

First plenary meeting of the 41st session of the General Conference

Tuesday 9 November 2021 at 10.15 a.m.

President: **Mr Altay Cengizer** (Turkey)

Item 1: ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

Item 1.1: Opening of the 41st session of the General Conference

1.1 **Mr Altay Cengizer** (Temporary President):

Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General of UNESCO, Excellencies, Ministers, Distinguished Ambassadors, friends and colleagues, representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you to UNESCO, to the 41st session of its General Conference. As President of the previous session, and in accordance with Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, I have the honour to preside over this inaugural meeting. I therefore declare open the 41st session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

1.2 Allow me to recall that the **Nominations Committee** is charged with determining and submitting to the Conference the list of nominations for the posts of President and of Vice-Presidents, as well as proposals for the composition of committees, commissions and other subsidiary organs of the Conference. According to Rule 32 of the Rules of Procedure, the Nominations Committee consists of the heads of all delegations entitled to vote in the General Conference. The head of a delegation may designate another member of his or her delegation to attend meetings and vote in his or her place. Representatives to the committee may be assisted by another member of their delegation. I invite the Nominations Committee to meet at 10:30 a.m. This can, of course, be a bit later now, in Room II. Moreover, the Legal Committee is invited to meet at 12 p.m. in Room IX. Thank you.

Address by the President of the 40th session of the General Conference

2.1 **Temporary President:**

Honourable ministers, Excellencies, esteemed colleagues, dear Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy, dear Madam Director-General Ms Audrey Azoulay, it has been my honour and privilege to serve you as the President of the 40th session of the General Conference of UNESCO. I am now entrusting my duty to the new President-elect, my esteemed colleague, His Excellency Santiago Irazabal Mourao of Brazil. I wish him every success in his term.

2.2 I thank my government who wished me to leave this position intact and unblemished. I am grateful for its continuous support. I thank my esteemed colleagues for the friendship and kindness I received throughout my term. But of course, how not to remember that very long period during which we all had to endure very difficult conditions? It was not even a month after the 40th session of the General Conference that we suddenly found ourselves in a totally different terrain and the bleakest of atmospheres. Not unlike an army under siege, the UNESCO headquarters had to be closed, as were our delegations, and we were cut off from each other. I hail the efforts of our Member States and the Secretariat during those extremely difficult times. UNESCO responded well to the conditions created by this unforeseen tragedy of the pandemic. However, the sad fact is that we cannot yet be sure if we have indeed left the pandemic behind us. Moreover, we cannot be sure whether new pandemics will not come in different shapes in the wake of the present one. In our Member States and here in France, the medical and sanitary workers performed nothing less than legendary efforts with their heroic and dedicated service to their people. I salute them. Our hearts go out to those we lost – at least more than five million people all over the world. We will always cherish their precious memories. I had to go through my own experience of spending more than a week at the emergency unit of a hospital in Paris due to the secondary effects of vaccination. It is the human condition that we seem to always become aware of the real value of anything only when we are about to lose it.

2.3 It is difficult to say that the response of the international community was on high gear and well-coordinated in comparison with the gravity of the crisis. The poorer among us were left behind. We should hope that in this increasingly interdependent world, the values of international solidarity, multilateralism and our obligations towards each other is now better understood, and the lessons of the past two years are taken to hearts and minds. The value of UNESCO and how central an international organization it is in the realization of our efforts in responding to the new emergencies should also have been better understood. We must now have a better and improved understanding of our brands. Let us not forget that multilateral diplomacy in our day is more and more about transversal action, action that goes across and intersects many on the way. We cannot surmount the present problems without intellectual bandwidth that will allow us to go straight against the problems arising from our interdependence. Hence, the need to bring back more the influence of UNESCO in this new world that squarely faces us. We have seen, for instance, that we have to put up a robust fight against misinformation and teach the value of science-based decision-making. We have to encourage good news to receive at least as much attention as the bad news which is, paradoxically, more popular. If we face so many problems that beset every one of us right now, then it means that we need to move beyond light agendas and low frequency action. We have to listen more to each other. We have to listen our upcoming new generations. We have to become more aware of what science teaches us here, what our old traditions try to tell us and understand the needs of our marginalized communities, women of all ages and indigenous people. Resilience comes from making sense of change. There can be no constant fight against change. Rather, we have to take advantage of it.

2.4 One may ask: what are the advantages that today's changes present us, after all? There can be many advantages,

but first and foremost, it is about our strength and perception that we really need each other and that we have to change the way we approach present day issues. The above challenges provide new opportunities for UNESCO. Our Organization can be the game changer if we are to move nearer to science-based decision making. UNESCO is about the creation of knowledge, about building sustainable knowledge societies. This is the real core of our mandate. We need big ideas, debates impacting discourses and initiatives. For instance, today UNESCO is the acknowledged world leader in changing why and how humanity imagines the future. Member States, sister organizations of the United Nations system, universities around the world, are all turning to UNESCO to build upon scientific advances in the discipline of anticipation, that enable new ways of using the future. And harnessing this capability is essential if we are to become better able to integrate novelty and change into what we see and do. I salute the decision of the Executive Board to support International Futures Day. We are turning our fear of change into a source of inspiration and creativity.

2.5 When I arrived at UNESCO five years ago as the Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Turkey, and during the last two years also as the President of the 40th session of the General Conference, I did not only learn much more about our Organization, but I have gained new insights, new ways to look at the world. I understood that we have to arrive at new ways of seeing the world and therefore this, the Western perspective, so to say, is essential. But it is not certainly enough. Mainly because of this exposure, all of us, as permanent delegates, feel from time to time that we should receive more attention from our people, from our capitals. It is primarily us that understand how and why UNESCO is more important than seeing eye to eye.

2.6 I know every one of us experiences difficulties in relating this simple fact to our capitals. I myself here in UNESCO felt that I was d'Artagnan and looking around for Athos, Porthos and Aramis. If a character in a novel does not display a certain stance against life, if he or she remains unclear and undecided towards the issues, then the reader also remains unclear and undecided towards the character. Though this might mean a disservice to the character of the novel, we should therefore remind ourselves that as there are so many forms of light in nature which we cannot readily see, there are more shades of light in UNESCO than we suppose. There is a unique accumulation of experience and expertise, along with historically dedicated service to mankind.

2.7 However, as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen within our societies and within our nations, and as wealth is being increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few, something else has happened. Expert opinion is now being denigrated. This what has taken place and we are all paying the price. Greed, lack of empathy and not fully understanding the conditions others find themselves in cannot be pursued for too long. History teaches us that sloppy approaches always end with creating more crises and troubles. I would say those who take UNESCO's role and future not seriously enough risk becoming marginalized. Unless the Member States start to be engaged with UNESCO in a more straightforward fashion and agree among themselves on a more enlarged framework for action, our Organization and its potential remain underutilized. Even worse, it can fall far behind the promise it holds within its mandate. In this vein, the Member States can seek to arrive to what I will call a new series of grand bargains. Such larger understandings will in turn, create new and more relevant parameters for us to work and move ahead more comfortably. We can then update the existing close partnerships within our Organization, and then we will be enabled to better respond to the modern context of our mandate. We can thus demonstrate together the intellectual capacities residing at our missions and at the Secretariat.

2.8 Here, I should pay a high-spirited tribute to the personnel of UNESCO. Without the team of dedicated and competent staff members in charge of implementing the decisions of the governing bodies, all our speeches would remain as a long list of wishes. This is why UNESCO is much more than the bounds of its adopted mandates. Anyone who worked here will understand this. All around us, we see what are called wicked problems. Our task is to get everyone to tackle them in concert. This is especially true when a slow deterioration turns out to be a general perception.

2.9 In this context, I now wish to draw your attention to the seemingly steady decline of humanities and liberal studies. This is a pity because all the humanities, along with our older traditions, help us to create denser and more generous lives. Humanities and social sciences add depth and resonance to our lives, enable us to move beyond the constraints of time and space wherever we may be living lives that are aware of others. UNESCO's mandate directly relates to such broader questions. Let me give you the example of the International Bioethics Committee established in UNESCO in 1998. From the very start, the Committee included experts from all fields like law and philosophy and not only biology. In the same year, UNESCO established the Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology. Now, years later, we are responsible for the ethics of artificial intelligence. As we still stand to be assured of a world which benefits in an equitable manner from technological innovations, we must continue to animate enlightened debates and do our part in strengthening multilateralism. Let us seek the benefits of being the intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience. Therefore, intellectual contributions from every one of us is as much important when it comes to keeping the flame burning. When we can do that, we will see how new and positive dynamics will rise to the fore. Indeed, apathy and alienation are big challenges for every organization. One follows the other.

2.10 And, therefore, let's always keep in mind that we are not shareholders of a company seeking to maximize profits, but equal shareholders of an international intergovernmental Organization conceived as the intellectual arm of the United Nations system. It will be much better if we can be more forward-looking and ambitious in the way of institution building instead of clinging to acquired behaviours of easy thinking. This, if we believe that there is a widening gap between the global challenges and the institutions that are meant to deal with them. In this sense, though it may sound somewhat twisted, the post-pandemic experience may represent a golden opportunity. We have a chance to update our intergovernmental system and focus on understanding the true messages of a new era. We need not squander it. There are too many self-defeating contradictions. We can hardly see everything in terms of rivalries. History does not offer do-overs once the right time is past. The COVID 19 pandemic has very much pushed back our gains in the past decade in all the crucial indicators of development. We will be contradicting ourselves if we fail to see the wider implications of the actual situation. Obviously, UNESCO continues to have its *raison d'être*, and the latest developments further strengthen the

original reasoning which led to the foundation of our Organization 75 years ago.

(The speaker continues in French)

2.11 Chers collègues, Excellences, il n'y eut jamais avant l'UNESCO une institution rassemblant des États du monde de manière structurée et régulière, à la seule fin d'établir une meilleure connaissance réciproque des cultures dans la perspective d'une paix mondiale. Donc, ce n'était pas une coïncidence que la première Conférence générale de l'UNESCO a eu lieu en Sorbonne. Je voudrais faire référence aux propos de mon compatriote turc Bedrettin Tuncel qui a présidé la Conférence générale 55 ans avant moi. « Nous devons éduquer nos garçons et nos filles de manière égale à tous les degrés d'enseignement. C'est le secret de la réussite économique ainsi que la vérité et de la morale internationale. Et il faut le comprendre sous cet aspect ». Maintenant, il faut aussi se rendre compte et voir comme une sorte d'échec malheureux le fait que ces paroles prononcées dans cette salle il y a 55 ans, de telles armes soient encore d'actualité et extrêmement valables, même aujourd'hui.

2.12 Ici, nous avons une organisation noble, car nous seuls semblons avoir un mandat qui permet de poursuivre ce que nous croyons dans nos cœurs. Par conséquent, nous avons la chance d'aller au-delà du réalisme et aussi d'aller au-delà du romantisme. Nous sommes donc bénis d'avoir à nos côtés les deux plus grandes écoles de pensée. C'est ainsi que l'on peut sortir des contraintes de l'empirisme simpliste, même lorsque parfois, nous semblons poursuivre des causes perdues. Après tout, il se peut que la seule façon de devenir anobli soit de poursuivre des causes apparemment perdues, car la victoire est atteinte pour les vraies causes. C'est la leçon que nous a léguée la génération de nos fondateurs. Le réalisme, néanmoins, doit rester de mise dans tous les domaines de l'UNESCO, l'éducation, les sciences, la culture ou encore en matière d'information et de communication, il y a plus de terres promises que des terrains gagnés. À nous de faire de sorte pour que cette tendance soit résolument inversée pour le bien-être de nos peuples.

(L'orateur poursuit en anglais)

2.13 On another count, Excellencies, I think I gave my best efforts to try to find ways to surmount the term limitation issue. I saw that within the two groups, there were those who had very good bilateral relations, and this led me to think that we might have a chance in trying earnestly to go after three consecutive terms. However, this remains an ongoing issue, and it is up to the Member States to decide what is to be done on the way to the next session of the General Conference. I was happy, as I already said, to see Futures Literacy gain strong grounds. There have been many timely events and the Summit on Futures Literacy is one of them.

2.14 Excellencies, esteemed colleagues, we need not shun, drive away what seems to be too popular and ephemeral. Eighty-five years ago, on 30 April 1935, Walt Disney wrote a letter to Monsieur Bonnet, Director of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, the precursor of UNESCO, located at Rue de Montpensier in Paris. Walt Disney thanked Monsieur Bonnet for the privilege of having been asked to contribute his ideas to the Institute's inquiry. This was coming from Mr Mickey Mouse himself, eighty-five years ago. The intellectuals did not shun a cartoon character and made inquiries then, as we should do now.

2.15 Thus, in three consecutive circular letters to all, I underlined our need at this time to look for existing synergies. In the course, I learned more about the deficiencies that our *grande marque*, the World heritage sites, including the natural sites, currently experience, especially in the vital areas of conservation and capacity building. I also learned how our programmes on youth and sports can readily benefit once we are able to realize the potentials of the existing synergy between the prestige of UNESCO and the dynamism of the football world. I think I laid the groundwork and theory for the benefits that may accrue to our Member States and to UNESCO in general everywhere, and especially in Africa, which is, deplorably, very much under-represented when it comes to world heritage sites. This is the initiative seeking to inscribe football as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Here, I wish to thank for the close interest shown towards this initiative, and I am very happy about the first meeting of the informal working group convened a few days ago. From now on, it is up to the interested Member States to pursue this initiative as I will be leaving and to recognize its intrinsic value and its high potential and attending impact. In the wake of recent scandals, the football world as such desires to clean its name. What better way for them is there than becoming structurally associated with our World heritage sites, existing and potential, and our programmes on youth and sports? What better way, as they have been asking, to receive the attention of the intellectuals around the world at a time when the beautiful game itself needs to be protected? It is time for us to be more creative, recognize the essence of our modern problems and reach new ways and methods that are to be pursued in total transparency.

2.16 It is unfortunate that at times the international community seems to be reactive rather than preventive. This is because we continue to remain aloof for too long to grasp the benefits of what can be termed as new thinking. However, this is tantamount to choosing to remain in our hastily defined comfort zones. Yet the world continues to move, always approaching new thresholds, new places. Granted, we cannot control everything, but we can earnestly try to be proactive and more open to new ideas. Faced with the new, we can show more courage to see what lies therein. Without trying, there is not much to be accomplished anyway. So it is time to say farewell. They also say that in our profession, there can be no farewells. We might again pop up in each other's ways. Who can really know?

2.17 Once again, I wish my good friend and esteemed colleague, His Excellency Mourao, Permanent Representative of Brazil, health and every success in keeping us all together within our principles. It is only natural that each President will have different priorities, as each will face a different template, different circumstances. On my election day, I promised you that I would be reachable to all of you, that I would be impartial and that I hope to leave this position unblemished. I am right now returning back to my chancellery, to be precise, right to the seats allocated over there in Room I. I avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Chairperson of the Executive Board, Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy, with whom I very much enjoyed working throughout my tenure. I would like to thank my own chancellery for their commitment to our work while I served as the President of the General Conference. I thank our Member States for the great support they give to Turkey's candidacy

for another term in the Executive Board. I am indebted to my close associates at the governing body's Secretariat, Mr Sachin Bhatt, Ms Iréna Caquet, Ms Eunice Ong and Ms Catherine Thiounn. I enjoyed very much working with them and I witnessed their very high calibre of professionalism. Thank you so much and please know that I am grateful to everyone in every corner of all the buildings of UNESCO. Thank you very much, Madam Director-General. Thanks to your Deputy and your Assistant Director-Generals. Thank you, my colleagues in the missions. I am grateful for your constant support and friendship. As the old Turkish saying goes, after all, at the end of the day, what really counts is to leave a kind voice under the skies. Thank you.

(Applause)

Address by the Chairperson of the Executive Board

3. Temporary President:

Ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honour to invite His Excellency Agapito Mba Mokuy, Chairperson of the Executive Board, to take the floor.

4.1 Sr. Agapito Mba Mokuy (Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo):

Excelentísimo señor Altay Cengizer, Presidente de la Conferencia General, señora Audrey Azoulay, Directora General de la UNESCO, excelentísimos señores ministros, jefes de delegaciones, distinguidos delegados, excelencias, señoras y señores: con sumo placer quisiera sumar mi voz para dar una cálida bienvenida a los distinguidos delegados a la 41ª sesión de la Conferencia General de la UNESCO. Estoy particularmente contento de ver reunidos a los Estados Miembros hoy, en esta sala 1, de forma presencial, pues la Organización está apenas saliendo del periodo más inédito de sus 75 años de historia, el cual ha sido caracterizado por la imposibilidad de reunirse de forma presencial debido a la pandemia de la coronavirus.

4.2 Como saben, distinguidos delegados, la asamblea de esta Conferencia General tiene lugar en un momento muy particular de la historia de la humanidad. Por un lado, estamos saliendo apenas de la inédita la pandemia de la coronavirus y sus consecuencias devastadoras, tanto para la sociedad en general como en el sistema educativo universal. El cambio climático está cada vez más amenazando nuestro planeta. La desigualdad crece cada vez más entre aquellos pocos que lo tienen tanto y el resto mayoritario que lo tiene tan poco. La intolerancia, la pobreza, la inseguridad y los conflictos emergentes amenazan la paz entre pueblos y naciones.

4.3 Es en este contexto que nos reunimos hoy, con una gran responsabilidad de demostrar a los pueblos e instituciones que representamos que podemos hacer realidad la cooperación internacional. Es nuestra oportunidad para enviar un signo al mundo para decir que comprendemos sus preocupaciones. No estamos movilizados solo para reunimos bilateral o multilateralmente, sino también para encontrar soluciones y perspectivas que puedan aliviar las ansiedades de nuestros ciudadanos.

4.4 En los próximos días, tendremos la oportunidad de hacerlo al más alto nivel de nuestra institución. Este es el momento para tomar decisiones que conlleven a acciones concretas para el ciudadano de a pie y evitar que todo se quede en palabras.

4.5 No tengo la más mínima duda que durante todos nuestros debates guardaremos esta meta en nuestras mentes para el bien de nuestros pueblos, para el bien de la humanidad.

(L'orateur poursuit en anglais)

4.6 Distinguished delegates, heads of delegations, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, UNESCO was founded in the wake of a World War. Millions of people had perished. Millions of others were forced to flee from death and despair. Millions had lost their homes and livelihoods. Millions just lost the hope to live, the hope to study, the hope to live in peace and harmony, the hope to respect and be respected in a free society, wherever all human beings were treated equally, irrespective of their race, religion or sex.

4.7 Today, we see a disturbing crisis arising in different parts of the world. When we see the increase of emerging conflicts, when we see the proliferation of arms produced with the aim of killing human beings, when we see the extreme poverty and increased illiteracy rates in many nations worldwide and when we see the increase in inequality resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we can agree on the urgent responsibility to act collectively. UNESCO is needed today more than ever to help build peace in the minds of men and women for the well-being of humanity.

4.8 The Executive Board that made it through the most trying context of the pandemic in the last two years, succeeded in ensuring business continuity in governance and leadership. The Executive Board worked hard to bring into force strategic decisions. It did so despite COVID-19 which disrupted our modus vivendi, our modus operandi. We stand for the respect of human rights in conformity with the Organization's Constitutional mandate. The Executive Board was able to adopt new working methods. It organized the first virtual meeting in the history of the Organization. We mourn our colleagues, partners, friends and family who lost their lives during these two years. I wish to take the opportunity to let you know that I was fortunate to be the Chairperson of the Executive Board that will be remembered as brave, courageous and committed to the cause of the Organization.

(The speaker continues in French)

4.9 Chefs de Délégations, Excellences, distingués membres, Mesdames et Messieurs. Nous célébrons le 75^e anniversaire de l'UNESCO, l'occasion pour réaffirmer notre engagement aux idéaux et mandat de l'UNESCO de construire les défenses de la paix dans les esprits des hommes par l'éducation, la science et la culture et la communication. Le Conseil exécutif a travaillé dur et délibéré pour trouver un chemin commun dans nos différences. Nous sommes fiers de présenter à l'approbation de la Conférence générale le Projet de stratégie à moyen terme pour 2022-2029, le 41 C/4 et

le Projet de programme et budget pour 2022-202, le 41 C/5, tels que recommandés par consensus par le Conseil exécutif. Nous sommes convaincus que ces objectifs et cibles intersectoriels concrets permettront à l'UNESCO d'atteindre les objectifs de développement durable ODD d'ici 2030 et renforceront sa position de contributeurs précieux à la construction de la paix dans les esprits des hommes et des femmes. En vous souhaitant à nouveau la bienvenue, permettez-moi à ce stade de remercier les Membres du Conseil exécutif pour leur investissement et leur énergie qui nous ont permis d'atteindre nos objectifs importants et les soumettre à l'attention de cette Conférence générale.

4.10 Nous n'avons peut-être pas toujours été d'accord, nous avons peut-être parfois accepté d'être en désaccord, mais nous n'avons jamais manqué d'avoir la foi en notre organisation. Et nous n'avons jamais manqué à notre sens de responsabilité et d'obligation de rendre compte à cet organe suprême, la Conférence générale. Nous nous sommes efforcés de représenter tous les États membres de notre Conférence générale. Une leçon que nous pouvons tirer de la pandémie COVID-19. Et le fait de constater une fois de plus que nous vivons dans un monde interconnecté, nous sommes inséparables et nous devons prendre le train de développement ensemble. Dans notre monde globalisé, nous devons faire face ensemble aux défis émergents tels que le COVID-19. L'unilatéralisme n'est plus d'actualité. Nous devons continuer, continuer à travailler sans relâche ensemble, parce que seulement ensemble, nous pouvons préserver la paix dans les esprits des hommes. Chers délégués, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, je vous remercie de votre aimable attention. *Xie-xien, sukran, spasiba, gracias. Thank you very much.*

(Applaudissements)

Address by the Director-General of UNESCO

5.1 Temporary President:

Madam Director-General, Ms Audrey Azoulay, you have the floor.

6.1 The Director-General:

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Excellencies, ministers, distinguished permanent delegates, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends of UNESCO, I would first like to thank the Chairperson of the Executive Board and the President of the General Conference for so rightly underlining the importance of this General Conference that starts today.

6.2 Every two years, the entire world gathers here in our shared home. And every two years, all our Member States make their voices heard to share their views, their projects, their ambitions and also, very importantly, their commitment. Over the next two weeks, some important initiatives will be completed, others will continue, and new possibilities will take shape on the horizon. This General Conference is, first and foremost, a time of completion. I am thinking in particular of our Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence which, if you adopt it, will become the first global normative instrument on this topic. The draft that we have submitted is the outcome of a two-year process during which we have worked together closely to build consensus and gain in diversity, depth and relevance. The second normative instrument that we are putting forward for adoption is our Recommendation on Open Science. At a time when the pandemic has clearly revealed and continues to reveal the benefits of more open science and greater scientific cooperation, this recommendation is urgently needed, and it can make the difference for our common future.

(The Director-General continues in French)

6.3 Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, cette Conférence générale est aussi celle au cours de laquelle nous allons collectivement, vous allez décider de nos orientations stratégiques pour les huit prochaines années. Vous aurez l'occasion de confirmer la stratégie à moyen terme que nous avons élaboré en étroite concertation avec vous et qui doit nous guider tout au long de la décennie qui vient de commencer jusqu'au seuil de 2030. Une telle projection demande de la lucidité sur l'état de notre monde, sur la manière dont l'UNESCO peut et doit intervenir. La crise du COVID a je le crois, confirmé la justesse de notre diagnostic, mais aussi du choix de priorités fait ces dernières années à l'intérieur de notre mandat et de notre capacité d'action. Elle a aussi montré combien il était nécessaire de se mobiliser pour l'éducation, pour l'environnement, pour la cohésion sociale et la paix et pour que la technologie ne se développe pas sans repères éthiques. Cette Conférence générale marque enfin le 75^e anniversaire de l'UNESCO.

6.4 Trois quart de siècle d'une histoire commune retracée par une exposition passionnante que je vous recommande dans le hall Ségur. Sous le regard toujours vigilant d'Albert, de L'homme qui marche d'Alberto Giacometti. Et autour de cet anniversaire, cette Conférence générale est l'occasion de nous rassembler autour de nos valeurs communes, celles que porte la Charte des Nations Unies et de notre acte constitutif. Des valeurs affirmées au lendemain du désastre matériel et moral de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, dans une histoire qui nous oblige. Je suis heureuse que plus de 100 ministres se soient inscrits pour prendre la parole lors de nos débats et que plus de 25 chefs d'État et de gouvernement viennent ici marquer leur engagement et leur attachement à cette maison. Car comme le rappelait le poète et écrivain Sony Labou Tansi, je le cite. « Chaque génération vient au monde avec sa propre part du monde. Nous avons le devoir d'ajouter du monde au monde ». Ajouter du monde au monde, de l'ambition à notre héritage magnifique. C'est là tout l'enjeu de cette Conférence générale. Ce grand moment d'échanges et de décisions que nous ouvrons aujourd'hui ici à Paris, au siège de l'UNESCO. Je vous remercie, vous souhaite de nouveau la bienvenue et d'excellents débats. Merci beaucoup.

(Applaudissements)

Item 1.3: Adoption of the agenda (41 C/1 Prov. Rev.)

7.1 Temporary President:

Thank you very much for your words, Madam Director-General. Ladies and gentlemen, after having listened to the inspiring words of the Chairperson of the Executive Board and the Director-General, we now move to a more procedural part of this meeting. We shall now examine item 1.3, the adoption of the agenda, contained in document 41 C/1 Prov. Rev.

which was prepared by the Executive Board at its 211th and 212th sessions. Allow me to remind you that at this stage, according to Rule 15, only new items of an urgent and important character may be added to the agenda. Any such proposals will be considered by the Bureau tomorrow morning before being put to the General Conference for approval by a two-thirds majority vote.

7.2 I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy, Chairperson of the Executive Board to present the provisional agenda.

8.1 **Mr Mba Mokuy** (Chairperson of the Executive Board):

Thank you very much, your Excellency. Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, in accordance with the provisions of Article V.B.6(a) of the Constitution of UNESCO, the provisional agenda of the present session of the General Conference was prepared by the Executive Board at its 211th session on the basis of a document submitted to it by the Director-General. Subsequent to its discussions in that regard, the Board adopted 211 EX/Decision 27.1. In pursuance of Rule 9.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, the provisional agenda was "communicated to all Member States and Associate Members as soon as possible after the closure of the session", by a circular letter CL/4356 dated 4 June 2021.

8.2 At its 212th session, the Executive Board examined the revised provisional agenda of the 41st session of the General Conference, and by 212 EX/Decision 26.1, the Board retained the six supplementary items that had been submitted within the time limit set by Rule 12.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, in addition to items stemming from the decisions taken at its 211th and 212th sessions. Those items were included in the supplementary list circulated to the Member States and Associate Members in accordance with the provisions of Rule 12.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. Through you, Mr President, I would like to convey to the General Conference that this provisional agenda is the collective work of the Members of the Executive Board and the Secretariat. I thank you for your attention.

9.1 **Temporary President:**

Thank you, Sir, for your presentation. Are there any comments on this item? His Excellency, the ambassador of Qatar is given the floor.

١٠ السيد الحنزاب (قطر):

شكراً سيدي الرئيس للسماح لنا بأخذ الكلمة، يقترح وفد بلادي سحب البند ٧-٣، وهو "مشروع تعديل الفقرة ٢ من المادة السادسة من الميثاق التأسيسي" من جدول الأعمال المؤقت المعدل، وذلك بعد التشاور مع عدد من الوفود من مجموعات انتخابية مختلفة لإعطاء الأولوية إلى ما تمر به منظمنا فيما يتعلق بالظروف التي يعيشها العالم بسبب جائحة كورونا، وإعطاء الفرصة والمزيد من الوقت لمنظمنا وجميع الدول الأعضاء لتجاوز هذه الأزمة التي ألمت بالعالم. وشكراً سيدي الرئيس.

11.1 **Temporary President:**

Thank you, Excellency. I see that there is a request to delete from the agenda of this session of the General Conference item 7.3, the draft amendment to Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Constitution. I would like to recall that item 7.3 is inscribed on the agenda of the 41st session of the General Conference following 40 C/Resolution 84 by the General Conference at its 40th session to adjourn the examination of this item to its fourth first session. In this case, Rule 15.1 on amendments, deletions and new items will apply. Rule 15.1 indicates that during a session of the General Conference, items may be amended or maybe deleted from the agenda by a majority of the Members present and voting. Therefore, we do not need to go on voting for this. I will just ask whether there is any opposition to this proposal from the room. I do not see any. So I will consider that this is adopted with a consensus.

11.2 *It is so decided.*

Item 1.6: Admission to the 41st session of the General Conference of observers from non-governmental organizations (other than those in official partnership with UNESCO), foundations and similar institutions maintaining official relations with UNESCO, as well as from other international organizations, and recommendation of the Executive Board thereon

12. **The Temporary President:**

Ladies and gentlemen, our next task is to examine item 1.6 of our agenda concerning the admission to the 41st session of the General Conference of observers from non-governmental organizations (other than those in official partnership with UNESCO), foundations and similar institutions maintaining official relations with UNESCO, as well as from other international organizations, and recommendation of the Executive Board thereon. The relevant working document is document 41 C/12. I am pleased now to invite once more the Chairperson of the Executive Board to present the Board's recommendations on this matter. You have the floor.

13.1 **Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy** (Chairperson of the Executive Board):

Thank you, Mr President. Mr President, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, the Executive Board examined document 212 EX/26. IV on the admission to the 41st session of the General Conference of observers from non-governmental organizations other than those in official partnership with UNESCO, as well as from foundations maintaining official relations with UNESCO. The Executive Board's decision thereon was adopted unanimously.

13.2 Mr President, I would like to hereby recommend, on behalf of the Executive Board, that those organizations listed in the annex to document 41 C/12 be invited to participate in the 41st session of the General Conference as observers in the debates on specific agenda items relating to their fields of competence. Thank you for your attention.

14.1 The Temporary President:

Thank you for your presentation, Mr Chairperson. I now wish to submit this recommendation for the approval of the General Conference. As I see no objections, I will take it that this recommendation is adopted unanimously. Thank you very much.

14.2 *It is so decided.*

Item 15.1: Request for the admission of the Åland Islands as an Associate Member of UNESCO

15.1 The Temporary President:

We will now examine item **15.1** concerning the request for the admission of the Åland Islands as an Associate Member of UNESCO. The request for the admission of the Åland Islands as an Associate Member of UNESCO is presented in document 41 C/63 under item **15.1**. The document includes a letter dated 23 July 2021 from Mr Pekka Haavisto, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, applying for Associate Membership on behalf of the Åland Islands whose international relations fall under the responsibility of this country. The letter is in compliance with Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Constitution, which states that territories which are not responsible for the conduct of their international relations may be admitted as Associate Members by the General Conference by a two-thirds majority of Members present and voting upon application made on behalf of such territory by the Member State having responsibility for their international relations. I now present to the General Conference the request for admission of the Åland Islands as an Associate Member of UNESCO. I see no objection to this request. I therefore declare that the Åland Islands has been admitted as a new Associate Member of the Organization.

15.2 *It is so decided.*

16. Temporary President:

This decision further enriches the cultural diversity of our Organization. I wish to extend my warmest congratulations to the Åland Islands, our new Associate Member. I am now pleased to give the floor to His Excellency, Mr Tuomas Tapio, Ambassador of Finland, to UNESCO.

17. Mr Tuomas Tapio (Finland):

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, dear colleagues, Finland wishes to warmly thank the General Conference for the decision to grant Associate Membership of UNESCO to the Åland Islands. The autonomy of Åland Islands is an example of a successful solution for regional governance and an integral part of Finland's democratic system. It is continuously developed in close cooperation with the Åland Islands. The Åland parliament has the right to pass legislation on, for instance, education, culture and the preservation of ancient monuments. The initiative taken by the government of Åland Islands for the request of Associate Membership is also testimony to the Åland Islands' commitment to UNESCO's important work in areas such as education and culture. It is a great pleasure for me to pass the floor, with your permission Mr President, to the Minister of Education and Culture of Åland Islands, Ms Annika Hambrudd. Thank you, Mr President.

18. Temporary President:

It is now my pleasure to give the floor to Ms Annika Hambrudd, Minister of Education and Culture of the Åland Islands.

19.1 Ms Annika Hambrudd (Minister of Education and Culture of the Åland Islands):

Mr President, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, 100 years ago, in 1921, Åland was granted autonomous status within Finland. The first parliament met one year later, and we count that as the birth of our nation. In celebrating our centenary, it is both an honour and a pleasure for me to address this assembly, when Åland is welcomed as an Associate Member of UNESCO. This is, truly, a landmark decision for us, and I speak for the Åland people and their government when I express my heartfelt gratitude to you.

19.2 Åland is an archipelago of more than 6,000 islands located in the heart of the Baltic Sea region. The islands have always formed a bridge, promoting trade and cultural exchange. This has helped to form our community, being insular but far from isolated.

19.3 Åland's language and culture is Swedish, having been part of Sweden for over 600 years. Åland was then part of the Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire. Despite this significant political change, the Åland people held fast to their culture. During the period of political turbulence at the end of the First World War, the Ålanders sought reunification with Sweden. This created tension between Finland and Sweden. Finally, the question was taken to the League of Nations, where it was solved in 1921. This momentous decision and its consequences are known around the world as the Åland Example.

19.4 The League's decision created the conditions for stability in the region. It included guarantees to protect Åland's Swedish language, culture and local traditions. The League also decided that a new treaty regarding Åland's demilitarization and neutralization should be made. This reinforced the original decision to demilitarize Åland in the Paris Peace Treaty at the end of the Crimean War. This was the first time that Åland was the object of international agreement. Åland's special status can therefore be regarded as a peace project from the start.

19.5 Mr President, Åland's UNESCO strategy is to continue this effort for peace, which is very much in line with UNESCO's motto – "Building peace in the minds of men and women". Åland already works actively with the implementation of various UNESCO conventions, which Åland has adopted.

19.6 Åland's long-standing maritime traditions are embodied in such things as the archive of the shipping company of Gustaf Eriksson, which has been nominated to the Memory of the World programme, as well as the Nordic nomination of the clinker boat-building tradition to UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

19.7 I would like to end by thanking Finland for its excellent cooperation in connection with Åland's application for Associate Membership. We shall continue to develop good relations through dialogue and respect, which constitute the signature of sustainable democracy. Thank you, Mr President.

20. **Temporary President:**

Thank you very much. I now give the floor to Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy, Chairperson of the Executive Board.

21. **Mr Mba Mokuy** (Chairperson of the Executive Board):

Thank you, Mr President. On behalf of the Members of the Executive Board and in my own name, it is a great pleasure and honour to welcome the Åland Islands as the 12th Associate Member of UNESCO. People of Åland Islands, please accept my warmest welcome to the UNESCO family. You can count on the expertise of this Organization in all areas of its mandate, and I am confident that your contribution will genuinely benefit the multilateral network. Your membership will only make UNESCO more inclusive by sharing quality education, safeguarding cultural heritage and managing the impacts of climate change. Walking together will lead us further towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I thank you for your attention.

22.1 **La Directrice générale :**

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, c'est avec grand plaisir que je veux moi aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux Îles Åland, qui rejoignent donc la famille de notre organisation comme douzième membre associé. C'est un moment important. Chaque nouvelle arrivée ajoute, ajoute un pas vers l'universalité de l'UNESCO. Pour cela, je vous remercie. C'est aussi une reconnaissance pour les traditions de paix, de culture, de dialogue des Îles Åland en cette année symbolique qui vient marquer le centenaire de leur statut d'autonomie dans l'histoire moderne.

22.2 Notre organisation est heureuse que les nouvelles pages de notre histoire commune puissent s'écrire aux côtés de ce bouillon de culture que sont les Îles Åland. Îles de nombreux grands écrivains, grands auteurs et notamment des femmes et je voudrais en citer deux ce matin, Sally Salminen et Ulla-Lena Lundberg, ces auteures dont le rayonnement porte bien au-delà de votre bel archipel. *Welcome to the Åland Islands. Thank you !*

Item 1.4: Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Conference and of the Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteurs of the Commissions and Committees

Election of the President of the 40th session of the General Conference

23. **The Temporary President:**

Thank you very much, Madam Azoulay. And I also extend my warm greetings to our new Associate Member. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we will now examine item 1.4 of our agenda concerning the election of the President of the General Conference. The related documents are 41 C/NOM/1 and its addendum. I now call upon Her Excellency, Ms Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili, Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, to present the recommendation of the Committee for the election of President of the 41st session of the General Conference. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

24.1 **Ms Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili** (Chairperson of the Nominations Committee):

Thank you, Mr President. Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the Nominations Committee held its first meeting this morning after the plenary and elected me as its Chairperson. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the honour thus bestowed upon me.

24.2 Mr President, the Committee examined the recommendation of the Executive Board regarding the election of the President of the 41st session of the General Conference. The recommendation of the Nominations Committee is contained in document 41 C/NOM/1 and Add.

24.3 The Nominations Committee decided to recommend to the General Conference to approve, by acclamation, the candidature of His Excellency Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Brazil to UNESCO, as President of the 41st session of the General Conference. Thank you, Mr President.

25.1 **Temporary President:**

I am therefore happy to proclaim the election of His Excellency, Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao from Brazil as president of the 41st session of the General Conference. *It is so **decided**.*

25.2 Dear Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao, allow me to congratulate you warmly on your election as the President of the General Conference. Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud, Your Excellency, with you and delighted with your election. Over the past years, many of us have become familiar with Mr Irazabal Mourao and remember fondly his interventions during the plenary sessions of the Executive Board. Mr Irazabal Mourao is a career diplomat who has been serving his country for the past four decades. All his long career, he has worked tirelessly for the promotion of international cooperation, dialogue and multilateralism, his golden tools to achieve peace. He has dealt with wisdom with sensitive and strategic issues, always striving for mobilizing the international community.

25.3 I have no doubt that Mr Irazabal Mourao will lead this honourable assembly with enthusiasm in a true gathering spirit. Your presidency will spearhead UNESCO's global mission for peace and development for all. And I am convinced that Your Excellency will guide the work of the General Conference with ability, efficiency and wisdom. We are all conscious that this is the house of peace, and it is our collective duty to continuously work in a consensual and constructive manner. The future generations will hold us to account. And now please allow me to give the floor to the Chairperson of the Executive Board, who wishes to say a few words.

26.1 **Mr Mba Mokuy** (Chairperson of the Executive Board):

Thank you, Mr President. Before congratulating the newly elected President, I would like to take this opportunity to express my most sincere thanks to the President of the 40th session of the General Conference, my dear friend, His Excellency Mr Altay Cenziger. Over the past two years, Ambassador Cenziger and I have worked closely, despite the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic kept us confined for long periods. It was a privilege for me to have created a relationship with him based on profound respect and understanding. I have always been and continue to be struck by his erudition and vision. His belief in the mandate of our Organization and what it can do for humanity is unwavering and unshakeable. We have indeed been privileged to have him lead us over the past two years. I wish you all the very best, dear President of the 40th General Conference, in your future endeavours. Know that you can always count on my support.

26.2 Now to my dear friend, His Excellency Santiago Irazabal Mourao, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Brazil to UNESCO, I extend, in my own name and on behalf of the Executive Board, my heartfelt congratulations on your election as the President of the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. We have come to know each other very well over the past two years and I have always counted on your constructive insight and support in the work of the Executive Board. You are a career diplomat and one who is committed to the ideals of the Sustainable Development Goals, attested during your service representing your country at the United Nations and at UNESCO. Your country, Brazil, is in various ways an amazing country, full of diversity, with a multifarious culture, incredible nature and a forthcoming population. I am convinced that with your long and able experience in diplomacy and your knowledge, wisdom and engagement, you will preside over this body with flourish. I wish you every success in the coming weeks at this 41st session of the General Conference, and in the two coming years. Thank you.

27. **Temporary President:**

Thank you very much. I am grateful for your kind words. I now give the floor to the Director-General.

28.1 **La Directrice générale :**

Merci Monsieur le Président... Monsieur le président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le président du Conseil exécutif. Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, permettez-moi à mon tour de féliciter son Excellence Monsieur Santiago Irazabal Mourão, Ambassadeur du Brésil pour son élection à l'instant à la présidence de cette 41^e Conférence générale. Vous devenez ainsi le 41^e visage d'une série de personnalités prestigieuses. Le premier d'entre eux, l'ancien Président du Conseil français Léon Blum a très bien formulé, à la naissance de l'UNESCO, l'importance de notre organisation. Il disait devant notre première Conférence générale que l'UNESCO avait le rôle unique, je le cite, de « créer les conditions intellectuelles, morales dont dépend le jeu du système des Nations Unies tout entier ». Rien que cela. Et c'est dans cette histoire exceptionnelle que vous vous inscrivez, une histoire dont vous aurez désormais la garde. Cette élection est bien sûr une reconnaissance personnelle, celle de votre parcours au service de la diplomatie brésilienne, notamment dans ses dimensions multilatérales et de coopération culturelle. Mais c'est aussi une reconnaissance de l'engagement de votre pays et de votre groupe. Le groupe de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes, c'est surtout une excellente nouvelle pour les 193 États membres de l'UNESCO et pour toute cette maison. Nous allons pouvoir bénéficier de la richesse de votre expérience. De votre capacité à aider à fabriquer du consensus, sur les biens communs dont nous avons la garde.

(La Directrice générale poursuit en anglais)

28.2 Mr President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we will certainly need all these qualities. The General Conference that starts today marks the beginning of a particularly strategic period for UNESCO, a period during which the spirit of consensus and dialogue must continue to reign, as it has to date. And for this, let me add my voice to the gratitude expressed to the President of the 40th session of the General Conference who, like the Chairperson of the Executive Board, had to fulfil his mandate in unprecedented circumstances. And here we are. We need, as you know, an efficient governance, but we also need all the voices of UNESCO's Member States to be heard, even those not sitting on the Executive Board. Their diverse perspectives, their diverse experiences of the world, are a source of wealth and opportunity. I would therefore be delighted to work with you and the future Chairperson of the Executive Board if the General Conference does me the honour of renewing its confidence in me later today. Because, to borrow the words of the renowned Brazilian author, Clarice Lispector, "*O futuro está na esquina*": "The future is around the corner." *Muito obrigada*. Thank you.

Address by the President of the 41st session of the General Conference

29. **Temporary President:**

Thank you, Madam Director-General. I now invite the president of the 41st session of the General Conference to take his place at the podium.

30.1 **Sr. Santiago Irazabal Mourão** (Brasil) (Presidente de la Conferencia General):

Señor Presidente de la 40^a reunión de la Conferencia General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, señora Directora General, excelencias, señoras y señores: agradezco a mi buen amigo el embajador Altay Cenziger sus amables palabras y reconozco su serio y arduo trabajo de mantener la calidad y el alto nivel de los debates de la Conferencia General, incluso en las difíciles circunstancias provocadas por la pandemia de la COVID-19. Le aseguro, mi amigo, que el fútbol seguirá siendo una de mis prioridades en cuanto ciudadano del Brasil.

30.2 Me siento profundamente honrado por la confianza que los Estados Miembros de la UNESCO han depositado en mí. La candidatura del Brasil fue inmediatamente respaldada por el Presidente Jair Bolsonaro y el ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Carlos França, a quienes agradezco. Mi especial agradecimiento al GRULAC por proponer mi nombre para este cargo, que es, creo, un fuerte símbolo de la convergencia de intereses de la región, abarcando toda su diversidad. Una muestra de que las diferentes visiones y opiniones, cuando son impulsadas por el diálogo, son una fuente de riqueza y cohesión.

30.3 También deseo agradecer y elogiar a mi amigo, el señor Agapito Mba Mokuy, por su activo papel como Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, donde su autoridad ha servido de guía para que los Estados Miembros puedan adoptar las tan necesarias decisiones estratégicas relativas a las cuestiones claves del presente bienio.

30.4 Los últimos años han sido, en efecto, extremadamente petrolíferos y me gustaría felicitar a la Directora General por su firme liderazgo y a la hora de introducir temas innovadores en el orden del día y crear consenso en torno a cuestiones delicadas para nuestra Organización. Las recomendaciones sobre la ética de la inteligencia artificial y la ciencia abierta que se presentarán para su adopción en esta Conferencia General, así como el lanzamiento del informe sobre el futuro de la educación, son una prueba concreta de la extraordinaria labor realizada por usted, Directora General.

(La Président poursuit en français)

30.5 Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, tirer le meilleur parti du multilatéralisme pour faire rayonner le mandat de l'UNESCO n'a jamais été aussi important. La pandémie du COVID-19 nous a montré que les domaines de compétence de l'UNESCO sont au cœur de toutes les réponses pour consolider une paix et un développement durable. La science a bien évidemment occupé une place centrale dans le combat, lors du combat contre le COVID-19. C'est justement le développement des vaccins qui nous a permis d'être tous réunis ici en provenance de différentes régions du monde pour la réalisation d'une Conférence générale en présentiel. En même temps, il faut le voir, nous avons constaté l'inégalité dans l'accès au partage du bénéfice du vaccin, révélateur de toute une gamme de questions liées à l'exclusion dans les sociétés et entre les sociétés. L'essor de nouveaux médias a permis d'une façon extraordinaire la reconstruction des liens sociaux et à faciliter la production circulation des savoirs. Cependant, il a favorisé aussi la hausse des manifestations et de haine et des diverses formes de discrimination en ligne et dans le monde réel.

30.6 Je pense également à la violence faite aux femmes et enfants et à la fermeture d'écoles qui ont tout particulièrement empêché l'accès des enfants à une éducation inclusive et de qualité. Nous ne pouvons pas construire des sociétés plus résilientes sans l'éducation. C'est ce que nous rappelle la COP-26, qui s'achève cette semaine à Glasgow, sur l'urgence de mobiliser l'éducation pour agir face au changement climatique et laquelle a été marquée par l'active participation de la jeunesse. La culture a aussi été appelée au centre du débat lors de la dernière réunion du G20 qui, pour la première fois, a reconnu son essentielle contribution pour promouvoir le développement durable. C'est pourquoi les États membres ont plus que jamais la responsabilité de faire valoir le rôle de l'UNESCO comme un socle fondamental pour le dialogue dans ces domaines de compétence.

30.7 L'UNESCO a déjà démontré sa capacité d'être au rendez-vous des grands changements politique et sociale qui ont bouleversé le monde. Rappelons qu'au lendemain de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, l'appel lancé aux intellectuels du monde entier par l'Organisation a inspiré la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme. Dans les années 60, L'UNESCO a été au cœur de la scène mondiale lors du processus de décolonisation. L'adoption de la Convention de 1970 a marqué la mise en place du premier instrument juridique international consacré à la lutte contre le trafic des biens culturels en temps de paix. Un sujet, comme vous le savez, particulièrement sensible aussi pour le colloque.

30.8 Dans le domaine de l'éducation, les rapports forts et dès lors, ont proposé une vision holistique de l'éducation et ont mis en avant le rôle de l'UNESCO comme un laboratoire, laboratoire d'idées. Le nouveau rapport, Madame la directrice, du futur de l'Éducation, incarne à présent ce même élan. Il ne s'agit que de quelques exemples de la force de cette organisation, qui se renouvelle sans cesse depuis 75 ans. L'UNESCO a été créée pour être l'agence intellectuelle des Nations Unies. La pandémie ne nous fait que rappeler la pertinence de son mandat. L'UNESCO reste une plate-forme privilégiée pour faire entendre toutes les voix des pays développés, des pays émergents, les pays en voie de développement, en particulier les petits États insulaires en développement. Et je profite pour donner la bienvenue aux Åland Islands, comme associé membre à l'UNESCO.

30.9 Nous devons investir dans le nouvel universalisme et l'UNESCO pour lui conférer une force et une légitimité accrues. Soyez assurés de mon ferme engagement à cet égard. La solidarité et la responsabilité doivent être notre boussole pour favoriser des initiatives adressées à la région Afrique qui reste une priorité globale, et ceci à travers notamment le renforcement de la coopération Sud-Sud et trilatérale. Nous devons continuer à travailler dans nos pays avec les interlocuteurs privilégiés, les commissions nationales et la société civile. Nous devons aussi continuer à défendre et faire résonner la voix des artistes, des chercheurs, des enseignants et des journalistes. La vocation de l'UNESCO est de s'ouvrir à la jeunesse et favoriser le foisonnement des idées qui permettront de prendre leur destin en main. C'est pourquoi je me réjouis du consensus attendu lors de la dernière session du Conseil exécutif qui permettra la réalisation en ligne, le 19 novembre prochain, du deuxième Forum des jeunes.

(La Président poursuit en anglais)

30.10 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, my presidency, I believe, begins at a critical moment. Together, we must implement the Medium-Term Strategy, to promote a deep impact in our societies. We need to boost UNESCO as a thinktank, to make a real difference in the lives of women and men across different countries. These require strengthening UNESCO presence in the ground, taking into consideration the singularity of each region and its needs. It also involves the development of solid partnerships bringing multiple stakeholders on board. Let me give some examples here. The World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, Mondiacult, is under preparation to be held in September 2022 in Mexico City. For forty years after the first Mondiacult, this event should be regarded as a great opportunity to discuss and decide on how to improve people's access, especially the poorest ones, to culture and cultural goods. In a few months from now, the UNESCO Creative Cities meeting will be held for the first time in a Latin American city, in Santos, Brazil. We hope its results will be able to broadly demonstrate the relevance of cultural industries for reducing social and economic gaps. Culture is indeed a fundamental key to reducing inequality and poverty, two of the great violences that hinder our efforts towards sustainability.

30.11 Another key for the consolidation of a sustainable society is science, in particular open science. This idea is central to catalyse scientific knowledge and technology transfer within the framework of the United Nations International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, spearheaded by UNESCO. We all know that the decisions taken today will have a strong repercussion for humanity and for the planet.

30.12 We have a unique momentum to create a better future and make UNESCO's aspiration of building lasting peace in the minds of women and men become true. For this, we need to ensure access to quality education. Still, today, the world counts more than 750 million illiterate adults. UNESCO must call States and all stakeholders to act with a sense of urgency if we wish to fulfil the 2030 Agenda. I quote the words of the former Brazilian President of the General Conference, Eduardo Portella, twenty-five years ago: It is not enough for us to think of the excluded. We must also consider those who, in the voracity of everyday life, have never been included. We need to prepare the current and future generations to act as real change makers, empowering them with intellectual and intercultural competencies, with media literacy. We need more data and better knowledge to fight against the root of ignorance and prejudice. This is why our cultural Conventions and programmes such Memory of the World and Slave Route projects are so relevant. The upcoming International Decade of Indigenous Languages under the leadership of UNESCO is also a call for inclusiveness through the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity. Positive change can only be built on the respect of cultural diversity and the equal and universal access to education and information. Member States must engage to adopt policies to strengthen the universal right to information as a human right. This is the best way to tackle recent threats and disinformation and to ensure the safety of journalists. By their colleagues, by building capacities, by carrying out advocacy, by fostering innovation, UNESCO continues to be a frontline player of multilateral cooperation. Today, more than ever, we need UNESCO's leadership. UNESCO holds a unique position to make a decisive contribution to the United Nations' Common Agenda and participate in this positive course led by Secretary General António Guterres to reinvigorate multilateralism based on a comprehensive vision of human rights.

30.13. My dear colleagues, as the new President of the General Conference, you can count on my willingness and courage to work together with you, the Member States, the Secretariat, to tackle these current challenges. I wish to assure you that with hard work and openness to dialogue, I will spare no effort to help UNESCO move forward towards our common goals. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Conference

31. The President:

Ladies and gentlemen, we shall now continue with item **1.4** of the agenda and proceed to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Conference. The relevant documents are 41 C/NOM/1 and its Addendum. I call upon Her Excellency, my friend Ms Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili, Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, to present the list of Member States who are candidates for the posts of Vice-Presidents for this session.

32.1 Ms Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili (Chairperson of the Nominations Committee):

Thank you, Mr President, but before continuing with item **1.4**, I would like to congratulate you wholeheartedly on the election as the President of the 41st session of the General Conference. And you know that you can count on my full support as you carry out your duty and responsibility throughout the term of your presidency. And I would also like to express my thanks to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr Altay Cenziger. Over the past two years, he has exercised the function of the President of the General Conference wisely and led us throughout a very challenging biennial.

32.2 Mr President, the Nominations Committee recommended in its meeting earlier today the election for the post of the Vice-Presidents of the 41st session of the General Conference, the heads of delegation of the following 21 Member States: Argentina, Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Italy, Grenada, Jamaica, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, Palestine, Switzerland, and Tunisia. We have also been informed by the Group V(a) of the candidates from Ghana, Namibia and South Africa for the post of the Vice-Presidents of the 41st session of the General Conference. I therefore submit, Mr President, the recommendation of the Nomination Committee concerning the now 24 Vice-Presidents of the 41st session of the General Conference, including the proposals from the Group V(a). Thank you.

33.1 The President:

I thank you. I now submit to you the list of proposals proposed by the Nomination Committee for approval by this General Conference. I see no objection. I therefore declare the heads of delegations on the list that was read out elected Vice-Presidents of the General Conference.

33.2 *It is so decided.*

33.3 Before we continue, I want to congratulate all the colleagues that have been elected as Vice-Presidents of the Conference, and I hope I will work together with all of you. I will need your support all the time. Thank you very much.

34.4 Ladies and gentlemen, this brings us to the conclusion of this morning's meeting. I wish to inform the heads of delegations and all the delegates that the plenary meeting reconvenes this afternoon at 3 p.m. Since we shall be dealing with some very important items this afternoon, including the appointment of the Director-General, I would ask you to be at your place at 3 p.m. sharp. The election to the post of Director-General is the first item that we will be dealing with this afternoon. It is a very important that everybody is already in the room at 3 p.m. and I need to emphasize the importance of your presence. All of you here, please. We will provide you with the procedural elements and details when we meet at 3 p.m. I wish you a pleasant lunch. The meeting is **adjourned**.

The meeting rose at 12 p.m.