

National statement of LITHUANIA

Delivered by His Excellency Mr Gabrielius Landsbergis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

General Policy Debate

41st Session of the General Conference

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Mr. President,

Madam Director General,

Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues,

Let me begin by expressing appreciation of the efforts of the Director General aimed at strengthening UNESCO for the past four years. Lithuania continues to support and contribute to UNESCO's work, in line with the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029. We align ourselves with the EU statement to be delivered later in this session.

Unique UNESCO mandate in education, science and culture allows strengthening lasting peace, sustainable development and human rights by facilitating dialogue among nations. We should continue effective use of all instruments and resources at our disposal to reach Organization's goals.

Since 1991, as a member of UNESCO, Lithuania has actively engaged in the implementation of UNESCO mandate. In this light we presented our candidature to the UNESCO Executive Board for the term 2021-2025, with a view to further support inclusive and high-quality education for all, promote the development of science, digital technologies and innovations, as well as enhancing media and information literacy. Lithuania will continue to be a vocal advocate of the freedom of expression, access to information, media freedom, and safety of journalists. Combatting disinformation and misinformation will also remain high on my country's agenda. That is why Lithuania presented its candidature for the Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication and is ready to further support the activities of this Programme through earmarked and un-earmarked contributions.

Excellencies,

The ongoing pandemic revealed inequalities across the world, including gaps in education and social security. It also aggravated the gender, digital, and connectivity divides. All of these must be urgently addressed. We are ready to use effective multilateralism and UNESCO instruments to reduce inequalities, reinforce multiple sectors and global priorities during and after the pandemic.

Lithuania actively contributes to the implementation of UNESCO global priorities on gender equality and Africa. During the last 10 years Lithuania has contributed to international projects in economic, sustainability and cultural areas for developing Africa and has initiated its own. We donated humanitarian assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa. Through the events of Africa week we seek to build trust, respect and understanding between cultures.

Another significant field of our commitments through UNESCO mandate is protection of human rights, which cannot be ensured without gender equality. Lithuania actively promotes women empowerment, especially in education and science.

We welcome inclusion of the youth element in this year's General Conference and I am glad to see Lithuanian representative at the Youth Forum. I am convinced that young people will have many

ideas and suggestions for the world they want and need. So let us hear them, understand them and do our best to create better future for them.

Dear colleagues,

Lithuania continues to pay close attention to the topic of information and communication. We welcome UN and UNESCO “Verified” campaign for fighting infodemia, disinformation and misinformation in the context of the pandemic. However, these phenomena are not confined to the pandemic alone; the damage they can do to our societies has a deeply harmful potential. Lithuanian NGO’s Debunk EU and the Civic Resilience Initiative are working on educational activities for societal media literacy. Every year Lithuania actively participates in the events of Global Media and Information Literacy Week. In 2019, we established UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy for Inclusive Knowledge Societies at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, aimed at helping to build a literate, informed, and participatory society.

I invite all Member States to engage in the global campaign to uphold press freedom, universal access to information, and defend the right of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since UNESCO is at the frontline of the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, we should implement UNESCO cultural conventions as an engine for promoting sustainable development and inclusion of local communities. It is crucial to contribute to security and building of peaceful, inclusive societies by restoring cultural objects and build back cultural life in the areas of conflict. Therefore, we support and contribute to the Director General’s project “Revive the Spirit of Mosul”.

Lithuania also supports the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List. By submitting a nomination dossier “Modernist Kaunas: Architecture of Optimism, 1919-1939” with a focus on the heritage of the modern world, we acknowledge the thematically, geographically and chronologically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties of Outstanding Universal Value.

Excellencies,

Our future is highly dependent on technological development. It is crucial to continue cooperation on implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, so that it could contribute to the interest of all people, and help achieving sustainable development goals, protection of human rights and human dignity.

Universal access to science must be more inclusive and collaborative. That is why Lithuania was actively engaged in preparation of the Recommendation of Open Science as a global standard-setting instrument, which seeks to close the gaps in science, technology and innovation within and between nations.

Dear colleagues,

Only by multilateral cooperation, financial support of all Member States and common efforts regarding challenges we can reach our goals on national and international level. Lithuania is ready to engage with all Member States and commits to put in maximum efforts to ensure UNESCO’s constructive and effective work.

I thank you.