

## **MOCW – Landenstatement, Unesco, 10 november 2021**

*Dear colleagues,*

During the pandemic, important values have come under increased pressure worldwide.

Important values that include:

Equal opportunities.

Diversity and inclusion.

Democracy and human rights.

Gender equality.

And equal rights for the LGBTI community.

As a result of the pandemic, many people are finding it ever more difficult to participate in society and pursue their personal development.

This should be a painful realization for everyone involved in the work of UNESCO.

Education, culture and science – areas which have our full commitment – are the foundation for personal and social development. Equal participation is our top priority: no one should be left behind.

That is why the Netherlands will continue to work across all UNESCO domains, to do everything to ensure that people can lead fulfilling lives in just societies. And to support every initiative that is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In doing so, our eyes, our hearts **and** our actions must be focused on the youth.

By raising the quality of education and ensuring that everyone, everywhere in the world, has equal opportunities and equal access to education, we lay the foundation for a peaceful and sustainable society.

For **their** peaceful and sustainable future.

Words alone are not enough!

UNESCO will have to take a strong and active role in the fields of human rights, culture and education. Let me highlight one of the priorities of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in each of these areas.

Firstly, **human rights**.

By adopting the recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence during this conference, UNESCO can set a great example and show its commitment to protecting fundamental rights worldwide. In this complex area, the Netherlands believes that a human centred approach should be given the highest priority.

As well as doing more to protect fundamental rights worldwide, we must recognize that in many countries freedom of expression is under attack and that safety of journalists is needed now more than ever.

At the World Press Freedom Conference hosted by the Netherlands in 2020, some promising steps were taken towards forming a united global front on this issue.

The *International Programme for the Development of Communication* also remains of vital importance to the Netherlands.

The second point I wish to focus on is **culture**.

In recent years, I have worked hard to ensure that Dutch policy on culture facilitates a cultural sector created by and for everyone in our society. This is a long-term process, but it's encouraging to see so many cultural institutions and creatives already subscribing to this philosophy and embracing it fully.

In addition, the Netherlands will continue its international efforts to conserve and protect culture. Our strong sense of responsibility finds expression in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee and the committee on the import and export of cultural objects. World heritage is something we will never lose sight of.

In the years ahead, we want to make the link between climate and cultural heritage a special focus of our common activities. To ensure that investing in culture not only makes for a peaceful society, but also a sustainable one.

Thirdly, we come to **education**.

Access to a high standard of education is a fundamental human right and the key to achieving the other Sustainable Development Goals.

Crises around the world, not least COVID-19, have had an adverse effect on equality of opportunity and equal access to education. This is especially true for women and girls.

The closure of schools worldwide has brought to light and even intensified many pre-existing inequalities. Both in the classroom and online. Both in the Netherlands, as in other parts of the world.

It is up to all of us to ensure that UNESCO takes the lead in addressing these issues. Higher standards in education and improved access to education have the power to prevent future inequalities in every society...

Here again, words simply are not enough. Determined action is needed. From all of us.

From me and from you.

The young people of today are entirely justified in calling us to account, in reminding us that what we do today determines their future.

We cannot afford to disappoint the young ones.  
Making up for disappointments takes far too long.  
And time is a luxury we do not have.

Let them know – let them feel – that the UNESCO family is here  
for them!

That our hearts are open to them.

And that the actions we agree on here during this conference  
will make a real difference to their world.

[Thank you for your attention.]