

**Statement of H.E. Henryka Mościcka-Dendys, Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
at the 38th General Conference of UNESCO (Paris , 5 November 2015)**

*Mr President of the General Conference,
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the outset I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, on your election. I am confident that under your able leadership we will achieve all ambitious goals and objectives which are on our agenda.

Mr President,

The 38th session of the General Conference is a special one as it coincides with the 70th anniversary of UNESCO. I should like to take this opportunity to reaffirm my country's faith in the organization and its Constitution. We all remember the citation from UNESCO's Constitution "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". This sentence remains still valid, even more now, as new threats to peace and security unfold. We need UNESCO to be strong, responsive and able to contribute to peace and security by promoting international cooperation through education, science, and culture and to further respect for rule of law and human rights. Poland – one of UNESCO's founding members - supports implementation of UNESCO's mandate and will continue to do so in the future.

Mr President,

The seventieth anniversary of UNESCO is a good time not only to take stock of what has been achieved, but more importantly, to identify new challenges, and lay down an action plan for the future.

New challenges come from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a major achievement of all UN Member States. Goals contained therein, especially Goal 4, underpin all UNESCO's strategies and activities. UNESCO has an important role and responsibility in translating these goals into concrete action plan. Therefore, we note with satisfaction the adoption of the Education 2030 Framework for Action. This document gives us a new vision of education with bold and innovative actions and we consider it an important element of implementation of Agenda 2030.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The continued destruction of cultural heritage, often of unique importance for humanity affects us all. Such acts constitute no less than "a war crime". They also constitute another challenge for international community. Poland fully supports numerous initiatives and actions undertaken by UNESCO and the global community to counter-act these barbaric acts as well as wide spread trafficking in cultural objects. We thank the Director-General for her personal involvement in addressing these problems.

As it was expressed by the President of Poland in his statement during the UN General Assembly session: "in the face of those beastly acts, international community should take more decisive steps in order to stem the practice of destroying and looting the world heritage".

In this context, Syria and Iraq are very much in the focus of international attention today. But we should not forget about the cultural heritage which is deliberately destroyed in other parts of the world or exposed to destruction during military operations, Ukraine being just an example. Poland supports initiatives aiming to create a global movement to protect heritage in areas where it is threatened by extremists. Poland supports also a proposed UNESCO's strategy on reinforcing the organization's action for the protection of culture in the event of armed conflict which will be discussed at this session. We call on all states to adopt this document and fully implement it.

Contributing to these international efforts, Poland established a special training program for experts to help other countries in enhancing their capacity to better protect endangered cultural heritage. As we debate, the city of Krakow simultaneously hosts an international conference devoted to the protection of cultural heritage against special threats and safety of historical buildings.

Pondering on the role UNESCO plays in the contemporary world we cannot forget that this organization is an inherent part of a wider UN strategy on sustainable development and, more importantly, peace-

building in the world. In this context the importance of creating a culture of peace through education should be emphasized. Therefore, we look forward to discussions and the outcome of a high-level side event on *Education to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of our priorities is to strengthen the World Memory Programme. Documentary heritage constitutes a major part of the memory of the peoples of the world and reflects the diversity of peoples, languages and cultures. We look forward to the adoption of the draft UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage, Including in Digital Form.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland attaches great importance to the activity of the World Heritage Committee, which still proves its particular significance for the preservation of the world heritage. Poland is ready and will be honoured to host its 41. session in Krakow. Our ancient capital, whose Old City was one of the first sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, seems to be ideal for the meeting of the Committee.

Distinguished Delegates,

In concluding, let me reassure you of Poland's unequivocal support for UNESCO and its mission. It is our deep belief that working together we will be able to respond to all challenges the organization is confronted with.

Thank you for your attention.