

National Statement of the Republic of Korea
at the 41st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO
by H.E. Mr. Dong-gi Kim,
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Korea

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Madame Director-General,

Distinguished Delegates, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate Ambassador Santiago Irazabal Mourão on his election as the President of the 41st General Conference of UNESCO. I have every confidence that this General Conference will prove a resounding success under his able and wise leadership. As Madame Director General embarks on the second term soon, we wish to express our deep appreciation for the achievements in delivering on UNESCO's mandate during the first term. We trust that Madame DG will imbue even further impetus into the valuable work of UNESCO.

For the past 75 years, UNESCO has been traveling a journey of building the defences of peace in the minds of men and women. All our endeavors have been rooted in universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms. By working together toward the realization of these principles, we have truly achieved many meaningful accomplishments for humankind.

However, the unprecedented global challenges such as the pandemic, climate change, and a growing inequality and divide mean that there is indeed no scope for complacency.

Mr. President,

I would like to draw your attention to two key elements which are imperative if we are to be able to well rise to these tasks of the times. First, UNESCO should play a leading role in fostering even more solid ties of multilateral cooperation. This requires an accurate analysis of the current environment in the education, science, and cultural fields as well as the mobilization of resources for translating UNESCO's ideals into reality. I hope we can present together more UNESCO projects through which the benefit is actually felt on the ground.

UNESCO's functions such as serving as a laboratory of ideas, a standard-setter, now have new significance in terms of successfully navigating the path towards a brighter future. In this regard, we welcome the timely adoption of recommendations on AI Ethics and Open Science. We will make every effort to enable the new norms embraced by UNESCO to take root in the international community.

Second, in this context UNESCO needs ever-strengthened partnerships with other international actors. The interlinked and broad nature of UNESCO's work requires a tighter network of cooperation both at the domestic and international levels, bringing together various stakeholders. The unique network of UNESCO National Commissions can act as an effective facilitator of UNESCO programs at every level of our societies.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Korea, in the face of real difficulties following the Korean War, deeply appreciated the helping hand offered by UNESCO in the form of printing machines for textbooks provided during the 1950s. The realization that the international community remembered us and readily shared educational resources was a source of tremendous encouragement to the Korean people.

Now the Republic of Korea is joining the noble endeavors of UNESCO to deliver a message of hope to the international community – a message that we can further contribute to peace and security by fostering solidarity among nations through education, science and culture.

Education is a fundamental human right. And at the same time an enabler of other human rights. Education helps us maximize upon the potential of individuals and societies. In this belief, the Republic of Korea is committed to developing quality education and education for all. We will continue to contribute to UNESCO Technical and Vocational Training, as well as girls' education and women's education in different regions.

We welcome the Futures of Education report, which will serve as a compass guiding us to the way forward for education. We believe the report will ultimately serve to facilitate a consensus within society on the need to invest more in education. And, indeed, fostering a shared understanding of the future path to take, it will serve to deepen a sense of cooperation at the international level.

Racism and discrimination are the seeds of social conflict and create cracks in the spirit of a community of people living together in harmony. The Group of Friends for Solidarity and Inclusion with Global Citizenship Education will continue to speak out against any acts denying the equality of all human beings.

We believe international cooperation in science is a key to narrowing the gap among nations and promoting joint response to transboundary problems. We will continue our efforts in making further achievements in such fields as hydrology, ocean science and biodiversity.

The joint inscription of Korean Traditional Wrestling, SSireum, as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2018 represents a valuable step towards establishing lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. We hope the Demilitarized Zone, a very symbol of the division of the two Koreas, can be a world heritage site in the future, marking another significant initiative for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. President, Dear Colleagues,

In closing, in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, solidarity and inclusion across borders are more precious than ever. It is imperative to continue our efforts to build invincible defences of peace. The Republic of Korea is committed to the abiding collaboration with UNESCO to realize the noble ideals it aspires to.

Thank you for your kind attention.