

Thank you, Mr. Chair,
Madam Director-General, for whom I would like to echo what my
previous speaker has just said,
Excellencies and Dear Colleagues,

I would like to begin my remarks by asking a question. Have you paid attention to a “YOUNG GIRL IN BOOTS” at the entrance of Fontenoy? The statue, made by a Japanese sculptor, commemorated the First World Congress of UNESCO Clubs and Associations in 1984, held in Sendai.

Sendai is the birthplace of the first UNESCO association in the world in 1947. Over the 70 years, the number of clubs or associations has grown to over 5000 in more than 100 countries. This is a good reminder for us of the high expectations to the Organization from all over the world.

Since its accession in 1951, Japan has been active for UNESCO to fulfill its mandates. Allow me to illustrate a few recent examples.

On education, Japan remains committed to support ESD in various parts of the world. ESD is an essential enabler for the SDGs. Japan will continue to promote the sharing of expertise and experiences for peoples to join forces.

One such example is the UNESCO-Japan ESD Prize. I am looking forward to congratulating winners of this year of the Prize from Jordan, Zimbabwe and UK at the coming General Conference.

On behalf of my people and Government, I would like to express our deepest condolences to all countries and peoples who suffered from the recent earthquakes and hurricanes. As a disaster-prone country, Japan has been active in improving tsunami and flood early-warning systems, and in developing policy guidelines for Disaster Risk Reduction. We would also like to promote relevant activities through IHP and IOC. Cooperative activities in MAB and

Geoparks are also important to harmonize human life with natural environment, including disasters caused by nature.

The concept of SDGs through sports was highlighted in the Kazan Action Plan adopted by our Sports Ministers this July. One could find a similar concept in the programme entitled "Sports for Tomorrow". Japan started this programme in 2014 as the host of Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in 2020. The programme has produced fruitful results in 193 countries, including Kenya, Laos and Cambodia most recently.

Two weeks ago, we hosted an international conference in Tokyo with experts to discuss the future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues. The conference discussed how we can revitalize the lost cultural heritage and thereby revive the identity, beliefs and integrity of the local community. It was a good step forward in the search, and discussion, of the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage, in response to the destruction by conflicts or disasters.

The environment in which UNESCO operates has changed. But its founding principles remain relevant. During the current session of the Executive Board, let us Member States make right decisions for the right course of this Organization, including in the election of next Director General.

Japan, as a responsible Member of the Organization and of the Executive Board, is firmly committed to playing its part, so that the Organization could navigate safely and wisely through challenges including those in governance, finance, and politicization.

Solutions to political problems would require dialogue. For the Memory of the World Programme, Japan continues to believe that the programme, as in the case of all other UNESCO programmes, should play roles to promote dialogue, rather than incite divisions among the Members and peoples.

Before concluding, allow me to ask another question. Have you

looked at the refurbished Japanese garden in Fontenoy? We hope that the garden remains a place where dialogue occurs among ourselves, or with the nature, for peace. It is called “garden of peace”.

Thank you for your kind attention.

(End)