

Dear President of the General Conference of UNESCO,
Dear Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO,
Dear Director-General of UNESCO,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Delegates,

I would like to start by congratulating Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Audrey Azoulay on her appointment for second consecutive term as the head of the organization. We highly appreciate the work of Ms. Azoulay and of UNESCO Secretariat, which successfully lead the Organization in the way of reforms under difficult conditions.

I also extend congratulations to the newly elected President of the General Conference. I am convinced that his rich professional experience would contribute to fruitful discussions in the spirit of the ideals and principles of our Organization.

The global health crisis proved once again the exceptional power of international cooperation, the importance of solidarity, and the role of consistency and efficiency in our efforts to achieve peace and stability. This goal, set by our ancestors 75 years ago, resonate even stronger today - it is our common duty to achieve it.

UNESCO has a leading role in the realization of the ambitious UN Agenda 2030. Bulgaria is an active and consistent partner in this global effort.

One of the important steps to make progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 is to strengthen the global education architecture. We welcome the leading role of UNESCO in the consultation process, the global coordination and the related cooperation mechanism. Our priorities are the professional qualifications and life-long learning which are essential components of the Global Education Programme.

An important task for us is the implementation of a clear and long-term policy, aimed at protection of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We are aware that new threats endanger the World heritage in all its diversity, which requires the entire international community to participate in its protection, management and popularization. Along with the cultural diversity that promotes the free exchange of ideas between cultures, we consider the cultural heritage as a powerful tool for economic growth and for development of creative economy, digital environment and jobs of tomorrow.

The Republic of Bulgaria considers as a high priority the preservation of traditions and customs as a vector of sustainability. Proof of this consistent commitment is the active work of the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, situated in Sofia. This Center continued its activity during the harsh pandemic conditions. Bulgaria will initiate a renewal of the Agreement with UNESCO for this Centre, which proved to be a key actor in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage in the region.

Bulgaria is proud that, via the UNESCO-Bulgaria Trust, it finances a series of projects in the priority areas such as fight against antisemitism through education, enhancing sustainability to climate changes in the context of protection the cultural and natural heritage.

The inequalities between different countries and regions deepened during the COVID period, which brought up the crucial role of science, technologies and innovations in developing more stable and resilient societies. The essential need of open and inclusive science has been proven, involving enhanced cooperation and solidarity. Bulgaria adopted the UNESCO recommendation for open science and included it as an integral part of all new scientific initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of the artificial intelligence for the deep transformation of our times, we have to make sure that it serves the humanity while respecting the human rights and dignity. Bulgaria took part in the broad consultation process of drafting the UNESCO Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence.

In conclusion, I express once again Bulgaria's confidence that all together we shall continue to make solidarity efforts for expanding the UNESCO influence for development of the processes, leading to the wellbeing and prosperity of the mankind.

I wish success to the General Conference of UNESCO.

Thank you for your attention.