

**ADDRESS / STATEMENT**

**41<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of UNESCO  
Paris, France, 11 November 2021**

**PROF DR SIMONA KUSTEC**

**MINISTER**

**OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SPORT**

**OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

**Madame Director General,  
President of the General Conference,  
Dear Chair of the Executive Board,  
Excellencies, distinguished Colleagues,**

**Madame, Director General, dear Audrey Azoulay,  
First of all, my sincere congratulations and all my best wishes for your second term as Director General of UNESCO. I am very much looking forward to our cooperation during the next four years.**

**We live in a time of immense transformation. The Republic of Slovenia remains committed to its position that UNESCO as an organization with a 76-year tradition, is today, perhaps, even more relevant than ever before. Its unique expertise coupled with the determination of UNESCO's Member States to take a major step towards the preservation of international peace and security through cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture, reaffirms UNESCO's major mission.**

**We should refocus our priorities to the paramount mission of UNESCO: education, science and culture should all be strengthened. I would like to underline that UNESCO should continue to reposition itself as an intellectual power within the UN System and should more extensively consult professional experts from Member States. We should respect, cherish and foster a bottom-up lead approach coupled with a strong commitment to evidence-based policy making in all phases of UNESCO's decision making.**

**Slovenia remains committed to achieve visible and strong results in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which UNESCO plays a leading role. Even more so, since UNESCO is responsible for at least nine Sustainable Development Goals, we fully support UNESCO to take the lead with regard to the implementation of SDG 4 on Education.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Slovenia fully recognizes UNESCO's new efforts in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and in particular in its ethical dimensions.**

**The development and application of AI technologies will profoundly shape humanity's access to information, knowledge transaction processes and education. AI carries great potential to foster open and inclusive knowledge societies, especially for marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, rural populations, and indigenous peoples, to promote open access to education, digital persistence, cultural diversity, and scientific progress. Let's not forget that with great potential comes great responsibility. AI is likely to transform the future of education, science, culture and communication.**

**It is without saying, that Slovenia fully and without any doubts supports the adoption of UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.**

**In this light, the Slovenian Government proposed the establishment of an International Research Centre on AI under the Auspices of UNESCO, which received utmost support of all Member States during the last session of the General Conference. Let me take this opportunity to once again express our gratefulness to UNESCO and all its Member States.**

**Slovenia is convincingly committed to opening the field of education – as you all know we are a strong advocate of UNESCO's endeavours in the field of Open Educational Resources. Therefore, and having in mind the enthusiastic involvement of Slovenia's researchers and experts in the overall**

process, I am delighted to say that Slovenia fully supports the adoption of UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science.

In regard to education – I sincerely wish to express my great congratulations that UNESCO organized the High Level Segment of the 2021 Global Education Meeting that was held yesterday with biggest success.

I am deeply convinced that the new Global Education Cooperation Mechanism will serve as a framework to invest into education and to mobilize for COVID-19 recovery and the futures of education.

I am extremely proud to serve as a member of the new SDG 4 Education2030 High Level Steering Committee in the upcoming two years.

At this session of the General Conference, we look forward to the budget and programme for 2022-2025 being approved and to the Draft Medium Term Strategy for the period 2022 – 2029. In consultation with all our stakeholders, I can express my satisfaction to agree with all outlines as well as with the Director General's proposed scenario of UNESCO's budget.

I welcome the positive new dynamic that was evident since the last session of the General Conference. I would also like to offer congratulations to the Director General and her team for what has been achieved. There is a sense of direction and ambition for the future. Challenges remain, but there is a renewed sense of optimism for the future.

Coming from national to regional objectives and commitments, I underline that all remarks expressed in my national capacity are aligned with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

In conclusion: Slovenia looks forward to being part of that UNESCO journey and supporting its efforts.

Happy 75th Anniversary of UNESCO!

Thank you for your attention.