

Mr President,

Mr President of the Executive Board

Madam Director-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, and

Distinguished Colleagues

Although I am not present in person but I thank you for the opportunity to deliver my speech this way. Fortunately, even if we are hindered by the pandemic, advanced digital technologies enable us today to discuss topics of utmost interest to many people.

We commend the work done by the Secretariat under your able guidance, Madam Director-General. Amongst others: we have refocused Global Priority Africa, prepared the Medium-Term Strategy and finished the work on the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, as well as the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

As a neighbouring country, we fully understand that Ukraine is in a difficult situation. Hungary strongly and fully supports the sovereignty of Ukraine.

However, there are significant questions in our bilateral relations, including issues related to the education and language use rights of the Hungarian national community in the Western Ukrainian region. We wish to underline that no crisis situation can justify any hatred against a minority. Hungary reconfirms its willingness to solve these issues on a bilateral basis, and calls on the Government of Ukraine to continue to work with relevant international and regional human rights mechanisms in this regard.

Beside being committed to increase cooperation among nations in education, culture, and science, UNESCO is also called upon to fight against all forms of discrimination among people and to fight for ensuring the principle of equal treatment.

In this spirit, in 1960, UNESCO adopted the *Convention against Discrimination in Education* which clearly declares the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities as well as the right to use or teach their own

language. Education is the key to a liveable future for all young people and no one can be deprived of this right since this would mean depriving them of future and of hope.

Please allow me to call your attention, as I also did two years ago, to a very serious and alarming situation concerning education in the mother language of the Hungarian minority living in Western Ukraine.

According to the Law on Education adopted in 2017 by the Ukrainian Parliament, the Hungarian youth have no possibility to participate in education in their mother language. Furthermore the Law on Ukrainian language was adopted in 2019, making the use of Ukrainian language exclusive.

However, this untenable and injurious situation could be solved by modifying the Ukrainian law on indigenous people.

At present Hungarians are not considered indigenous people in Ukraine. However, if Ukrainian law would adopt the definition of indigenous people as defined in the Convention number 169 of the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations, then the scope of the Ukrainian law on indigenous people would also cover the Hungarian minority.

Defining indigenous people in such a way would provide a solution in that members of the Hungarian minority living in Western Ukraine could use their mother language from the beginning of their in primary schools to the end of their studies in secondary schools.

It is evident for us to use our mother language, therefore, on the basis of equal treatment, we should guarantee this right to all persons belonging to minorities.

We therefore request the cooperation and support of UNESCO and of UNESCO Member States for ensuring the educational right of the Hungarian minority.

Thank you for your attention.