationally, to counteract illicit trafficking Sweden has established a national coordination task force.

In June 2017 Sweden was pleased to co-host, together with Fiji, "The Ocean Conference" on the implementation of SDG 14 on Healthy Oceans and Seas. The deteriorating condition of our oceans must ring alarm bells for us all. The multi-stakeholder participation, and commitments made during the conference, highlighted the fact that saving the oceans will require all sectors of society to play their part – and the conference also showed that they are ready to do so. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in UNESCO plays an important role in the implementation of SDG 14 and we appreciate its active participation in the conference.

The oceans are also affected by, and in return affect, our climate and UNESCO has an important role to play in all parts of its mandate as regards climate change.

The Nordic countries are strong, but critical friends of the UN system. It is important with the Nordic voice in UNESCO's Executive Board. Therefore, we hope for Members States' strong support to ensure that Finland is elected to the Executive Board after Sweden.

Finally, let me take the opportunity to thank the Director-General Irina Bokova and her team for all efforts during her mandate. Lastly, let me say thank you to our colleagues in the Executive Board and also to the President of the Executive Board Michael Worbs for these years. We wish the new Executive Board members good luck in the continuation of our important work!