

STATEMENT

**by Emine Dzhamparova, Head of the Delegation of Ukraine,
First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine
at the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference
(10 November, 2021, Paris, France)**

**Mr. President,
Madam Director General,
Distinguished Delegates of the General Conference,**

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to attend the long awaited 41st session of the General Conference in presentia.

While entirely sharing UNESCO values, Ukraine fully supports the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025. We believe that they are a solid foundation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the UNESCO's fields of competence by 2030.

We believe in the leading role of UNESCO in alleviating global shocks and suffering caused by them in its areas of competence. And more to the point, Ukraine is ready to join programmes and activities of UNESCO dedicated to its **global** priorities, - Africa and Gender, - by sharing our experience in preserving cultural heritage, managing educational systems, introducing innovative digital technologies and in other areas concerned.

My country continually promotes gender equality at the national and international levels. We support UNESCO's gender-transformative actions in overcoming inequality and vulnerabilities in all spheres of its competence.

We consider relevant the UNESCO's strategies aimed to support a priority group - small island developing states. They are facing climate change emergencies, inequalities concerning income, systematic threats to their cultural and natural heritage and their existence, we cannot but acknowledge that the resources allocated to programs in this area are insufficient. We must take responsibility to ensure the existence of the indispensable treasures of SIDC's human, cultural, historical and natural wealth.

Another priority group - young people – requires and deserves our heightened attention and consistent support.

To spread UNESCO humanistic principles, values and philosophy among children and youth we have also recently launched a nationwide contest among the UNESCO associated schools “Healthy planet, healthy people – common responsibility, joint efforts: My vision of the future”.

In such a way, we wish to foster the generation responsible for the planet and its mankind.

Mr. President,

Referring to the noble mission of our Organization, which is “Building peace in the minds of men and women”, I cannot but mention the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea where human rights and values of UNESCO are being persistently ignored and violated.

To give an example, about 140 political prisoners of Kremlin are being held in Crimea or unlawfully transferred to the Russian territory. Most of them are Crimean Tatars. Eight citizen journalists are currently in detention in Crimea and one is under house arrest.

Russian occupation administration violates the right for education in native language. Education in Ukrainian language is available only to 0,2 percent of schoolchildren in Crimea. Only 3 percent of children study in Crimean Tatar language. The number of Crimea Tatar schools reduced from 15 to 7.

Of particular concern is the comprehensive militarization of education and propaganda of war among minors.

Over the past few years, several invaluable world heritage properties on the peninsula have been completely or partially destroyed.

The UNESCO report on the situation in the temporary occupied Crimea, issued in November 2020, noted the illegal transfer of cultural artefacts to the territory of the Russian Federation. Recent large-scale barbaric “restoration works” at the World Heritage site of the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and the Khan's Palace in Bakhchisarai, - the only remnant of Crimean-Tatar architecture in the world, - seriously threaten their universal value.

The Russian Federation destroys religious monuments of Crimean Tatars. More than 90 Crimean Tatar burial monuments were ruined during the construction of “Tavrida” highway.

Freedom of speech is practically destroyed: Russia forced the independent media out of the peninsular and persecutes human right defenders, journalists, and activists.

We appreciate the efforts made by UNESCO Secretariat and in particular, by Madam Director-General aimed to end this lamentable situation by monitoring the situation in the peninsula.

Having regard of the consecutive decision "Follow-up of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine)" adopted by the last session of the Executive Board, we are looking forward to comprehensive monitoring of UNESCO in the upcoming year.

Madame Director General,

We commend your efforts and your activities during the most challenging period of UNESCO’s existence. You managed to maintain UNESCO’s functioning and operative capacities during the crisis. We congratulate you on having been re-elected for the second term.

Dear Colleagues,

Finally, let me mention the crucial role of National Commissions for UNESCO in implementing noble goals of our Organization and promoting it’s values at national levels. National Commissions are an important and integral element of UNESCO’s construction. Let us support and actively engage them to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of our Organization.

As a National Commission of Ukraine for UNESCO over a year ago, we launched a comprehensive reform process to enhance our contribution to the mission of UNESCO. We are going to promote new dimensions: gender equality and digitalization.

This year, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of UNESCO our president launched a virtual flash mob. We initiated creation of a tree alley in the Kyiv botanical Garden. This was done with the UN Coordinator.

We continue to encourage diplomatic missions accredited in Ukraine to follow this example and to create their national symbolic tree alleys in this multicultural garden.

Now we call for other National Commissions to join this initiative in their countries. Preserving ecosystems and natural heritage should be in the spotlight of our Organization.

I wish to conclude my speech by saying that, if elected to the Executive Board, Ukraine will be determined to safeguard all the UNESCO values, all the priorities I have just mentioned, and actively promote its ambitious and progressive agenda.

Thank you for your attention.