

Mr President of the General Conference,

Madame Director General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is an honour for me to address the 41st General Conference of UNESCO, when we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of UNESCO and 30 years of Latvia's membership in UNESCO. Culture, education and science are at the heart of every nation's development and are especially important at this time when we are working to overcome the consequences of the pandemic.

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement on behalf of the European Union to be delivered later today. We welcome the new strategic vision for UNESCO. In an inter-dependent world, we can address and resolve global problems only through multilateral cooperation. Madame Director-General, let me congratulate you on your re-election for the second term. I am convinced that under your guidance UNESCO will contribute greatly to the areas of education, science, culture, and stronger multilateralism.

Latvia is proud to be home to the indigenous community of Livonians. The Livonian language – one of the most endangered languages in Europe – has greatly benefited from the International Year of Indigenous Languages. Therefore, we support and are fully committed to be involved in the upcoming Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Language policy is of very high importance to Latvia, particularly in education. We believe that language is the cornerstone on which the integrity and cohesion of the society is built. Education, on the other hand, is the cornerstone of our future prosperity. Therefore, our focus is on making sure that our educational programmes serve the needs of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds and no one in our educational system is left behind.

We stand strongly behind the Paris Declaration for increased investments and global solidarity for the recovery and future of education. We are honoured to be among the countries that will engage in the high-level policy dialogue on quality education and Latvia's nomination in the High-level Steering Committee confirms our commitment to realization of the Education 2030 Agenda.

During the disruptive times of the pandemic, the role of well-informed citizens is more crucial than ever. In this context I would like to highlight the importance of the Global Media and Information Literacy Week and we are proud of supporting and promoting its proclamation in United Nations General Assembly this year.

Latvia has been an active member of the UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication. As part of the Global Media Freedom Coalition, Latvia promotes and supports media freedom and safety of journalists globally, and we are proud to support the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, which contributes to UNESCO's media programmes.

We are also glad to recognize that the review of the Memory of the World Programme has successfully concluded, and new nominations are now being accepted for the International Register. We strongly believe that documentary heritage is an important evidence of our roots that shouldn't be forgotten.

Madame Director General,

Distinguished delegates,

In 2023, Latvia will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Latvian Song and Dance Festival and 20 years of the proclamation of the Baltic song and dance celebrations as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This powerful event is going to be a living example of Latvia's contribution to the World's cultural heritage. At the same time, it will highlight the work the UNESCO is doing to preserve and promote the World's cultural diversity. In this regard, it is my honour to invite Madame Director General to visit Latvia in 2023 to experience the Latvian Song and Dance Festival in person.

Being a member state of UNESCO has strengthened us as a nation and has allowed us to make a contribution to the joint efforts towards our common global goals. We are keen to further our cooperation and Latvia's support to UNESCO's strategic vision.

Thank you for your kind attention.