

**Intervention of Secretary of State for Education, Science, Research and Sport of the
Slovak Republic, Mr. Ľudovít Paulis, during the General Political Debate of the 41st
session of the General Conference of UNESCO**

Dear Mr President of the General Conference,

Dear Madame Director General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- First of all, I would like to **warmly congratulate Madame Director General for your/her re-election** for the second mandate [with such an impressive/historical majority]. It is a clear evidence of your successful and very skilful management of this organisation, your ability to bring about an appeasement in its working, and to **transform** the organisation so that it responds effectively to the current challenges. Slovakia has been strongly supporting you throughout your first mandate, and we are eager to do so in the 4 years to come.
- Allow me to **congratulate also you, Mr President**, for your successful election, Slovakia is ready to work closely with you and support your objectives.
- Today, we are celebrating 75 years of existence of UNESCO. 75 years of many far-reaching achievements. They all have something in common: adherence to **fundamental principles of multilateralism**, mutual respect and tolerance as well as development of human potential. Principles, which strengthen the responsibility of Member States, lead towards mutual trust and understanding, and thus bring predictability and stability in the activities of the organisation.
- Principles innate to UNESCO, which allowed it to provide **immediate and effective response to challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic**. Multilateralism, partnership and cooperation have confirmed their strength and vital necessity!
- Moreover, the areas under UNESCO's mandate clearly demonstrated their crucial importance in the post-COVID recovery.
- Let me touch briefly upon each of them.

Education

- Slovakia welcomes the initiative "**Futures of Education**. Indeed, the time has come to assess globally what approach to education is adequate in an era of growing interconnectedness and dynamism, in an era of common challenges and deepening disparities. We share the belief of the Director-General that "Our deeply humanist DNA cannot let us reduce education to a technical or technological issue, nor even to an economic one."
- Effective and accelerated implementation of **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** is nowadays one of the main tasks of all UN agencies, including UNESCO. Sufficient financing for development is a precondition for progress, and the mobilisation of public and private resources a key for its achievement. The **Renewed Global Education Cooperation Mechanism** has thus a crucial role to assemble all

relevant stakeholders and strengthen our commitment and accountability in the implementation of SDG4.

- **Inclusive and quality education**, especially of young people, plays a major role in this process. Through education on sustainability, we lead young people towards the adoption of core ethical values and solidarity and successively to an understanding that helping the most vulnerable and excluded people is the best expression of humanity.

Culture

- Placing culture at the heart of development policies is the only way to ensure an inclusive and equitable development. Promoting respect for cultural diversity is the only way to facilitate understanding and peace.
- Despite the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural sector, the international cooperation in the field of culture has continued thanks to UNESCO. Slovakia is very pleased with the successful inscription of transnational nominations of the **Danube Limes** as well as the **Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe** on the World Heritage List, which already includes 8 Slovak sites of an outstanding universal value.
- Intangible, living, heritage forms an integral part of the Slovak culture, identity and history. It represents a crucial tool in promoting cultural diversity and sustainable way of living. Slovakia actively develops its know-how in safeguarding and developing its living heritage. Slovak **candidature to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022** is an expression of its true devotion to share Slovak expertise with partners in UNESCO.

Science

- **Artificial intelligence** has a potential to radically transform our lives. Artificial intelligence can indeed represent a catalyst for a great progress of humanity. Nevertheless, it can also bring many challenges such as the increase of inequalities and tensions within societies. Thus, we need human-centred artificial intelligence that fosters sustainable development and inclusive human progress.
- The adoption of the **Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence** will be a major milestone in setting up the global regulation framework to ensure that these emerging technologies will benefit all humanity. Slovakia strongly supports the **lead role of UNESCO** in the implementation of the Recommendation.
- Equally, the **Recommendation on Open Science** will enable important advances to bring citizens closer to science and to facilitate the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge around the world.

Communication and Information

- **Media Freedom and fact-based journalism** are interdependent with democracy. They serve as its guarantee while democracy has to guarantee the access to information and

protect freedom of speech and expression. If this balance is jeopardized, authoritarianism and lies might prevail.

- The Slovak Republic, as a member of the **International Coalition for Freedom of the Media**, actively supports the protection of journalists, media freedom and unhindered access to information.
- This year, Slovakia has decided to strengthen its support to media protection activities of UNESCO by voluntarily contributing to the **Global Media Defence Fund**.
- To conclude, the Slovak Republic, as the founding member of UNESCO, has fully supported its mission since the very beginning. We welcome the focus and priorities set out in the new Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029, which gives us the certainty that UNESCO will play a cardinal role in the 21st century.
- Happy birthday UNESCO!