

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Madam Director-General

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

(75th anniversary)

This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of UNESCO. It is an occasion to recall the history and vitality of our Organization, and to renew our commitment to its founding values. Today, even more than in 1945, Education, Science, Culture, Communication and Information are powerful tools that move us closer to a more peaceful and prosperous world.

(Emerging from the pandemic)

We find ourselves in a new international context, conditioned by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has particularly highlighted the role of Science. Thanks to the application of the most advanced research, it has been possible to develop vaccines in record time, which gives us a glimpse of the hoped-for way out. For this to happen, it is still necessary for vaccination to reach everyone so that we can successfully put an end to the pandemic. Spain is fully committed to this goal: we have already donated more than 25 million vaccines and we will donate another 25 million before the spring of 2022.

On the other hand, in the field of education and culture, we have suffered the adverse consequences of Covid-19 fully. Most developed countries, those with widespread access to electricity and the Internet, have been able to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in these areas. In Spain, thanks to new technologies and the commitment and dedication of education professionals, schooling has continued throughout most of the pandemic.

We are aware that this has not been the case everywhere. We are committed to working to overcome this situation and to achieve equal educational opportunities in all countries.

As far as the world of culture is concerned, both creators and consumers have suffered one of their worst crises. This deserves a calm reflection that takes into account the vulnerabilities of these sectors, the strengths and weaknesses of creative fields and access to culture as a right for all.

Mr. President/Director General

(General Conference 2021)

This year's General Conference is particularly important. We are counting on adopting the new UNESCO Strategy for the next eight years. This agenda includes very relevant initiatives for the future, such as the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, which will be a very useful tool in the development of this key technology in the coming years.

I would also like to highlight in particular our support for two basic lines of action at UNESCO: "Priority Africa" and "Gender Equality".

With regard to Africa, we consider it urgent to pay special attention to the continent in order to respond to its specificities in terms of heritage, technical training, education and, of course, scientific cooperation and support in the challenge of vaccination against Covid.

Gender equality is also one of Spain's priorities, both in our internal policies and in our external action. We will work actively within the Organization to develop programs to achieve this objective in all countries.

(New mandate of the Director General)

This General Conference coincides with the beginning of a new term of office for the Director General of this Organization. In the aftermath of the pandemic, we face the challenge of making up for lost time, renewing structures, streamlining our operations and offering solutions to the problems we face.

Madam Director General, you can count on Spain in carrying out your important duties at the head of the Organization to meet these challenges.

(Spain's Commitment)

At the national level, we are working to ensure that UNESCO's values and principles, activities and messages permeate through Spanish society. The government is not alone in doing this; numerous private and public institutions are very active in this field. A few days ago, the Spanish Federation of Associations, Centers and Clubs for UNESCO organized an event to commemorate UNESCO's 75th anniversary, which was a great success.

Spanish civil society feels increasingly identified with UNESCO's programs. By number of inscriptions, we are the fourth country on the World Heritage list, the fifth on the Intangible Heritage list, the second in the number of Global Geoparks, and the first in both the number of Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Chairs. We Spaniards are, therefore, global ambassadors of UNESCO's message, and we are very proud of it.

Mr. Chairman,

We are convinced that this 41st General Conference will be a success. UNESCO has solid foundations in Spain: the firm commitment of the Government and that of a vast network of actors involved in all your areas of work.

Thank you.