

**Remarks by the Head of the Georgian Delegation
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Ms. Khatuna Totladze
to the 41st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO**

President of the General Conference,

Madame Director-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, I am pleased to address the 41st session of the General Conference and extend our sincere congratulations to Ms. Audrey Azoulay with the renewal of her mandate of the Director General. We cordially offer our best wishes in her continuing efforts to position UNESCO as a key actor in all fields of its competence mostly in light of the challenges we are all facing today.

On October 7, 1992, shortly after gaining independence, Georgia launched its multifaceted collaboration with UNESCO. It is nearly for 30 years already that Georgia shares ideals and values of the Organization and recognizes the importance of its endeavors. Today we reiterate our readiness to provide full support to its future work.

This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of UNESCO. It is an occasion when global community can look through the longest list of achievements and reflect on the challenges ahead, to achieve even greater efficiency through UNESCO's Strategic Transformation process.

Herewith, the successful outcome of the process is based on multilateral collaboration and effective dialogue with all its member states. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated in a most severe way that only by joint efforts we can effectively address global challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guides the work of the Government of Georgia and the UN system. In 2019, the Georgian Government adopted The SDG National Document, aiming at promoting the implementation of SDGs and introduction of evidence-based national policy according to the 2030 agenda.

The new Educational and Science Strategy of Georgia will become operational from 2022. Ten-year policy vision of the Country places particular emphasis on three main goals: Quality, Equity and Governance.

The role of science and research has become more prominent than ever. Acknowledging the importance of scientific cooperation that makes science more transparent and inclusive, Georgia fully supports draft recommendations on Open Science.

The COVID-19 crisis, that has already had a significant disruption of education process worldwide, made education system actors offer new creative approaches to maintain continuity of education. To meet the strong demand, education process has been transformed featuring the special role of information and communication technologies in education.

Having high impact on youth, the ICT plays a crucial role for their learning, skill development and ensures their better adoption to the modern challenges.

2021 is a remarkable year for the capital of Georgia – Tbilisi, that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, currently hosts World Book Capital programme. With a focus on innovations and use of modern technologies, the projects envisaged throughout the year, are seeking to encourage promoting literacy level among

youth and to make books accessible for readers regardless their financial and physical capabilities.

The role of culture and creativity in the development policies of the Georgian cities will be further enhanced in the light of Director General's recent decision to include Georgian capital Tbilisi and city of Batumi to creative cities network. I wish to express my gratitude for recognition of our efforts and express confidence that designation of Georgian cities will bring tangible contribution to the implementation of the objectives of the Network.

We continue our firm and fruitful cooperation with the World Heritage Center. Let me take the opportunity and thank the Center and its consultative bodies for support and recognition of our efforts towards the implementation of the World Heritage Convention as well as for the expertise assistance in preserving World Heritage sites and museum collections.

As a Party to the Diversity Convention, Georgia continues to advance in its effective implementation. This year, Georgia became the member of the Intergovernmental Committee for the period 2021-2025.

The World Network of Biosphere reserves is an excellent tool for international cooperation and building capacity. For the first time, Georgia is ready to submit two nominations in this regard. Establishment of Biosphere Reserves in Georgia is fully in line with the vision of the state towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

I am proud to say herewith, that the first natural heritage property nominated by Georgia "The Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands" has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list this year.

We hope that biosphere reserves established in Georgia as well as Georgian natural heritage property on the World Heritage list will greatly contribute to fostering biodiversity conservation and environmental education. They will also establish a good practice for harmonious coexistence of man and environment.

Dear colleagues,

On September 21, 2020 the world celebrated the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. On this occasion, heads of State and Government gathered to decide on

urgent efforts towards strengthening international cooperation for ensuring three main pillars of the UN: human rights, peace and security and development.

On behalf of my country, I want to once more express our deep concerns of the humanitarian crises in Georgia's occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

The return to the dividing lines, the ongoing creeping annexation, installation of barbwire fences along the occupation lines to cut off remaining links between the war - divided societies, significantly affect the livelihoods of the local population.

Deliberate eradication of cultural heritage, looting and illicit trade of cultural artefacts, restrictions on freedom of movement, and deprivation of the right to education in the native tongue - particularly in the Gali region, double our concerns and highlight the vital need for urgent response.

In this respect, we acknowledge the paramount role of UNESCO. Our society considers the Organization as a key stakeholder and strongly expects its efficient involvement in the process, especially regarding the monuments of cultural heritage. We believe that only with consolidated efforts it is possible to eliminate such grave violations in different parts of the world.

Distinguished Delegates,

On 12 November, the President of Georgia will be among distinctive participants of the High-Level event dedicated to the 75th Anniversary of UNESCO. It will surely be a good opportunity to reaffirm our commitments towards Organization's actions and to jointly discuss the essential role of UNESCO in the face of global challenges.

Thank you very much for your attention.