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**AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL STATEMENT
41ST SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE**

Mr President, Director General, Distinguished Delegates.

First, I would also like to congratulate you, Mr President, for leading this General Conference and at the same time pay tribute to the previous President. In addition, I would like to congratulate the Director-General on her reappointment. Australia reaffirms its commitment to supporting both of you in your leadership of the organisation.

Australia is proud of its strong role in the foundation of UNESCO. At that time, as the world emerged from the horrors of a global war, we joined with others in the need to rebuild and to come together in a spirit of peace: we saw – and continue to see – the fundamental importance of education, of basing decisions on science (and fighting fake news); of building tolerance and understanding - through respect, the sharing of culture and the sharing of information to build openness and trust.

75 years later, these same principles and needs drive our commitment to working with all of you through UNESCO to deliver results for the future.

In Education – we remain firmly committed to the inclusive principles imbued in SDG 4 including increasing access for girls. The implementation of the UNESCO *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education* will help economic recovery from COVID-19 by enhancing mobility and inter-university cooperation. Australia has commenced ratification of this important Convention.

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The COVID Pandemic has shown us the importance of basing our decisions on science and the remarkable gains that can be made by sharing knowledge. Australia commends UNESCO for its work on the draft recommendation on Open Science, which will benefit people around the world. For our part, we work with industry, civil society, academia and the global community to develop guidance and share best practice approaches to ensure science is open, inclusive and equitable.

Australia is committed to ensuring new and emerging technologies, like AI, are developed and used in a way that promotes and upholds human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is imperative that the draft recommendation on the ethics of AI remains grounded and implemented in line with international human rights law. This is a priority for Australia.

We continue our long-term commitment to promoting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. We are pleased to co-sponsor the Windhoek + 30 Declaration: Information as a Public Good, World Press Freedom Day 2021.

From its inception, Australia has actively participated in the Programme on the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) where we are seeking re-election to its International Coordinating Council. Australia brings a unique perspective to the role in biocultural conservation and heritage through engaging with our first nations, to achieve multiple sustainable benefits for all people and nature.

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We look forward the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL), launching next year. Through the Global Action Plan and in our role as temporary co-chair of the Steering Committee of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages Global Task Force, we are committed to sharing the knowledge and understanding of indigenous people's languages.

As member States of UNESCO, we must also look to the future, at how we can continue to work together to shape a modern organisation responsive to the challenges facing our planet and its people.

We have used our four-year term on the World Heritage Committee to help shape the a World Heritage Climate Change Policy. We stand ready to engage in its implementation and to help resolve difficult outstanding questions including how to respond to changing Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties in a changing climate.

Australia is acutely aware of the unique challenges of Small Island Developing States, including our neighbouring Pacific Island Countries. We welcome UNESCO's increased engagement with Small Island Developing States, and continue to support a strong SIDS voice in UNESCO activities and governing bodies. We welcome the nomination of our Pacific neighbour, the Cook Islands, to the UNESCO Executive Board.

After 75 years, UNESCO's important role in providing space for countries to share their differences and work collectively for a common good, remains as important as ever.

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Australia looks forward to working with UNESCO in supporting an effective, open and transparent organisation, accountable to all members. This will require strong leadership to implement UN reform, efficient and collaborative ways of working, and budget rigour to empower UNESCO to deliver on its agreed mandate. We stand ready to work with you Mdm Director General, UNESCO and all its members to continue to build a UNESCO firmly grounded in its past and ready for the challenges of the future.