

## Fourth plenary meeting of the 41st session of the General Conference

Wednesday 10 November 2021 at 3.15 p.m.

President: **Mr Irazabal Mourão** (Brazil)

### General policy debate (*continued*)

#### 1. **The President:**

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, welcome back. I declare the fourth plenary meeting of the General Conference open. Ladies and gentlemen, we will now continue with national statements. I remind you that in order for our afternoon to be as efficient as possible, we will need to continue with the good practice of respecting the six-minute time limit. And I wish to thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation in this regard. I now have the honour to invite His Excellency, Mr Bárður av Steig Nielsen, Prime Minister of Faroes, to speak to the room. I think the Prime Minister is a little bit delayed. Let us wait one second. Sorry, I now call His Excellency, Mr Jeyhun Bayramov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan. You have the floor, sir.

#### 2.1 **Mr Bayramov** (Azerbaijan):

Dear Mr President of the General Conference, dear Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, dear Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, at the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency, Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao, on the assumption of his presidency of the 41st session of the General Conference and wish him every success in fulfilling that highly responsible duty. I also express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr Altay Cenziger for his hard work in presiding over the 40th session of the General Conference. Using this opportunity, I would like to congratulate Ms Audrey Azoulay on her re-election as the Director-General of UNESCO, and we hope for every success during her second mandate.

2.2 Ladies and gentlemen, this year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of UNESCO. Today, the relevance of UNESCO is more than ever as we are going through unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic continues, posing a serious threat to the whole world from the very beginning. Our government has been taking robust measures to minimize the negative impact of the pandemic on its population, as well as on the international community. Sixty percent of our population has already been vaccinated. We have also made voluntary financial contributions to the World Health Organization in the amount of \$10 million and provided financial and humanitarian assistance to more than 30 countries to support their fight against the COVID-19.

2.3 Mr President, Azerbaijan has a long-standing relationship with UNESCO and next year we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of our membership in UNESCO. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madam Mehriban Aliyeva, we have a strong dynamic partnership with UNESCO. Within the last 30 years, Azerbaijan has become an important and reliable partner of the Organization. Azerbaijan supports the Organization's noble mission in different parts of the world and is one of the main partners in promoting of intercultural dialogue. Azerbaijan has been supporting UNESCO Member States from African, Asian and Latin American regions in such priority areas as girls' education, safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage, science and innovation technologies, and disaster risk preparedness through the trust fund that has been established between UNESCO and Azerbaijan.

2.4 Azerbaijan is committed to the protection of both cultural and natural heritage globally, considering the utmost importance of preserving the rich cultural heritage of Africa. Azerbaijan has decided to financially contribute to the Africa World Heritage Fund. Besides, Azerbaijan supports UNESCO's Global Priority Africa and calls on the international community to pay special attention to the needs of the small island developing States. Azerbaijan expressed its intention to join the Global Education Coalition, launched by UNESCO in March 2020. In this regard, Azerbaijan will contribute to the supportive actions aimed at assisting all learners around the world, particularly the most vulnerable ones. I am proud to announce the contribution of \$1 million by my government to the Global Education Coalition.

2.5 Honourable delegates, as you are well aware, Azerbaijan liberated its territories from 30 years of occupation by Armenia and with the signing of the trilateral statement by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on 10 November 2020, the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan came to an end. The results of the Armenian occupation were devastating. Armenia had pursued a systematic policy of destroying, pillaging and misappropriating Azerbaijan's cultural heritage, both in the territories it has occupied for 30 years and in Armenia itself during the occupation period. Hundreds of cultural properties have been deliberately and completely destroyed, damaged, looted and subjected to alteration, with a view to changing the historical and cultural character. Of 67 mosques, 65 have been razed to the ground and the remaining two were desecrated and used as stables for pigs and cows. In total disrespect to the Muslim world, thousands of museums artifacts have been illegally exported to Armenia. By all these actions, Armenia pursued far reaching targets of removing any sign heralding the Azerbaijani origins as an example of cultural genocide. Armenia also refused to share the maps of the minefields, deliberately preventing the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to the liberated territories. This also constitutes a gross violation of international law, including UNESCO instruments such as the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols, as well as the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

2.6 In our various communications, we alerted UNESCO of these gross violations and illegal activities committed by Armenia and requested the need to dispatch a technical mission to the occupied territories throughout the past 30 years. Unfortunately, each time Armenia prevented the dispatch of the of this mission, which was acknowledged by UNESCO in its 2005 report. The Government of Azerbaijan has already initiated practical steps, aiming at eliminating the consequences of decades long occupation, followed by massive destruction at the highest level. Azerbaijan declared its determination that all cultural and religious monuments in the liberated territories, regardless of their origin, will be duly preserved and restored.

Azerbaijan will continue to build upon these ideals and values and guarantees all the rights for all its citizens, irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation. Indeed, Azerbaijan is home to more than 50 different ethnic groups. Azerbaijan, in its efforts at post-conflict rehabilitation, is looking forward to cooperation with UNESCO. Over the past months since the end of the conflict, Azerbaijan and UNESCO have been actively engaged in dialogue with a view to dispatching a technical mission to the liberated territories. The two sides have agreed on several complex technical, legal and political aspects of the mission, which will ensure its effectiveness and independence. The assessment of the unprecedented damage inflicted upon our cultural heritage is a priority for our government, and we are ready to host an independent technical mission as soon as possible. Unfortunately, Armenia is trying to block and politicize the mission, which is detrimental to its successful accomplishment. Armenia must refrain from interfering in this process and cease exploiting this Organization for its own political purposes.

2.7 Excellencies, on the occasion of the 880th anniversary of the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi, this year is declared as the year of Nizami Ganjavi in Azerbaijan. On 4 October, Azerbaijan organized the event dedicated to Nizami at UNESCO Headquarters, and we extend our appreciation to Madam Director-General for co-hosting this event. Azerbaijan has just hosted the 8th Baku Global Forum, organized by the Nizami Ganjavi International Centre, bringing together the representatives of more than 40 countries.

2.8 In line with UNESCO's ideals and commitments, Azerbaijan promotes intercultural dialogue, tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the world. The Baku Process, initiated in 2008 by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has become a global platform in fostering the rapprochement of cultures in partnership with international and regional organizations, including UNESCO.

2.9 Dear friends and colleagues, in conclusion, Azerbaijan, as a candidate country to the UNESCO Executive Board for the term 2021-2025, counts on your valuable support. Your trust will give us an opportunity to further contribute and assist our Organization in realizing its noble goals and ideals. Thank you.

### 3. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Aziz Abdulkhakov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Minister of Tourism and Sports. You have the floor sir.

#### 3.1 **Mr Abdulkhakov** (Uzbekistan):

Mr President of the 41st session of the General Conference, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to speak at this tribune of the UNESCO General Conference. I commend the effort of the UNESCO's Secretariat to bring us together in person despite current difficulties. I am pleased that we are gradually returning to normal work conditions after a long period of virtual life under pandemic.

3.2 First, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Santiago Irazabal Mourao on his election as the President of the 41st session of the General Conference for the next two years. I wish you, Mr President, all the best in this important and responsible endeavour. I also sincerely congratulate Her Excellency Madam Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on her appointment for a second term. I would like to extend the full support of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to her and her distinguished team. She managed the Secretariat in the best possible manner throughout her first term that partially coincided with the challenging times of the pandemic. We are confident that under her leadership during the coming years, UNESCO will lead us to new heights on the way to achieving the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

3.3 Today, when challenges like climate change continue to escalate and, at the same time, we face some new challenges like a global pandemic, we need UNESCO as never before and its leadership is inexpressibly important. The Organization that oversees almost all major aspects of human life has turned seventy-five. We all celebrate this important milestone in these days. We fully share the widely supported vision that today UNESCO is on the right path. I would like to commend the productive work the Organization has done to support Member States when they were hit by the pandemic. We found relevant and timely all key initiatives launched by UNESCO to respond to COVID-19, like Global Education Coalition, the ResiliArt Movement, "Next Normal" campaign and many more.

3.4 Uzbekistan, by being an active stakeholder in the international community under the leadership of President Mirziyoyev, has been putting great effort across broad issues within the UNESCO mandate. The investment to advance culture, education, science and information sectors has doubled, in some cases tripled during the pandemic, to mitigate negative impact and keep these arrays intact. For instance, to preserve cultural heritage, we adopted a plan to introduce modern digital technologies to create 3-D copies of all four world heritage properties. In the education and science fields, we are running Presidential programmes such as "New Uzbekistan" and the "Third Renaissance". Over the last years, the media sector has flourished with an unprecedentedly high pace.

3.5 In our development strategies, we attach significance to fully utilizing the opportunities that UNESCO offers. In the last two years since the official visit of UNESCO Director-General, Madam Azoulay, to Uzbekistan in August 2019, we managed to increase UNESCO programmes' presence in our country despite the pandemic. The Organization, as usual, supported us vitally in arranging major international and regional events. We also thank UNESCO for its support in promoting our initiative, the "Khiva Process", at the recent Executive Board meeting. This idea was launched as a main outcome of the international forum that was organized in Geneva in September at the initiative of President Mirziyoyev. The Khiva Process will establish a new platform to strengthen international collaboration in central Asia within the areas of UNESCO's mandate. We are confident that this framework will add value in the effort made by UNESCO in this region. To promote the Khiva Process, we submitted a resolution to the General Conference. We also have some other important documents concerning the organization of the World Forum on Early Childhood Education in Uzbekistan and the celebration of the 1050th anniversary of Abu Raykhon Beruniy. We look forward to and count on the support of Member States in adopting this important resolution in this session.

3.6 In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Uzbekistan is strongly determined to support UNESCO's activities as well as to further boost bilateral partnership. We are a candidate to the UNESCO Executive Board elections for the term starting in 2023 and also to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage next year. We have some important projects ranging from inscribing "Bakhshi Art" and "Zarafshan Silk Road Corridor" in the relevant UNESCO world heritage lists and promoting biodiversity and UNESCO Global Geoparks, to holding global celebrations such as the International Day for Universal Access to Information and many more. We look forward to working closely with all stakeholders on these matters and further promoting UNESCO's mandate internationally. Thank you.

#### 4. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency, Ms Maria Brown, Minister of Education of Ecuador. You have the floor madam.

##### 5.1 **Sra. Brown (Ecuador):**

Un saludo cordial a todas las autoridades nacionales y de la UNESCO que nos acompañan en este importante evento. El Gobierno de Ecuador felicita la reelección de Audrey Azoulay como Directora General de esta Organización y ratifica el compromiso nacional de seguir colaborando en materia de educación, ciencia, cultura y comunicación e información. Estas son áreas prioritarias que han sido consideradas en el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo para los próximos años en el Ecuador.

5.2 En cuanto a educación, como un derecho humano fundamental, Ecuador está comprometido con alcanzar las metas establecidas en el Objetivo de Desarrollo Sostenible número cuatro. Para ello, con el liderazgo del Presidente Guillermo Lasso, Ecuador ha avanzado en la vacunación de niños y jóvenes desde 5 años de edad, convirtiéndose en uno de los primeros países de la región en vacunar a la población infantil. Esta estrategia ha permitido, luego de 16 meses de pandemia y educación a distancia, retornar a clases presenciales. Esperamos para enero de 2022 haber llegado con clases presenciales al 100% de la población en edad escolar.

5.3 Asimismo, estamos trabajando en un modelo pedagógico más innovador que reconozca la importancia de la diversidad geográfica, biológica, cultural y lingüística del país. En este escenario, y después de atravesar por momentos tan complejos de la pandemia por COVID-19, hemos asumido algunos retos, entre ellos: procurar un retorno seguro y progresivo a clases presenciales; abordar el incremento de la violencia intrafamiliar, el embarazo adolescente, la ansiedad, la depresión a través de estrategias integrales; reinsertar a la educación a niños y jóvenes que han abandonado sus estudios y han sido excluidos de la educación durante y antes de la pandemia; cerrar la brecha digital en la educación y capacitar a los docentes en nuevas herramientas tecnológicas para una educación virtual.

5.4 En el ámbito de la cultura, Ecuador cuenta con dos ciudades Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad: Quito y Cuenca. El Gobierno nacional promueve la reactivación de las industrias creativas y culturales y la salvaguardia del patrimonio cultural material e inmaterial. Ha planteado la estrategia emblemática de los teatros del barrio promoviendo las artes escénicas y plásticas en todas las comunidades del país con fondos de desarrollo del patrimonio. El Gobierno nacional apuesta por potenciar su sistema de memoria social y patrimonio, incorporando nuevas tecnologías digitales para poner en valor museos, archivos y bibliotecas, porque este legado no es solo del Ecuador, es parte del patrimonio mundial, nos compromete a todos y para ello el apoyo de la UNESCO es fundamental.

5.5 Ecuador espera pronto que el pasillo, ritmo que identifica a los ecuatorianos y que posee características ligadas a profundos entramados históricos, sociales y culturales, así como a significaciones, valores, funciones, usos y formas tradicionales que han sido transmitidas de generación en generación, sea considerado como patrimonio cultural inmaterial de la humanidad, así como lo ha sido la marimba y el tejido de sombrero de paja toquilla.

5.6 La diversidad del Ecuador también se expresa en sus pueblos indígenas. Contamos con 14 lenguas originarias que deben ser preservadas a través de mecanismos educativos y comunitarios. Esta será una ardua tarea con la UNESCO en el marco del próximo Decenio de las Lenguas Indígenas, mismo que fue promovido ampliamente por el Ecuador en el seno de las Naciones Unidas.

5.7 Asimismo, contamos con siete reservas de biosfera en la Amazonía: el Parque Nacional Yasuní, la Reserva Sumaco Napo Galeras; en el Sur del Ecuador: el Podocarpus, y el Macizo del Cajas; la Reserva de biosfera transfronteriza de Ecuador y Perú: Bosques de Paz, la Reserva de Bosques Húmedos Tropicales del Chocó Andino de Pichincha y, cómo no olvidar, el primer Patrimonio Natural de la Humanidad: las Islas Galápagos.

5.8 El compromiso del Gobierno nacional y del Presidente de la República, con su conservación y con la transición ecológica, se han visto plasmados en su reciente anuncio durante la COP 26, en la cual Ecuador se comprometió a ampliar el área marina protegida en 60 000 km<sup>2</sup> y junto con Colombia, Costa Rica y Panamá, proteger este corredor marino que alberga uno de los territorios de mayor diversidad de fauna en el mundo. Esta propuesta innovadora plantea que los países del mundo aporten en mecanismos como canje de deuda a la reducción y mitigación de los efectos del cambio climático.

5.9 Estamos comprometidos para que en el país exista libertad de expresión y seguridad de periodistas. La presidencia presentó a la Asamblea Nacional dentro de sus primeros 100 días de gobierno la Ley de Libertad de Expresión como muestra de este compromiso. El Presidente Lasso impulsa un gobierno de diálogo en donde la diversidad de ideas es valorada y la construcción de consensos es la base para avanzar en democracia.

5.10 Reiteramos nuestro llamado a los Estados Miembros de la UNESCO a que trabajemos juntos y fortalezcamos el multilateralismo, plasmemos en acciones concretas, las metas de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, esperamos contar con el apoyo de la UNESCO en estas iniciativas y continuar trabajando en nuestras áreas de interés común.

#### 6. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency, Ms Li Andersson, Minister of Education of Finland. You have the floor madam.

**7.1 Ms Andersson (Finland):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, Finland aligns itself with the EU statement. Mr President, congratulations on your election. I also warmly congratulate Madam Azoulay, on your re-election. Finland looks forward to continued close cooperation.

7.2 Finland welcomes the aim to revive multilateralism as outlined in the United Nations Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda". We agree with the Secretary-General: we can either choose to break down or to break through. The report is highly relevant for UNESCO's work across all pillars of the United Nations – peace, development and human rights. The human rights-based approach is key for peace, stability and prosperity. We expect UNESCO to remain at the forefront in actively promoting the free flow of ideas – including academic, scientific and artistic freedom and the freedom of the media. UNESCO must continue to be a progressive and proactive voice for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also wish to see greater emphasis on gender equality, including the rights of LGBTI persons.

7.3 Excellencies, sped up by the COVID pandemic, digital innovation and transformation are definitely here to stay. This has brought to the fore the access to reliable information and scientific knowledge as we address the current global challenges. Finland supports the recommendations on Open Science as well as on the ethics of artificial intelligence (AI).

7.4 In the age of instant communication, disinformation and hate speech are increasing threats to societies all around the world. Disinformation has played an all too large role in slowing down our efforts to combat both climate change and the ongoing COVID pandemic. UNESCO has an important role in combatting misinformation, prejudice, discrimination and hate speech, which all reproduce and reinforce inequalities. As one remedy, we welcome the new intersectoral approach to critical media literacy.

7.5 The pandemic has highlighted the importance of quality education for all. Access to education is also one of the key components for the wellbeing of children and youth. However, currently millions are at risk of dropping out or falling behind in learning. Girls are at particular risk. The only acceptable goal in the current situation is that there must be no lost generation.

7.6 As technology becomes ever more intertwined with all aspects of our lives, we need to pay close attention to its racial, gender and social biases as well as biases towards disabled people. Finland is happy to be the co-leader of the United Nations Women's Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation of the Generation Equality campaign.

7.7 Ladies and gentlemen, with the COP26 summit ongoing, I want to emphasize that education, science and culture are all needed fully onboard to combat the ongoing climate emergency. We are currently racing against the clock to ensure that our societies become carbon negative early enough to avert the impending climate catastrophe. This rapid transformation calls for a large number of new skills and competencies. Our educational systems need to be fully up to speed to meet this challenge.

7.8 It is essential to promote youth engagement. We are grateful for the efforts to arrange for the virtual Youth Forum. Every General Conference should have a Youth Forum, planned for in a timely manner. I am happy to be accompanied by several young experts in my delegation.

7.9 Distinguished delegates, during our term on the Executive Board, we have seen UNESCO strengthening its global positioning and relevance through the strategic transformation process and results-based management. We find UNESCO at 75 more resilient than before, as shown also by its agility during the pandemic. The strategy and programme documents before us result from extensive negotiations involving all regions, and we wish to go along with the consensus adoption.

7.10 Finland is happy and proud to extend its support, together with the other Nordic countries for the candidature of Iceland to the Executive Board. The Nordics are, and will remain, strong and active partners of UNESCO. As a testimony to Finland's firm commitment to UNESCO, we were pleased to introduce the self-governing province of the Åland Islands as a new Associate Member of UNESCO. I wish to extend our thanks to the General Conference for granting Associate Membership to the Åland Islands. Thank you.

**8. The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Kristján Thor Júlíusson, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture of Iceland. You have the floor sir.

**9.1 Mr Júlíusson (Iceland):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, I start by congratulating Madame Azoulay on her re-election. Iceland is a longstanding partner of UNESCO and an active supporter of multilateralism. We are firmly committed to UNESCO's mandate and basic principles. Iceland shares UNESCO's goals of promoting peace and security through collaboration in education, science, culture, and communication. As we announced in June 2018, Iceland is a candidate to the UNESCO Executive Board at the elections taking place next week. The candidacy is supported by the other Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, with whom we work closely. UNESCO is one of Iceland's key partner organizations in supporting the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our joint vision for the next decade.

9.2 Excellencies, recent world events of the COVID-19 crisis have further exposed the digital divide and shed light on new opportunities. As we continue our path towards increasing digitalisation, bridging the digital divide will be key to fulfil our promise of leaving no one behind. UNESCO's contribution in this area has the potential to be crucial towards building a better and more equitable and sustainable future for all.

9.3 Excellencies, we must not lose focus on the importance of including gender equality in every aspect of UNESCO's work and we welcome the Medium-Term Strategy's focus on a gender-transformative approach. We must continue our efforts at ensuring equal access of all genders to education, eradicating gender-based violence, and promoting women's empowerment. It is, moreover, important that we demonstrate awareness of our society's structural qualities by pursuing an

intersectional approach to gender mainstreaming and encouraging respect and increased equality for our diverse and plurilingual populations. For this to be possible, we all need to be active participants. We therefore emphasize the importance of the increased engagement of men in this process.

9.4 Mr President, the human rights-based approach is central to UNESCO's programmes and needs to be further strengthened – This must also include a special concern for people identifying as LGBTI+, whose marginalization can negatively affect their ability to exercise their rights, access to society, and safety.

9.5 Education is a fundamental human right of which should be accessible to everyone. We should continue to focus on ensuring inclusive and equitable high-quality education at all levels. A dynamic and flexible education system places the focus on giving everyone the opportunity to develop and increase their competence on their own terms through active democratic participation, cooperation, communication and creative critical thinking. We also need to continue work on coordinating education for sustainable development and educating the world's population on the adverse effects of climate change. The effects of climate change are much too visible, both in my country Iceland, but also in many of the small island developing States.

9.6 Respect for fundamental freedoms, pluralistic media and freedom of information is vital to every society. UNESCO is doing important work on promoting freedom of expression, but there is no doubt that media freedom and the safety of journalists is under threat. Governments and civil society must work together to reverse this trend. We must defend freedom of speech, a hallmark of any democratic and free society.

9.7 We welcome UNESCO's initiative and work on the recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence. This is an important first step in ensuring that emerging technologies benefit humanity. The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science also serves as an important tool to define shared values and principles while bringing science closer to citizens.

9.8 Ladies and gentlemen, in Iceland's development policy we have placed emphasis on the quality of basic education and improved access to education in developing countries. We continue building on Iceland's partnership framework agreement with UNESCO since 2019 with the aim of providing predictable and flexible funding through a multi-tier agreement. Iceland was also a founding Member of the CapED programme in 2003 and are happy to show our renewed support for this programme.

9.9 Recently we have also brought four of Iceland's United Nations university programmes, focused on capacity development training in developing countries, under the auspices of UNESCO, in order to build new partnerships. The category 2 institute, GRÓ, was founded last year and builds on the long-standing work of four training programmes in the fields of geothermal energy, fisheries, land restoration and gender equality and is building new partnerships with UNESCO to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

9.10 Dear friends, Iceland's candidacy to the UNESCO Executive Board in 2021 is in line with our desire to strengthen Iceland's commitment to the Organization and the realization of UNESCO'S mandate, both through its normative work and work on the ground. As a Member of the Executive Board, we wish to continue the work of others on good governance aligned with our vision for an active and effective UNESCO. We hope to have your full support at the elections next week. I thank you.

#### 10. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr. Pablo Da Silveira, Minister of Education and Culture of Uruguay. You have the floor sir.

#### 11.1 **Sr. Da Silveira** (Uruguay):

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, distinguidos delegados nacionales: quisiera, en primer lugar, señor Presidente, sumarme a la felicitación por su elección para presidir esta Conferencia General y expresarle toda la colaboración de Uruguay en esta tarea. También quisiera sumarme a las felicitaciones a la señora Directora General por su reelección para un nuevo período al frente de esta Organización. Estamos convencidos de que este segundo mandato continuará cimentando una visión ambiciosa para la UNESCO y seguirá contribuyendo a encontrar soluciones.

11.2 Celebramos muy particularmente que tras tiempos complejos y desafiantes, nuevamente tengamos la posibilidad de encontrarnos aquí en esta casa, convocados por temas centrales para nuestros países. Este tema, este tiempo de pandemia ha representado un inmenso desafío y ha traído dolor y muerte para millones de familias y personas en todo el planeta. También nos ha recordado cuánto nos falta avanzar en términos de justicia internacional. El acceso a tratamientos médicos, las tasas de mortalidad, la administración de vacunas se han distribuido de manera muy desigual, prolongando inequidades que existían antes, que siguen existiendo hoy y que seguirán existiendo mañana, si no tomamos decisiones energéticas.

11.3 La pandemia trajo dolores nuevos y nos recordó injusticias viejas, pero también generó oportunidades y aceleró procesos en curso. El uso de las tecnologías como instrumentos de política pública y el desarrollo de nuevas modalidades de educación híbrida o a distancia son ejemplos de avances que se aceleraron en los últimos dos años. También es probable que hoy exista una mayor conciencia mundial sobre las tareas fundamentales que cada día ejercen los maestros y que tienen como escenario principal a las escuelas de todo el mundo.

11.4 En nuestro país, Uruguay, la pandemia nos impulsó a fortalecer los instrumentos de educación a distancia y a reconocer la conectividad como una condición para el ejercicio de derechos. También nos empujó a reforzar la formación de maestros en el uso de nuevas tecnologías y a ensayar nuevas modalidades de gestión de escuelas. Nuestro desafío ahora es que estos avances no se pierdan con la vuelta a la normalidad. También la UNESCO desplegó una rápida acción a nivel internacional para garantizar la continuidad educativa y evitar la desinformación, fomentar la reflexión sobre

cuestiones éticas y buscar soluciones para la cultura. En este sentido, queremos hacer público nuestro reconocimiento a todo el equipo de la Secretaría y muy especialmente al liderazgo de la señora Directora General.

11.5 Aprovecho también esta ocasión para reiterar el compromiso de mi país con el multilateralismo, con el apego al derecho internacional y a la solución pacífica de conflictos, con la promoción y protección de los derechos humanos, con la cultura de paz y con la democracia como régimen de gobierno. Estos son compromisos que intentamos honrar como miembros de la UNESCO. Uruguay es actualmente miembro del Consejo Ejecutivo, miembro del Consejo Ejecutivo de la Comisión Oceanografía Internacional y ejerce la Presidencia del Comité Intergubernamental de Bioética.

11.6 En el territorio uruguayo funcionan dos centros de categoría 2 auspiciados por la UNESCO: el Centro para la Gestión de Aguas Subterráneas para América Latina y el Caribe y el Centro Experimental Regional sobre Tecnologías de Saneamiento. Contamos con dos reservas de biosfera y un geoparque mundial UNESCO y se ha aprobado la instalación de un Centro Regional para Planificación y Capacitación Marina.

11.7 El país cuenta con tres sitios inscriptos en la lista de Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO, el último de los cuales, una iglesia construida por el ingeniero uruguayo Eladio Dieste, se incorporó hace muy pocos meses. También tenemos dos inscripciones en la lista de Patrimonio Inmaterial, el candombe y el tango, este último en conjunto con nuestros hermanos argentinos. Somos pioneros en el desarrollo de las rutas UNESCO que ahora empiezan a instalarse en otros países.

11.8 En Uruguay funcionan ocho cátedras UNESCO y estamos a punto de incorporar una más. En GRULAC UNESCO coordinamos el grupo de trabajo de Ciencias Naturales y Exactas. Hemos firmado un memorándum de cooperación en materia de libertad de expresión y acceso a la información pública. Tenemos varios proyectos en curso con financiamiento de la UNESCO y estamos comprometidos con el proyecto "La Ruta del Esclavo". Tal vez la mejor materialización de este largo compromiso sea la oficina regional que funciona en Montevideo desde hace 72 años. Esta oficina fue la primera en ser abierta luego de que se instalara esta sede aquí, en París. Se trata de una oficina de gran solidez técnica que viene desempeñando un fantástico trabajo en el área de las ciencias naturales y exactas y comienza a serlo en el de las nuevas tecnologías.

11.9 Quisiera simplemente para terminar, dar una noticia y una invitación: en mayo de 2022, Uruguay será sede de la Conferencia Global del Día Mundial de la Libertad de Prensa. Esa actividad marcará el regreso después de casi una década de este importante evento a América Latina. La organización de esta actividad es vista por el Gobierno uruguayo como una manera de confirmar su compromiso indeclinable con la libertad y, en particular, con las libertades de expresión y de prensa. También será una ocasión para reflexionar sobre los desafíos actuales de la profesión periodística, sobre las condiciones de riesgo en la que frecuentemente se ejerce, sobre el impacto de las redes sociales con el consiguiente aumento de falsas noticias, sobre los desafíos económicos que enfrentan los medios y sobre la necesidad de profundizar el compromiso de los gobiernos con la transparencia, la limitación de su propio poder y el fomento de un debate público de calidad.

11.10 Hoy, como hace 75 años, redoblamos nuestra apuesta por la UNESCO. Por eso los invitamos a visitar Uruguay los días 2, 3, 4 y 5 de mayo del año que viene para participar en esta gran celebración de la libertad de prensa, que concebimos como un homenaje a los periodistas, a los medios y a la libertad como valor fundamental. Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

## 12. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Professor Tony Mwaba Kazadi, Minister of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. You have the floor sir.

### 13.1 **M. Kazadi (Congo) :**

Monsieur le Président, je voudrais avant tout vous présenter au nom de la République démocratique du Congo, mes félicitations pour votre élection en qualité de Président de la 41<sup>e</sup> session de la Conférence générale et vous souhaiter plein succès pour votre mandat ainsi qu'aux autres membres du Bureau.

13.2 Monsieur le Président, il y a deux ans, lorsque le rideau tombait sur la 40<sup>e</sup> session, personne ne pouvait se douter qu'à peine quatre mois plus tard, le monde allait être frappé par la pire catastrophe sanitaire du siècle à travers la pandémie de COVID-19 qui, hélas, continue de sévir. Aujourd'hui, nous allons célébrer le 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de notre Organisation dans ce contexte difficile, mais nous les célébrons quand même avec un enthousiasme non dissimulé, car l'UNESCO n'est pas restée tétanisée par cette catastrophe. Bien au contraire, elle a su montrer sa résilience, prouver sa pertinence et démontrer qu'elle demeure toujours inventive, opérationnelle et efficace.

13.3 Si tous les domaines ont été fragilisés par la pandémie, celui de l'éducation l'a été encore davantage, et c'est dans ce secteur que les efforts de notre Organisation ont été les plus remarquables. En effet, l'UNESCO s'est portée au chevet de nos systèmes éducatifs avec promptitude et détermination en vue d'assurer la continuité des apprentissages pendant la période de confinement. Le recours au numérique et à l'enseignement à distance s'est révélé comme une alternative crédible, notamment dans mon pays, malgré les insuffisances qu'il faut maintenant corriger, car cette stratégie est appelée à s'affirmer pour la pérennisation dans le cadre de la résilience de nos systèmes éducatifs.

13.4 C'est ici le lieu de remercier la Directrice générale, que nous avons eu le plaisir d'accueillir à Kinshasa le 15 octobre 2020, pour son implication personnelle dans ce combat ainsi que celui de la mobilisation de tous les protagonistes en vue de maintenir, en dépit de la crise sanitaire, une offre éducative inclusive et de qualité, et d'offrir à chacun la possibilité d'apprendre tout au long de la vie.

13.5 S'agissant particulièrement de mon pays, nous apprécions à sa juste valeur l'accompagnement technique de l'UNESCO dans plusieurs chantiers comme l'appui à la planification, la pérennisation des systèmes d'information et de gestion de l'éducation, des diagnostics sectoriels de type Reisen et l'élaboration d'un pacte de partenariat dans le cadre de la nouvelle approche des PME visant la transformation stratégique du système éducatif. Mais aussi nous apprécions surtout

l'appui à la mise en œuvre de la politique de la gratuité de l'enseignement primaire décrétée par le Président de la République et Chef de l'État, Son Excellence Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo.

13.6 Madame la Directrice générale de l'UNESCO, lors de sa visite en 2020, a engagé l'UNESCO à appuyer la planification sur cinq ans à travers la mise en place d'un mécanisme rigoureux de suivi évaluation de la gratuité et le renforcement de la formation initiale et continue des enseignants. Nous notons des avancées notoires sur ces chantiers et aujourd'hui un assistant technique a été placé à mon service et une feuille de route adoptée avec des activités précises.

13.7 Dans les domaines des sciences exactes et naturelles, le monde a encore pris conscience du fait de la crise sanitaire, de la nécessité du développement des sciences, technologies et innovation STI, ainsi que l'importance de la préservation des écosystèmes et de la biodiversité. En effet, les STEM sont au cœur du progrès et en période de crise, comme c'est le cas aujourd'hui, elle constitue un levier pour accéder aux solutions appropriées. Au sujet des écosystèmes et de la biodiversité, il est évident qu'ils sont aujourd'hui mis à mal par l'accélération des effets du changement climatique. Nous considérons que l'action transversale et interdisciplinaire de l'UNESCO dans ces domaines témoigne du sens des responsabilités que nous nous sommes en droit d'attendre de notre Organisation. Et là aussi, nous voulons souligner l'important travail que l'UNESCO a effectué pour nous soutenir. Et aujourd'hui, nous détenons notre politique nationale scientifique qui vient d'être validée ce mois d'octobre 2021.

13.8 La RDC, qui est le deuxième poumon vert du monde, se réjouit de la sortie d'un de ses biens, en l'occurrence les Parcs de Salonga, de la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril. Nous sommes reconnaissants au Centre du patrimoine mondial pour son accompagnement et comptons sur l'appui de l'Organisation pour la réalisation des actions d'envergure initiées en faveur de nos réserves de biosphère et tourbières.

13.9 Par ailleurs, les inégalités croissantes, davantage exacerbées par la pandémie, la montée de l'extrémisme, de la haine et de la violence, l'expansion de la pauvreté et les violations des droits de l'homme sont des défis qui compromettent les efforts entrepris par la réalisation des ODD. Nous avons noté avec soulagement qu'ils ont été pris en compte par notre Organisation, notamment à travers les sciences sociales et humaines. Dans ce cadre, la RDC adhère notamment au choix porté sur les jeunes en tant qu'acteurs du changement ainsi qu'au rôle conféré au programme MOST pour éclairer les politiques.

13.10 La promotion de la culture, de la paix et du dialogue interculturel, tant indispensable à nos sociétés, souvent traversées par des conflits, figure également parmi les pistes qui suscitent de l'espoir. Messieurs le Président, nous avons noté également l'action de l'UNESCO face aux dérives potentielles des sciences émergentes, c'est le cas de l'intelligence artificielle, avec le projet de recommandation sur sa dimension éthique.

13.11 Concernant la culture, impactée aussi par la crise sanitaire, le renforcement de la protection et de la promotion de la diversité et des expressions culturelles prônés par l'UNESCO est d'une importance sans égale. Mon pays a adhéré aux nombreux instruments normatifs du secteur culturel, notamment la Convention de 2003 sur la protection et la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel. Dans le cadre de cette Convention, nous attirons l'attention particulière de l'Organisation sur le dossier d'inscription multinationale de la rumba congolaise sur la Liste représentative du patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité soumis par les deux Congo. L'inscription de la rumba congolaise au patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité renforcera les ponts culturels entre les deux capitales les plus rapprochées du monde que sont Kinshasa et Brazzaville et consacrera une pratique culturelle adoptée mondialement depuis des décennies.

13.12 Enfin, la communication et l'information jouent un rôle stratégique dans notre monde interconnecté et c'est tout à l'honneur des l'UNESCO de les compter parmi ses domaines de compétence. En cette période de crise et de réarmement pour la réalisation du Programme 2030, la communication et l'information participent à la mobilisation des décideurs et des communautés, favorisent l'accès au savoir, le partage des connaissances et le développement des compétences.

13.13 Monsieur le Président, je voudrais terminer en rappelant qu'à travers mon propos, la République démocratique du Congo a tenu à exprimer sa foi dans notre Organisation qui résiste aux crises actuelles. Le 41 C/4 ainsi que le 41 C/5 nous poussent à penser qu'aucune de ces crises ne nous empêchera d'atteindre les ODD relevant des domaines de compétence de l'UNESCO. La tâche est certes ardue, mais notre Organisation peut compter sur son expertise, son expérience et ses outils de gouvernance. Je vous remercie.

14. **Le Président :**

Merci Excellence. J'appelle maintenant Son Excellence Treenuch Thienthong, Ministre de l'éducation de Thaïlande.

15.1 **Ms Thienthong (Thailand):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, on your election as President of the General Conference. My delegation wishes to pledge our full support under your leadership. I would also like to congratulate Madam Audrey Azoulay on her re-election as Director-General of UNESCO.

15.2 Mr President, uncertainties and challenges caused by the pandemic have brought existing issues and exclusions, both within and between countries, and, of course, the work of our Organization has been affected as well. Nevertheless, allow me to commend the Secretariat for being innovative in keeping the work right on track with new modalities.

15.3 Mr President, this conference is being held at the right time as we are entering the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5), based on the four strategic objectives, will obviously ensure coordination within the Organization, while at the same time increasing the positive impact of UNESCO in addressing global issues, particularly when the Organization seeks to bring back better collaboration with its partners. Thailand therefore supports these two documents.

15.4 In Thailand, as schools begin to reopen, we have to ensure health safety in school for both students and teachers. Wide coverage of vaccination for students and teachers is our core immediate action. At the same time, a strong effort to bring back all students to education is highlighted as well, to promote inclusive education and avoid the increase of out-of-school children in our society. Our educational personnel are committed to working proactively to ensure the rights-based, inclusive and equitable education for all children nationwide.

15.5 During the pandemic, educational technologies have been widely introduced. However, disparity in education is more visible in our society. In light of this, Thailand believes that UNESCO's Strategy on Technological Innovation in Education (2022-2025) could be a pathway to contribute to a more just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable society. We also endorse the Recommendation on Open Science, which aims to overcome digital, technological and knowledge divides that exist between developed and developing countries.

15.6 UNESCO's lead role in achieving SDG 4 is strongly supported. The linkage between the SDG4 – Education 2030 Steering Committee and the High-Level Political Forum, will also involve stronger collaboration from other sectors to contribute to the achievement of SDG 4. Next year, Thailand, together with UNESCO Bangkok, will host the Asia-Pacific Education Ministers Conference to provide an opportunity for us to review the progress made across the region. The Conference will emphasize Thailand's strong commitment in promoting quality inclusive education since the initiative of Education for All in Jomtien.

15.7 Thailand encourages UNESCO to help Member States to enhance their capacities in designing science, technology and innovation systems so that scientific knowledge could be well utilized in tackling social needs and environmental challenges. As part of this, Thailand highlights the Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model as one of next year's national agendas with an integration of STI to capacity building for key actors.

15.8 The promotion of Futures Literacy is also strongly supported to cope with global challenges, and help our society be ready in overcoming them. This also includes the awareness of AI that has huge potential to transform the future of humanity. To ensure that these emerging technologies benefit humanity, we support the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence which will not only protect but also promote human rights and human dignity.

15.9 In closing, Thailand would like to express our appreciation to UNESCO Bangkok for the continued cooperation and strong support to Thailand and the Asia-Pacific Region. We also confirm our full commitment to supporting UNESCO in achieving its mission. Thank you.

16. **Le Président :**

*Thank you.* J'appelle Son Excellence Bachelot-Narquin, Ministre de culture de France. Vous avez la parole Excellence.

17.1 **Mme Bachelot-Narquin (France) :**

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs, Mesdames et Messieurs. Quel plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour rappeler les priorités de la France à l'UNESCO.

17.2 Avant toute chose, je souhaite, Madame la Directrice générale, vous féliciter pour votre réélection. Vous avez tracé la voie et vous avez su nous guider vers une UNESCO efficace, généreuse et fédératrice. Je tiens aussi à remercier chaleureusement l'ensemble de nos collègues des autres délégations pour le soutien qu'ils vous ont apporté. Ensemble, nous vous confions la tâche primordiale de porter les valeurs de 1945 et tout particulièrement celles d'universalisme et de démocratie. Je suis résolument convaincue que la culture et l'éducation de tous nous permettront d'atteindre l'idéal démocratique de dignité, d'égalité et de respect de la personne humaine affirmé dans le préambule de l'Acte constitutif de l'UNESCO.

17.3 Avec cet idéal à l'esprit, je tiens à vous faire part de nos priorités. Notre ambition pour l'UNESCO est d'agir en ayant pleinement conscience de notre responsabilité dans tout le périmètre d'intervention de l'UNESCO. En particulier, nous avons identifié les actions prioritaires suivantes pour les années à venir: agir davantage pour la protection des droits des femmes et des filles, agir pour la liberté des médias et agir pour la protection du patrimoine. Agir en responsabilité signifie aussi soutenir sans relâche les professionnels de la culture, de la science et de l'éducation dans les zones en crise, en particulier en Afghanistan et au Liban. Avoir conscience de notre responsabilité, c'est d'abord penser aux gens.

17.4 La France a aussi des priorités en matière de protection du patrimoine, constitutif de nos identités et de nos histoires. La France souhaite tout d'abord renforcer ses actions pour empêcher les destructions intentionnelles du patrimoine culturel, bien trop fréquentes ces dernières années. À cette fin, nous devons nous interroger sur les lieux qui ne sont pas encore à l'ordre du jour, mais où, pourtant, patrimoine et liberté sont menacés. La France appelle également au déploiement rapide d'une mission d'inventaire du patrimoine dans et autour du Karabakh, en accord avec toutes les parties concernées. Nous souhaitons aussi poursuivre des actions de coopération pour préserver, restaurer, reconstruire. Emblématique de notre action patrimoniale et du succès de la coprésidence franco-japonaise, la France mène un travail exigeant à Anghor pour le remontage du Mebon. Je m'en réjouis particulièrement.

17.5 Parallèlement, nous souhaitons que l'UNESCO se dote d'une politique globale de lutte contre les dérèglements climatiques, dérèglements qui ont notamment un impact fort sur le patrimoine culturel. Une autre priorité concerne la lutte contre le trafic illicite des biens culturels. Pour lutter contre ce fléau qui ne connaît pas de frontières et qui participe à financer le terrorisme, la France travaille à ce que l'ensemble des États membres de l'UNESCO signent et ratifient la Convention de 1970. Il nous revient en effet d'unir nos forces face aux réseaux de trafiquants pour protéger nos biens, nos populations, nos systèmes démocratiques et civils, car c'est bien en réalité de cela dont il s'agit.

17.6 Cette Convention ne s'applique cependant pas à toutes les situations. Elle ne peut s'appliquer à des faits antérieurs à 1970 ni à des situations tombant en dehors de son champ. D'autres approches sont possibles. Je pense ici aux restitutions



des 26 œuvres constituant le trésor d'Abomey que la France a rendu hier au Bénin. Par ailleurs, je n'oublie pas la Convention de 2005 concernant la protection de la diversité des expressions culturelles. La France souhaite la promouvoir et œuvrer pour sa ratification par un maximum de pays.

17.7 Fiers d'avoir été élus en mai 2021 au Comité de la convention, nous présenterons le mois prochain notre Feuille de route nationale pour la mise en œuvre de cette Convention dans l'environnement numérique. Enfin, la France souhaite agir pour une plus grande justice sociale grâce à un meilleur accès à l'éducation partout dans le monde. Le Président de la république et le Ministre de l'éducation l'ont rappelé ce matin.

17.8 Fortement engagé en faveur de l'Objectif de développement durable numéro 4, visant une éducation inclusive et de qualité pour tous, la France soutient résolument l'action de l'UNESCO en direction des jeunes filles encore trop souvent négligées ou exclues du système scolaire.

17.9 En conclusion, je forme le vœu que l'ensemble de ces priorités enrichissent nos échanges, renforcent notre coopération. Madame la Directrice générale, pour avoir rendu aux États membres une UNESCO efficace, nous vous remercions et nous vous souhaitons plein succès pour votre second mandat. Merci à tous.

18. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Bence Rétvári, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Deputy Minister of Human Capacities of Hungary. You have the floor sir.

19.1 **Mr Rétvári (Hungary):**

Mr President, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleagues, although I am not present in person, I thank you for the opportunity to deliver my speech this way. Fortunately, even if we are hindered by the pandemic, advanced digital technologies enable us today to discuss topics of utmost interest to many people.

19.2 We commend the work done by the Secretariat under your able guidance, Madam Director-General. Amongst others, we have refocused Global Priority Africa, prepared the Medium-Term Strategy and finished the work on the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, as well as the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

19.3 As a neighbouring country, we fully understand that Ukraine is in a difficult situation. Hungary strongly and fully supports the sovereignty of Ukraine. However, there are significant questions in our bilateral relations, including issues related to the education and language use rights of the Hungarian national community in the western Ukrainian region. We wish to underline that no crisis situation can justify hatred against a minority. Hungary reconfirms its willingness to solve these issues on a bilateral basis and calls on the government of Ukraine to continue to work with relevant international and regional human rights mechanisms in this regard.

19.4 Besides being committed to increase cooperation among nations in education, culture, and science, UNESCO is also called upon to fight against all forms of discrimination among people and to fight for ensuring the principle of equal treatment. In this spirit, in 1960, UNESCO adopted the Convention against Discrimination in Education which clearly declares the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities as well as the right to use or teach their own language. Education is the key to a liveable future for all young people and no one can be deprived of this right since this would mean depriving them of future and of hope.

19.5 Please allow me to call your attention, as I also did two years ago, to a very serious and alarming situation concerning education in the mother language of the Hungarian minority living in western Ukraine. According to the law on education adopted in 2017 by the Ukrainian Parliament, Hungarian youth have no possibility to participate in education in their mother language. Furthermore the law on the Ukrainian language was adopted in 2019, making the use of Ukrainian language exclusive. However, this untenable and injurious situation could be solved by modifying the Ukrainian law on indigenous people. At present, Hungarians are not considered indigenous people in Ukraine. However, if Ukrainian law would adopt the definition of indigenous people as defined in Convention No 169 of the International Labour Organization of the United Nations, then the scope of the Ukrainian law on indigenous people would also cover the Hungarian minority. Defining indigenous people in such a way would provide a solution in that members of the Hungarian minority living in western Ukraine could use their mother language from the beginning of primary school to the end of their studies in secondary school. It is evident for us to use our mother language, therefore, on the basis of equal treatment. We should guarantee this right to all persons belonging to minorities. We therefore request the cooperation and support of UNESCO and Member States for ensuring the educational right of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine. Thank you for your attention.

20. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Claudia Ruíz Casasola de Estrada Minister of Education of Guatemala. You have the floor madam.

21.1 **Sra. Ruíz Casasola de Estrada (Guatemala):**

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, señora Directora General, autoridades, señoras y señores delegados permanentes: quiero iniciar mi intervención felicitando a la señora Audrey Azoulay por su reelección como Directora General de la UNESCO, convirtiéndose en una referencia para realizar esfuerzos conjuntos y fortalecer los sistemas educativos para desarrollar competencias y abrir espacios para todas las niñas en el mundo y, en mi caso, para Guatemala. Asimismo, felicito al señor Delegado Permanente de Brasil, el embajador Santiago Mourão, por asumir la Presidencia de la Conferencia General en un momento clave de transformación estratégica de la Organización.

21.2 Es para mí un honor participar en la Conferencia General de la UNESCO y representar al señor Presidente de la República de Guatemala, al doctor Alejandro Giammattei, expresando un fraternal saludo y el compromiso de nuestro país con el esfuerzo renovado por el cumplimiento de la Agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible.

21.3 Guatemala, al igual que todos los países, enfrentó desde marzo del 2020 los desafíos provocados por la pandemia, pandemia provocada por la COVID-19 que fundamentalmente afectó el cierre de los centros educativos, todo con la finalidad de salvaguardar la vida y la salud de la población. Y en ese momento, cuando el mundo ve lo frágil que es, Guatemala resuelve el desafío más grande: asegurar la alimentación escolar para 2,5 millones de niños, niños que empezaron a recibir las raciones de alimentos en sus hogares de manera ininterrumpida durante dos años.

21.4 Se implementó el programa Aprendo en Casa y en Clase y se realizaron todos los esfuerzos para lograr que los centros educativos operarán a distancia, reproduciendo material educativo en idiomas nacionales y en formatos de audiobooks para los niños con discapacidad visual y todos los programas de clase por televisión con intérprete de lenguas para atender a los niños con discapacidad auditiva.

21.5 Asimismo, durante el peor momento de la crisis, Guatemala en el 2021 marcó un hito al registrar un incremento en la matrícula escolar de 135 777 estudiantes, para lograr un total de 2 680 623 niños atendidos entre los 4 y 12 años, quienes actualmente siguen cursando el ciclo escolar bajo la modalidad híbrida, funcionando de acuerdo al Sistema Nacional de Alerta Sanitaria, por lo que el sistema educativo en Guatemala no se detuvo.

21.6 Es importante resaltar que el Presidente de la República de Guatemala priorizó la vacunación de maestros y, a la fecha, se cuenta con el 96% de docentes con esquema completo de vacunación. De igual manera, se incentivó la vacunación de las organizaciones de padres de familia y se está gestionando la vacunación de 2 356 000 menores de edad para regresar a la presencialidad total en el 2022 para atender aproximadamente 4 millones de estudiantes. Y es importante mencionar en este foro, en esta conferencia, que en Guatemala se hablan 25 idiomas nacionales, entre ellos mayas.

21.7 Deseo continuar haciendo énfasis en las acciones relevantes que ha realizado Guatemala: se implementó la Política General de Gobierno y se readecuó el Plan Estratégico Sectorial de Educación con enfoque inclusivo, pertinencia cultural y lingüística, alineado a los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, garantizando así la continuidad del aprendizaje en todos los niveles educativos. Se diseñó el Plan Integral para la Prevención, Respuesta y Recuperación ante la pandemia y algo muy importante se activó el Clúster de Educación integrado por más de 80 entidades nacionales, internacionales, sector empresarial que apoyan al Ministerio de Educación.

21.8 Cabe destacar la implementación del proyecto de producción de energía eléctrica sostenible mediante la instalación de paneles solares para las escuelas en áreas rurales, a fin de proveer energía a los centros educativos y garantizar el acceso a los medios tecnológicos de aprendizaje, fomentando el cuidado del medio ambiente ante el cambio climático.

21.9 Con el objetivo de enunciar otros logros y avances significativos, se destaca la aceptación de Guatemala como miembro de la Alianza Mundial para la Educación y la implementación de importantes intervenciones y estrategias conjuntas con el apoyo de la Oficina de la UNESCO.

21.10 Quiero destacar que, si bien es cierto la pandemia puso distanciamiento físico en la comunidad educativa, ocurre un hecho histórico, autoridades educativas, maestros, padres de familia, diputados del Congreso de la República, sector privado, organismos internacionales y cooperantes se unen como una gran familia a favor de la niñez y la adolescencia para que la educación y sus programas de apoyo no se detengan.

21.11 Es importante manifestar el reconocimiento del Gobierno de Guatemala hacia la UNESCO por su acompañamiento al Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes en apoyo a la protección y conservación del patrimonio mundial y la salvaguarda del patrimonio cultural inmaterial, y significativos avances en el tema de tráfico ilícito de bienes culturales del patrimonio nacional, que se han concretado en acciones como la entrega voluntaria y la recuperación del fragmento de la Estela Maya número 9 del sitio arqueológico Piedras Negras en Petén, que data del Período Clásico Maya. Aprovecho para comentarles que por iniciativa presidencial, Guatemala está trabajando en las nominaciones de la celebración de la Semana Santa a la lista de Patrimonio Cultural Intangible y del Parque Arqueológico Nacional Tak' Alik Ab'aj como patrimonio mundial.

21.12 Y en el ámbito científico-tecnológico se ha mantenido una relación estrecha con la UNESCO que ha favorecido el fortalecimiento de los centros UNESCO-Malala. Asimismo, se han tenido avances importantes en la reducción de la brecha digital en coordinación con la Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones.

21.13 Hoy, más que nunca, reitero la importancia del preámbulo de la Constitución de la UNESCO, que evoca que “la amplia difusión de la cultura y la educación de la humanidad para la justicia, la libertad y la paz son indispensables a la dignidad del hombre”. Muchas gracias.

## 22. The President:

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Highness Prince Badr Bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Culture of Saudi Arabia You have the floor sir.

١-٢٣ الأمير بدر آل سعود (المملكة العربية السعودية):

سعادة رئيس المؤتمر العام، سعادة رئيس المجلس التنفيذي، معالي المدير العام لليونسكو، أصحاب المعالي والسعادة رؤساء وفود الدول الأعضاء، السيدات والسادة، السلام عليكم، أود بداية أن أعرب عن اعتزازنا بشراكتنا المتينة مع منظمة اليونسكو، كما نبارك لها مرور أكثر من ٧٥ عاماً من النجاحات، والتي كانت المملكة العربية السعودية منذ تأسيس المنظمة، مساهمة مع الدول الأعضاء في الوصول إلى تحقيق أهدافها ومساعدتها الرامية إلى إرساء السلام من خلال التعاون الدولي في مجالات التربية والعلوم والثقافة. وتلتزم بلادي بالتعاون مع منظمة اليونسكو والدول الأعضاء في سبيل تعزيز كافة المساعي الدولية لإطلاق العنان لإمكانات الثقافة في تسريع جهود أهداف التنمية المستدامة. كما تدعم المملكة استراتيجية اليونسكو المتوسطة الأجل للفترة ٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٩.

٢٣-٢٢ الحضور الكريم، تعد قطاعات الثقافة والعلوم مكوناً أساسياً في رؤية السعودية ٢٠٣٠. ومن هنا، فإننا نستثمر في مبادرات مثل برنامج الابتعاث الثقافي، وصندوق التنمية الثقافي الذي سيعزز النشاط الثقافي في المملكة، وصولاً إلى إطلاق الإمكانيات التنموية الكبيرة لهذه القطاعات. وانطلاقاً من إيماننا بأهمية الثقافة والعلوم على الصعيد التنموي، بادرت المملكة، بالتعاون مع شركائها الدوليين، باستحداث مسار ثقافي ضمن مسارات مجموعة البلدان العشرين، وذلك بناء على التزامات الاجتماع الأول لوزراء الثقافة على هامش رئاسة المملكة عام ٢٠٢٠. وبعد اعتماد لجنة التراث العالمي بالإجماع مشروع القرار المقدم من المملكة لبناء قدرات العاملين في مجال التراث للسنوات العشر القادمة، فإننا نتطلع إلى إسهام هذا القرار في تعزيز التنوع الجغرافي للخبراء، وتمكين ورفع الكفاءات، ووضع تدابير لحماية مواقع التراث الثقافي.

٢٣-٣ أصحاب المعالي والسعادة، رغم التحديات التي كشفت عنها جائحة كورونا في القطاعات الثقافية، فإنها كانت نافذة لفرص جديدة. فقد مكنتنا البنية التحتية الرقمية المتينة من النهوض بالقطاع الثقافي أثناء فترة الإغلاقات العامة من خلال تطبيق الرقمنة التي أسهمت في الحفاظ على التراث وزيادة المشاركة في العروض الثقافية. وبفضل رؤية قيادتنا الحكيمة، فقد حققت بلادي فترات كبيرة في التنافسية الرقمية، حيث أحرزت المركز الأول على مستوى التنافس العالمي، وقفزت ٤٠ مركزاً في مؤشر البنية التحتية الرقمية للاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات. وفي هذا الصدد، نعتز بانعقاد القمة العالمية للدكاء الاصطناعي في المملكة عام ٢٠٢٠ تحت عنوان "الدكاء الاصطناعي لخير البشرية"، الاستراتيجية الوطنية للبيانات والدكاء الاصطناعي لتطوير الكفاءات والبيئات التشريعية، وبناء موارد وتشجيع الاستثمار في هذه القطاعات التي ستشكل وجه المستقبل، كما نفخر بإسهام المملكة في إعداد مسودة أخلاقيات الدكاء الاصطناعي.

٢٣-٤ وفي مجال التعليم، أطلقت المملكة عدداً من المبادرات الرائدة للتعليم مدى الحياة وتعزيز التنافسية لدى الأفراد عبر التطوير المستمر للمهارات والقدرات، من خلال إنشاء برنامج تنمية القدرات البشرية كأحد البرامج المستحدثة لرؤية المملكة ٢٠٣٠. وفي مجال التعاون الدولي للحفاظ على البيئة وتعزيز الاستدامة، أعلنت المملكة مؤخراً عن مبادرة "السعودية الخضراء" ومبادرة "الشرق الأوسط الأخضر" لمعالجة آثار تغير المناخ في المملكة والمنطقة بشكل أوسع. وسيتم تشكيل فريق عمل دولي للاستدامة لزيادة الوعي وتوفير فرص أفضل لتبادل علمي للأفكار في هذا المجال. وكانت مخرجات قمة مبادرة الشرق الأوسط الأخضر التي عقدت في المملكة بين قادة بارزين من المنطقة والعالم مشجعة لتعزيز التعاون وتوحيد الجهود نحو تنفيذ الالتزامات البيئية المشتركة.

٢٣-٥ وفي الختام، نشمّن كافة الجهود الحثيثة التي تبذلها منظمة اليونسكو والدول الأعضاء في سبيل توثيق التعاون المتعدد الأطراف، الذي من شأنه أن يسهم في نشر السلام العالمي، ومد جسور التواصل، وإطلاق الإمكانيات التنموية للعلوم والثقافة لتحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة، والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله.

#### 24. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Berhnu Nega, Minister of Education of Ethiopia. You have the floor sir.

#### 25.1 **Mr Nega (Ethiopia):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, honourable ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I congratulate you, Your Excellency, Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao, on your election to the presidency of this 41st session of the General Conference. Madam Director-General, Ms Audrey Azoulay, I congratulate you on your second term election and my delegation commends your efforts and leadership rendered to continue UNESCO's major plans, programmes and activities for peace and shared prosperity for its Member States.

25.2 Over the last two years, the world was entangled with the COVID-19 pandemic, which totally affects humanity. Meaningful intervention to continue the implementation of the work of our great institution deserves much appreciation. Following the national election held in July this year, Ethiopia has formed a new government comprised of various parties as members of the cabinet in October. A 10-year national plan has been developed with a new vision to meet the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and make Ethiopia a middle-income country by that time. Most goals stipulated in the National Plan of Ethiopia are aligned with the new UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5).

25.3 Despite the above efforts, Ethiopia is currently facing several challenges that most important of which is the internal conflict caused by the intransigence and armed provocation of narrow ethnic nationalists aimed ultimately at the dismemberment of our country. As a result of the ongoing conflict, millions of innocent civilians are being displaced. Thousands of schools, colleges and universities are destroyed and closed. Millions of students are displaced and out of school. Similarly, thousands of teachers are displaced and are out of work. As it currently stands, the supply of humanitarian assistance by the concerned United Nations agencies is far from satisfactory. Since UNESCO is mandated to foster peace and sustainable development in its mandate, at this General Conference I would like to call upon all actors to mobilize and support the war affected civilians in Ethiopia.

25.4 It is notable that following the 40th session of the General Conference, Her Excellency, President Sahle-Work Zewde, also the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, has been appointed to chair the International Commission on the Futures of Education. We commend Her Excellency, the Chairperson, Commission members, advisory bodies and the Secretariat for preparing the historical report to re-imagine the future of education by 2050.

25.5 Education in Ethiopia is undergoing comprehensive reform to address SDG 4 and the African Union's Agenda 2063 to this effect over the last three years. We have prepared the general education roadmap, new education and training policy and education proclamation, education sector development plan and national curriculum framework. One of the most important objectives of the reform is to significantly improve the quality of education in the country during the reform implementation period. Currently in Ethiopia, we have over 27.5 million students, 700,838 teachers and 46,361 schools in the general education sector, while over 1.1 million students are enrolled in 45 public universities. Over half a million trainees are enrolled in 1,700 TVET institutes and colleges. Apart from this enrolment data, during the COVID-19 pandemic period,

our education system has been seriously affected. As a result, over 3 million students are out of school. To overcome the problem, we have launched the community-based back-to-school campaign at the beginning of this school year. However, as the problem is global and multidimensional, it requires a serious debate among the state parties to find plausible solutions. Otherwise, the attainment of SDG 4 will be at stake.

25.6 The preparation of recommendations on open science and ethics of artificial intelligence, which will contribute to equitable access to the results of science and technology by the UNESCO science sector, is highly appreciated by my country. Climate change is continuously affecting humanity in unprecedented ways in all Member States. If all Member States do not work together to maintain biodiversity and introduce drastic mitigating measures to reduce carbon emissions, the future crisis will be more and more complicated. In this regard, as part of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Green Legacy initiative, the government of Ethiopia plans to plant 20 billion seedlings by 2022. Over the past three years, over 15 billion seedlings have been planted. Moreover, taking into account the regional and global concern this year, we have provided seedlings to our neighbouring countries in the Horn of Africa.

25.7 In the water sector, the ninth phase of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (2022-2029), preparation and consultation process has passed through a series of engagements. Meanwhile, I would like to assure you that we are committed to working towards its implementation. Apart from this, as UNESCO is mandated to work on water science, we believe that water should not be a political agenda, but a resource to change the life of millions and a basis of cooperation, peace and sustainable development.

25.8 UNESCO has registered nine tangible and four intangible heritage sites in Ethiopia. We appreciate the World Heritage Committee for continuing the comprehensive work during the COVID-19 pandemic period. However, preparation of commendable nominations, dossiers, and conservation of registered heritage sites have been a problem in Ethiopia, which needs UNESCO's technical support. Meanwhile, we should like to extend our appreciation to the Government of France for the provision of technical and financial support for the ongoing renovation and restoration work of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and the Ethiopian National Palace.

25.9 As it is one of the known global tourist destinations, development of culture and tourism is becoming a priority sector for the Government. Accordingly, new destinations across the country are being developed with dedicated investment. However, the tourism sector, which is a source of livelihood for small and middle-level enterprises, has been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We again believe that these issues need the special attention of the UNESCO. As part of the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the current practice of controlling the illicit import and export of cultural properties became more complicated in developing countries such as ours. Thus, a joint effort of States Parties needs to be harmonized to take proper actions.

25.10 Globalization has fostered the information and communication revolution, which is affecting practically all human actions. The social and mainstream media is flourishing more than ever. However, apart from its contribution to strengthen the democratization of culture and ideas, most countries are affected negatively by misinformation, disinformation and fake news. Unfortunately, as was reported repeatedly, my country, Ethiopia has been one of the victims of this phenomenon. The misuse and abuse of social media is fuelling the current conflict and causing unspeakable damage in life and limb to many innocent compatriots. Thus, we need to work hard to rein in the damage caused by the misuse of social media as one of United Nations family without compromising fundamental democratic principles.

25.11 In conclusion, the new Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5) is meaningfully addressing the African group priority areas and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Furthermore, we are highly confident that the proper implementation of the action plan will be approved and that a meaningful result will be registered. Finally, on behalf of the Government of Ethiopia, I reaffirm the significance that Ethiopia holds for its partnership with UNESCO and its commitment to working together to bring about a sustainable future for all of us. Thank you.

26. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Sam Tanson, Minister of Culture of Luxembourg. You have the floor madam.

27.1 **Mme Tanson (Luxembourg) :**

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Excellences, honorables Délégués, Mesdames et Messieurs, c'est avec émotion que je me tiens aujourd'hui devant vous, alors que l'UNESCO fête son 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire cette année.

27.2 En 75 ans d'existence, l'Organisation aura témoigné de grands chamboulements historiques, de l'après-guerre à la Guerre froide, de la chute du mur de Berlin au 11 septembre, de l'émergence de l'internet à l'intelligence artificielle, qui tous ont affecté très directement ses domaines d'action et l'auront amené à mûrir et repenser ses priorités.

27.3 L'UNESCO a su se montrer résiliente et agile, et trouver les ressources pour se réinventer sans cesse. Et notre Organisation doit se réinventer et agir comme rempart contre des défis d'ampleur mondiale, contre les ravages de la pandémie de Covid, dans l'éducation de nos enfants et de nos jeunes, avant tout nos filles, dans la vie culturelle, et jusque dans nos activités sportives, contre les ravages du changement climatique sur notre patrimoine culturel et de la pollution sur nos précieuses ressources hydriques, contre les ravages de l'intolérance, de l'obscurantisme et du populisme sur la liberté d'expression, de culture, d'éducation, amplifiés par les nouveaux modes de communication.

27.4 Face à ces défis, l'UNESCO a la noble tâche de nous réunir pour identifier ensemble des solutions constructives, comme par exemple avec les recommandations portant sur l'éthique de l'intelligence artificielle et sur une science ouverte. À nous de veiller à la mise en œuvre de ces recommandations.

27.5 Madame la Directrice générale, au nom du Luxembourg, j'aimerais vous féliciter pour votre réélection. Je vous remercie pour l'énergie que vous avez déployée pour rendre cette Organisation plus efficace, plus vigoureuse, plus prévisible, et vous assurer du soutien du Luxembourg. La nouvelle Stratégie à moyen terme et le budget constitueront en ce sens une excellente base de travail pour aider l'UNESCO à jouer pleinement son rôle dans l'atteinte des Objectifs de développement durable.

27.6 Membre fondateur de tant d'organisations internationales, le Luxembourg a le multilatéralisme et la défense des valeurs universelles inscrit dans son ADN. Mon pays est dès lors très honoré d'avoir été élu, il y a moins d'un mois, pour la toute première fois, au Conseil des droits de l'homme pour le mandat 2022-2024. Les quatre priorités que nous nous sommes fixées dans ce cadre rejoignent de très près les domaines clés de l'UNESCO.

27.7 Il s'agit de l'appui à l'état de droit, à l'espace civique et aux défenseurs des droits humains, et la lutte contre l'impunité. C'est un domaine qui prend toute son importance dans l'action de l'UNESCO en faveur de la sécurité des journalistes, et des femmes journalistes en particulier, action que le Luxembourg soutient activement, y compris par un cycle de conférences organisé par notre Commission nationale.

27.8 Le développement durable et l'action climatique fondés sur les droits humains. Un cadre de vie durable dans un monde en paix. La lutte contre les effets désastreux du changement climatique sur le patrimoine mondial. Voilà les principes des programmes UNESCO « Géoparc » et « L'Homme et la biosphère ». À ce titre, je suis ravie que la candidature luxembourgeoise « Minett UNESCO Biosphere » ait abouti l'an dernier et j'espère que la candidature « Natur- à Géoparc Mellerdall » soit elle aussi retenue. Cet engagement montre l'attachement luxembourgeois à la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de développement durable sur son terrain.

27.9 Le troisième domaine prioritaire est l'égalité des genres et la lutte contre les discriminations. Le Luxembourg ne s'engage pas seulement pour l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes, notamment avec sa politique étrangère féministe, mais soutient également activement les communautés LGBTIQ+.

27.10 Et finalement, nous allons mettre la protection et la promotion du droit des enfants au centre de notre activité au CDH, tout comme la protection des mineurs et de leurs droits est reflétée au cœur de mon activité en tant que Ministre de la Justice. Je salue dès lors la tenue du Forum des jeunes qu'il aurait simplement été inconcevable de ne pas organiser cette année-ci.

27.11 Permettez moi également de souligner quelques développements récents dans le domaine de la culture au Luxembourg. L'avancement du Projet de loi de protection du patrimoine culturel qui contribue, en se basant sur les textes de l'UNESCO et de l'UE, à une mise en œuvre holistique de nos engagements internationaux dans ce domaine. L'organisation de Esch 2022, qui sera conjointement avec la ville de Kaunas en Lituanie, et Novi Sad en Serbie, capitale européenne de la culture en 2022, et qui mise sur l'intégration par la culture. L'inscription de nombreuses initiatives à l'Inventaire luxembourgeois du patrimoine immatériel qui se traduira, je l'espère, en de futures candidatures multinationales. Enfin, et pour conclure, j'apporte mon plein soutien aux propos qui seront tenus ultérieurement par l'Union européenne. Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

## 28. The President:

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Dr Majed bin Ali Alnoaimi, Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Bahrain. You have the floor sir.

٢٩-١ السيد النعيمي (البحرين):

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، معالي رئيس المؤتمر العام، معالي المديرية العامة، رئيس المجلس التنفيذي، السيدات والسادة، السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، في البداية، يسعدني ويشرفني أن أنقل تحيات وتمنيات سيدي حضرة صاحب الجلالة، الملك حمد بن عيسى آل خليفة، عاهل البلاد المفدى حفظه الله ورعاه، وصاحب السمو الملكي، الأمير سلمان بن حمد آل خليفة، ولي العهد، رئيس مجلس الوزراء، حفظه الله ورعاه، لهذا المؤتمر باستمرار التوفيق والنجاح لتحقيق أهدافنا الإنسانية المشتركة. ويطيب لي أن أتقدم باسم بلدي، مملكة البحرين، بخالص الشكر والتقدير والتهنئة إلى معالي رئيس المؤتمر العام، والشكر موصول أيضاً إلى معالي السيدة أودري أزولاي، المديرية العامة لمنظمة اليونسكو، على حسن إدارتها للمنظمة وما حققت من إنجازات مشهودة بالرغم من كافة التحديات التي شهدتها العالم خلال العامين الماضيين. وأهنئها أيضاً على حصولها على الثقة من قبل الدول لولاية أخرى.

٢٩-٢ الحضور الكرام، إن مملكة البحرين تؤيد ما ورد في مشروع الاستراتيجية المتوسطة الأجل للفترة ٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٩ للمنظمة، باعتبارها مختبراً للأفكار ومحفزة للتعاون الدولي لبناء حصون السلام وتعزيز التنمية المستدامة، والتغلب على الآثار التي خلفها تفشي جائحة فيروس كورونا (كوفيد ١٩)، خاصة على التعليم، والعمل على تسريع عملية رقمنة التعليم وتوفيره، وتعزيز فرص التعلم مدى الحياة. ولا بد في هذه الظروف من الإشارة إلى الدور المحوري الذي لعبه "جائزة اليونسكو - الملك حمد بن عيسى آل خليفة لاستخدام تكنولوجيات المعلومات والاتصال في مجال التعليم" في تكريم المبادرات المتميزة الهادفة إلى إيصال التعليم الجيد لجميع الفئات في مختلف الظروف. إذ ركزت الجائزة في دورتها السابقة على دور الذكاء الاصطناعي في ضمان استمرار التعلم وجودته.

٢٩-٣ معالي الرئيس، معالي المدير العامة، السيدات والسادة، لقد عملت بلدي مملكة البحرين على ضمان بقاء التعليم ضمن أولوياتها السياسية والتنموية، والاستمرار في تطويره، وتطوير البحث العلمي وتشجيع الاستثمار فيه، وتعزيز قيم المواطنة والعالمية وحقوق الإنسان، ومواجهة كافة أشكال التطرف والتعصب مهما كان شكله أو مصدره. وإن مملكة البحرين قد حولت التحدي إلى فرص، خلال هذه الجائحة، لتطوير آليات العمل سواء من خلال ما يوفره مشروع جلالة الملك حمد مدارس المستقبل من فرصة كبيرة للتعلم الإلكتروني الرقمي، أو من خلال الدروس المركزية أو البوابة التعليمية لوزارة التربية والتعليم التي أصبحت مصدراً رئيسياً للتعليم والتعلم والتواصل بين المعلمين والطلبة وأولياء الأمور، بل إن هذه البوابة زارها في العام الماضي فقط أكثر من ٦٨ مليون مراجع، وأصبحت بالتالي مرجعاً مهماً

في التعليم الرقمي، إلى جانب ما وفرته وزارة التربية والتعليم من بدائل أخرى مثل الدروس المتلفزة وقنوات اليوتيوب التي بلغ عددها ١٤ قناة، تم تخصيص واحدة منها للطلبة من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة.

٢٩-٤ وهذا إضافة إلى جهود المملكة في العمل على حماية التراث، وتعزيز التنوع الثقافي، ودمج قضايا حقوق الإنسان والتسامح والقضايا البيئية في المناهج الدراسية، ومثل ذلك المدرسة المعززة للمواطنة وحقوق الإنسان، وتدريب منتسبي الوزارة على كافة المراحل التعليمية وتطوراتها، خصوصاً من خلال المركز الإقليمي لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصال الذي يعمل في البحرين تحت مظلة اليونسكو، حيث قدم العديد من البرامج المتنوعة التي مكّنت الكثير من المعلمين من الاستفادة من هذه الخدمات، وقد وصل عددهم إلى ١٦٠٠ شخص.

٢٩-٥ وفي الختام، أجدد الشكر للجهود التي بُذلت لتنظيم هذا المؤتمر وإعداد وثائقه، وأؤكد أن مملكة البحرين، بقيادة سيدي حضرة صاحب الجلالة الملك المفدى حفظه الله ورعاه، ستظل على وفاتها الدائم للمبادئ والقيم الإنسانية للمنظمة لنشر التعليم والحوار والثقافة والتسامح والسلام، وتعزيز التعاون الدولي لأجل الإنسان، والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

**30. The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Jonel Powell, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth of Saint Kitts and Nevis. You have the floor sir.

**31.1 Mr Powell (Saint Kitts and Nevis):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, fellow honourable ministers, distinguished ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply honoured to address the 41st session of the General Conference on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Please allow me this minute to add our own congratulations to Madam Director-General Azoulay on her re-election.

31.2 My Government continues to recognize the valuable expertise provided by UNESCO to us as a small island developing State faced with multiple challenges. These range from water shortages arising from climate change to galvanizing youth, especially boys, into quality education fulfilment, and from scaling up the professionalization of the teaching force to integrating education for sustainable development. Not to forget the need to preserve both our tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In all these areas, UNESCO remains our undisputed partner in providing cutting-edge expertise in our quest to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

31.3 Mr President, I think I echo the sentiments of my Caribbean colleagues expressed in various United Nations forums and more recently at the COP26 summit in Glasgow. Small island developing States like ours must have a heightened voice at the top of the table in contributing to solutions impacting us, situated as we are on the frontiers of damaging climate change. In terms of UNESCO's role, climate change, expertise and resources must be redeployed in developing more focused and tailored measures that adequately reflect the unique conditions of SIDS. This must indispensably take account of our islands' vulnerabilities, linked to economies of scale and thus limited institutional capacity, the increase in frequency and intensification of natural disasters and sea level rises which contaminate fresh water sources. The COVID-19 pandemic has now accentuated these challenges. These require urgent UNESCO intervention, notably in delivering unfettered access to education and ensuring access to clean water for washing hands. And that is the only effective means of combating the pandemic.

31.4 One of the lessons to be learned from the disruption of COVID-19 in ensuring continuing education was that despite laudable benefits to digitize the learning process, it cannot be a substitute for the pedagogical knowledge and skills imparted by the teacher in the face-to-face experience. This is the basis for quality education, regardless of how it is delivered. In this vein, Saint Kitts and Nevis has prioritized the resumption of school and is the only Caribbean State to have had complete uninterrupted, full-time face-to face-school for the academic year 2020-2021 and thus far for the academic year 2021-2022. This is why with the help of UNESCO, we embarked on the professionalization of the teaching force, a central feature of which is a creation of a national teachers council focused on boosting standards and quality control.

31.5 Our next priority with UNESCO's assistance is integrating a policy framework for education, for sustainable development as part of the horizontal and vertical curriculum components in our national education programme. Another area in which UNESCO can provide immediate assistance is in addressing freshwater shortages, the key vulnerability factors of which remain rising sea levels and climate variability and change. There is a pressing need for the UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme to assist the Caribbean island States in reinforcing human and institutional capacities with scientific knowledge, methodologies and resilient water ICT-based management tools. We cannot achieve this ambition alone with UNESCO. This may require forging allegiances with other export partners such as the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations Environment Programme to drive enhanced water security, improved water quality and process wastewater, ultimately impacting on food security.

31.6 In conclusion, more than ever, we call upon UNESCO to refocus its SIDS expertise and support by providing resilience, building strategies in enhancing quality education, strengthening our early warning systems against the vagaries of climate change and preserving all places of memory and cultural heritage. With UNESCO's support, we can secure a sustainable future for our country and our citizens. I thank you for your kind attention.

**32. The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Milagros Germán, Minister of Culture of the Dominican Republic.

**33.1 Sra. Germán (República Dominicana):**

Muchísimas gracias, señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señora Directora General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, señores ministros, embajadores, distinguidos delegados, señoras y señores: reciban todos un cordial

saludo desde la República Dominicana. Felicitamos en nombre de nuestro país y del nuestro propio al Brasil, en la persona de su embajador y delegado permanente, el señor Santiago Irazábal Mourão por su elección como Presidente de esta 41ª Conferencia General. De la misma manera, felicitamos a la señora Audrey Azoulay por su reelección como Directora General de la UNESCO, su éxito es de todos. Le renovamos el respaldo del Gobierno dominicano a su gestión. *Nous connaissons aussi votre affection pour la République Dominicaine. Mon pays vous salue et surtout les plages de Samaná* que los esperan a todos.

33.2 En este escenario no tenemos que defender el valor de la educación o de la cultura. Todos los que aquí estamos lo conocemos bien. Los pueblos que no protegen su cultura están destinados al olvido o a la desaparición. La cultura, ese conjunto de coincidencias y diferencias que nos convoca hoy, nos invita a celebrar. La cultura nos define, nos percibe, nos hereda, nos recuerda y nos trasciende. Las agendas de hoy urgen, considerados los nuevos desafíos que nos ha impuesto esta pandemia, estamos obligados a priorizar alianzas globales y regionales que nos alimenten, pero también alianzas al seno de nuestras propias comunidades. Hoy, más que nunca, es preciso conciliar, promover una alianza profunda entre educación y cultura es fundamental. Esta alianza pasa por una reestructuración de los programas de educación, no solo para invertir más, sino para invertir mejor en una educación de calidad. Las últimas estadísticas hablan fuerte y claro y desnudan una triste realidad que nos presenta un nuevo desafío: evitar que la pandemia arroje fuera de las aulas a nuestras niñas, adolescentes y mujeres.

33.3 Esta realidad debe ser prioridad hoy, más que nunca, y debe ser intervenida. Permítanme contarles que desde República Dominicana estamos trabajando en establecer alianzas estratégicas que nos permitan aprovechar el inmenso potencial técnico de la UNESCO en favor de la construcción de vínculos de colaboración entre los programas de educación y gestión cultural. Y confiamos en poder crear un sistema efectivo que nos facilite llevar por un mismo camino los objetivos de nuestra nación hacia la gran meta común del ODS 4. Aunque todo el panorama mundial se haya enrarecido a causa de la pandemia y sus diversas crisis colaterales, es ahora cuando más debemos apostar a la cultura como ente de cohesión de nuestros pueblos. Será la cultura y sus múltiples lenguajes la que nos ayudará a detener la desigualdad. Será la cultura la que nos abrirá las puertas para asimilar las profundas transformaciones que se han registrado en nuestras sociedades posmodernas. Será la cultura, en definitiva, la que nos señalará el camino para llegar a salvo a nuestro nuevo destino.

33.4 Hablemos de educación, el Gobierno de la República Dominicana, ante los obstáculos que planteó la pandemia para volver a las aulas, no se quedó de brazos cruzados. “Aprendamos desde casa”, nació en marzo del 2020 e inició la reapertura del año escolar. En un acuerdo sin precedentes, las clases fueron transmitidas por más de 150 emisoras de radio y televisión, empresas de cable y plataformas digitales. Se impartieron programas para la capacitación de maestros, instruyendo a más de 100 000 profesores sobre las nuevas metodologías de la educación a distancia. Para ello, contamos en todo momento con el apoyo técnico de la UNESCO.

33.5 En el campo de la educación superior, logramos articular y unificar las cátedras UNESCO en una red nacional de cátedras, reafirmando nuestro apoyo a la investigación científica y tecnológica. Celebramos la cuarta edición del Premio Juan Bosch, un reconocimiento financiado por el Gobierno de la República Dominicana que tiene por finalidad impulsar el trabajo de jóvenes investigadores en Ciencias Sociales y nos llena de mucha alegría compartir que en esta última edición del Premio Juan Bosch se ha presentado la mayor cantidad de candidaturas en la historia del premio.

33.6 Nuestro país ha trabajado arduamente en la recuperación del sector de la cultura a través del programa Industrias Creativas y Culturales. Creamos el Gabinete de Economía Naranja, una iniciativa que busca fortalecer, regular y supervisar las instituciones que generan bienes y servicios culturales y en atención a nuestro compromiso con nuestros gestores culturales, el Gobierno promulgó la Ley de Mecenazgo Cultural, un extraordinario instrumento a través del cual se estableció un régimen de incentivos y acceso a microcréditos para la financiación de proyectos culturales.

33.7 Pero ¿quién puede abstraerse del encanto de la bachata? Pues en el año 2019 recibimos con alegría la inscripción de la música y el baile de la bachata en la lista representativa del Patrimonio Inmaterial de la Humanidad, al tiempo que renovamos nuestro compromiso con su difusión como testimonio para las generaciones futuras. En ese mismo año, nuestra capital, la ciudad de Santo Domingo, fue declarada por la UNESCO como ciudad creativa de la música y firmamos junto a 11 instituciones un convenio sin precedentes rumbo al Plan Metropolitano de Cultura.

33.8 Recientemente, el país depositó los instrumentos de ratificación de la Convención sobre la Protección del Patrimonio Cultural Subacuático y estamos confiados que lograremos actualizar las normativas para una gestión más efectiva de nuestros bienes culturales subacuáticos.

33.9 Cabe destacar, en el marco de esta Asamblea, el trabajo que nuestro país ha venido desarrollando a través del programa El Hombre y la Biosfera de la UNESCO, gestionando nuestra Reserva de Biosfera Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo como un modelo de manejo compartido con las autoridades locales, la sociedad civil y el Comité Nacional sobre el Hombre y la Biosfera, que incluye tres áreas íconos y protegidas y ricas envió diversidad. Próximamente estaremos sometiendo al programa el Hombre y la Biosfera una nueva reserva: Madre de las Aguas, un conjunto de espacios productores de este recurso ambiental localizados en la cordillera central de nuestro país.

33.10 Andrés L. Mateo, reconocido intelectual dominicano y embajador de nuestro país ante este organismo, concibió la frase odisea intelectual para describir las sinuosidades del camino en el proceso histórico de construcción de nuestra identidad dominicana. La tomo prestada a Andrés para asegurarles que la nueva dirección del Ministerio ha iniciado una verdadera odisea intelectual, moral y ética orientada a lograr que la consigna “la cultura somos todos” se mude del reino de las palabras y saque residencia permanente en el mundo real en el que cada dominicano y cada dominicana pueda ejercer sus derechos culturales como componentes de los derechos humanos, asegurando la cohesión social y el desarrollo con civilización en la búsqueda de ese mundo más bello, más justo y mejor. *Спасі́бо, merci beaucoup, Shukran. Xiè xie. Thank you.* Muchas gracias. Buenas tardes.

34. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Ingrid Van Engelshoven, Minister of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands. You have the floor.

**35.1 Ms Van Engelshoven (Netherlands):**

Dear colleagues, Madam Director-General, Mr President of the General Conference, during the pandemic important values have come under increased pressure worldwide. Important values that include equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion, democracy and human rights, gender equality and equal rights for the LGBTI community. As a result of the pandemic, many people are finding it ever more difficult to participate in society and pursue their personal development. This should be a painful realization for everyone involved in the work of UNESCO. Education, culture and science – areas which have our full commitment – are the foundation for personal and social development. Equal participation is our top priority: no one should be left behind. That is why the Netherlands will continue to work across all UNESCO domains, to do everything to ensure that people can lead fulfilling lives in just societies. And to support every initiative that is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In doing so, our eyes, our hearts and our actions must be focused on the youth. By raising the quality of education and ensuring that everyone, everywhere in the world, has equal opportunities and equal access to education, we lay the foundation for a peaceful and sustainable society. For their peaceful and sustainable future.

**35.2** But words alone are not enough. UNESCO will have to take a strong and active role in the fields of human rights, culture and education. Let me highlight one of the priorities of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in each of these areas. Firstly, human rights: by adopting the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence during this conference, UNESCO can set a great example and show its commitment to protecting fundamental rights worldwide. In this complex area, the Netherlands believes that a human-centred approach should be given the highest priority.

**35.3** As well as doing more to protect fundamental rights worldwide, we must recognize that in many countries freedom of expression is under attack and that safety of journalists is needed now more than ever. At the World Press Freedom Conference hosted by the Netherlands in 2020, some promising steps were taken towards forming a united global front on this issue. The International Programme for the Development of Communication also remains of vital importance to the Netherlands.

**35.4** The second point I wish to focus on is culture. In recent years, I have worked hard to ensure that Dutch policy on culture facilitates a cultural sector created by and for everyone in our society. This is a long-term process, but it is encouraging to see so many cultural institutions and creatives already subscribing to this philosophy and embracing it fully. In addition, the Netherlands will continue its international efforts to conserve and protect culture. Our strong sense of responsibility finds expression in the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the committee on the import and export of cultural objects. World heritage is something we will never lose sight of. In the years ahead, we want to make the link between climate and cultural heritage a special focus of our common activities, to ensure that investing in culture not only makes for a peaceful society, but also a sustainable one.

**35.5** Thirdly, we come to education. Access to a high standard of education is a fundamental human right and the key to achieving the other Sustainable Development Goals. Crises around the world, not least COVID-19, have had an adverse effect on equality of opportunity and equal access to education. This is especially true for women and girls. The closure of schools worldwide has brought to light and even intensified many pre-existing inequalities, both in the classroom and online, both in the Netherlands, as in other parts of the world. It is up to all of us to ensure that UNESCO takes the lead in addressing these issues. Higher standards in education and improved access to education have the power to prevent future inequalities in every society.

**35.6** Here again, words simply are not enough. Determined action is needed from all of us, from me and from you. The young people of today are entirely justified in calling us to account, in reminding us that what we do today determines their future. We cannot afford to disappoint the young ones. Making up for disappointments takes far too long. And time is a luxury we do not have. Let them know – let them feel – that the UNESCO family is here for them! That our hearts are open to them. And that the actions we agree on here during this conference will make a real difference to their world. Thank you very much.

**36. The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Emine Dzhaparova, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. You have the floor madam.

**37.1 Ms Dzhaparova (Ukraine):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates of the General Conference, it is indeed a great pleasure and honour for me to attend the long awaited 41st session of the General Conference in person. My country entirely shares UNESCO values and fully supports the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5). We believe that they are a solid foundation for achieving the SDGs in UNESCO's fields of competence by 2030. We trust in the leading role of UNESCO in elevating global shocks and suffering caused by them in its areas of competence.

**37.2** More to the point, Ukraine is ready to join programmes and activities of UNESCO dedicated to its global priorities Africa and gender, by sharing our expertise in preserving cultural heritage, managing education systems, introducing innovative digital technologies and in other areas concerned. My country continually promotes gender equality, which is a top priority for the Government of Ukraine.

**37.3** Ukraine also considers relevant the UNESCO strategies aimed to support the priority group of small island developing States. They are facing climate change emergencies, inequalities concerning income, systematic threats to their cultural and natural heritage and their existence. We cannot but acknowledge that the resources allocated to the programmes in this area are insufficient.



37.4 Another priority group, that of young people, requires and deserves our heightened attention and consistent support to spread UNESCO's humanistic values and principles, the philosophy of being dedicated to the values of UNESCO, among children and youth. We have also recently launched a nationwide contest among the UNESCO associated schools: "Healthy planet, healthy people, common responsibility, joint efforts, my vision of the future". In this way, we wish to foster in the hearts of generations of Ukrainian boys and girls, concern for the planet and for humankind and a sense of their responsibility for the future of humankind.

37.5 Mr President, referring to the noble mission of our Organization, which is building peace in the minds of men and women, I cannot but mention the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea, where human rights and values of UNESCO are being persistently ignored and violated. And this is also my personal pain as I used to live in Crimea before 2014. Hundreds of political prisoners of the Kremlin are being held in Crimea behind bars or unlawfully transferred to the Russian territory. Most of them are Crimean Tatars. Russian occupation administration in Crimea violates the right to education in native language. Education in the Ukrainian language, for example, is available only to 0.2% of schoolchildren in Crimea. Only 3% of children of Crimean Tatars study their native and mother tongue. The number of Crimean Tatar schools has significantly reduced. Of particular concern is the comprehensive militarization of education and propaganda of war among minors. Over the past few years, several invaluable world heritage properties on the peninsula have been completely or partially destroyed. The UNESCO report on the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea, issued in November 2020, noted the illegal transfer of cultural artefacts to the territory of Russian Federation. Recent large-scale, barbaric restoration works at the world heritage sites in the ancient city of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora, and the Crimean Khans' Palace of Bagçasaray, which is a remnant of Crimean Tatar architecture and culture, seriously threaten these sites. The Russian Federation destroyed religious monuments of Crimean Tatars. More than 19 Crimean Tatar Muslim burial monuments were ruined during the construction of a highway. Freedom of speech is practically destroyed. Russia forced the independent media out of the peninsula and persecutes human rights defenders, civil journalists and activists. We appreciate the efforts made by UNESCO's Secretariat and in particular by Madam Director-General aimed at ending this lamentable situation by monitoring the situation in the peninsula. With regard to the decision on the follow-up of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Ukraine adopted by the last session of the Executive Board, we are looking forward to comprehensive monitoring by UNESCO in the upcoming year.

37.6 Madam Director-General, we also commend your efforts and activities during the most challenging period of UNESCO's existence, you have managed to maintain UNESCO functioning and operative capacities during the crisis. We, of course, congratulate you on having been re-elected for the second term.

37.7 Dear colleagues, finally, let me mention the crucial role of the National Commissions of UNESCO in implementing the noble goals of our Organization and promoting its values at national levels. National Commissions are an important and integral element of UNESCO construction. Over a year ago, the National Commission of Ukraine for UNESCO launched a comprehensive reform process to enhance our contribution to the mission of UNESCO. We are going to promote new dimensions such as gender equality and digitalization. This year, the Ukrainian National Commission, together with the Ukrainian President, in order to commemorate the 75th anniversary of UNESCO, launched the virtual flash mob. Of course, we could not travel and see the beauties of our cultural heritage, but we could do so virtually, and I am very thankful to the States of Qatar and to Turkey for joining this flash mob and producing their video clips in accordance with the Ukrainian initiative. We also initiated the creation of a tree alley in the Kyiv Botanical Garden. This was done with the United Nations coordinator in Ukraine. Now we call for other National Commissions to join this initiative in their countries. Preserving ecosystems and natural heritage should be in the spotlight of our Organization.

37.8 I wish to conclude my speech by saying that if elected to the Executive Board, Ukraine will be very determined to safeguard all of the core values, all of the priorities I have just mentioned and to actively promote its ambitious and progressive agenda. I thank you very much.

38. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Khatuna Totladze, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. You have the floor madam.

39.1 **Ms Totladze** (Georgia):

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, on behalf of the government of Georgia, I am pleased to address the 41st session of the General Conference and extend our sincere congratulations to Ms Audrey Azoulay on the renewal of her mandate as Director-General. We cordially offer our best wishes in her continuing efforts to position UNESCO as a key actor in all fields of its competence mostly in light of the challenges we are all facing today.

39.2 On 7 October 1992, shortly after gaining independence, Georgia launched its multifaceted collaboration with UNESCO. It is nearly for 30 years already that Georgia has shared the ideals and values of the Organization and recognizes the importance of its endeavours. Today we reiterate our readiness to provide full support to its future work.

39.3 This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of UNESCO. It is an occasion when the global community can look through the longest list of achievements and reflect on the challenges ahead, to achieve even greater efficiency through UNESCO's Strategic Transformation process. Herewith, the successful outcome of the process is based on multilateral collaboration and effective dialogue with all its Member States. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated in a most severe way that only by joint efforts can we effectively address global challenges.

39.4 Ladies and gentlemen, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guides the work of the government of Georgia and the United Nations system. In 2019, the Georgian government adopted the SDG National Document, aimed at promoting the implementation of SDGs and introduction of evidence-based national policy according to Agenda 2030.

39.5 The new Educational and Science Strategy of Georgia will become operational from 2022. The 10-year policy vision of the country places particular emphasis on three main goals: quality, equity and governance. The role of science and research has become more prominent than ever. Acknowledging the importance of scientific cooperation that makes science more transparent and inclusive, Georgia fully supports the Draft Recommendation on Open Science. The COVID-19 crisis, which has already had a significant disruption of education process worldwide, made the education system actors offer new creative approaches to maintain continuity of education. To meet the strong demand, education process has been transformed featuring the special role of information and communication technologies in education. Having a high impact on youth, ICT plays a crucial role in their learning and skills development and ensures their better adoption to modern challenges.

39.6 2021 is a remarkable year for Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, which despite the COVID-19 pandemic, currently hosts the World Book Capital programme. With a focus on innovations and use of modern technologies, the projects envisaged throughout the year, aim to encourage promoting literacy among youth and to make books accessible for readers regardless of their financial and physical capabilities. The role of culture and creativity in the development policies of the Georgian cities will be further enhanced in the light of the Director-General's recent decision to include the Georgian capital Tbilisi and the city of Batumi in the Creative Cities Network. I wish to express my gratitude for the recognition of our efforts and express confidence that the designation of Georgian cities will bring tangible contribution to the implementation of the objectives of the network. We continue our firm and fruitful cooperation with the World Heritage Centre. Let me take the opportunity and thank the Centre and its consultative bodies for the support and recognition of our efforts towards the implementation of the World Heritage Convention as well as for the expert assistance in preserving world heritage sites and museum collections.

39.7 As a party to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Georgia continues to advance in its effective implementation. This year, Georgia became a member of the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for the period 2021-2025.

39.8 The World Network of Biosphere Reserves is an excellent tool for international cooperation and building capacity. For the first time, Georgia is ready to submit two nominations in this regard. The establishment of biosphere reserves in Georgia is fully in line with the vision of the State towards the implementation of Agenda 2030. I am proud to say herewith, that the first natural heritage property nominated by Georgia "the Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands" has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List this year. We hope that biosphere reserves established in Georgia as well as Georgian natural heritage property on the World Heritage List will greatly contribute to fostering biodiversity conservation and environmental education. They will also establish a good practice for harmonious coexistence of humans and environment.

39.9 Dear colleagues, on 21 September 2020, the world celebrated the 75th anniversary of United Nations. On this occasion, heads of State and Government gathered to decide on urgent efforts towards strengthening international cooperation for ensuring three main pillars of the United Nations: human rights, peace and security and development. On behalf of my country, I want to once more express our deep concerns for the humanitarian crises in Georgia's occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. The return to division, the ongoing creeping annexation, installation of barbed wire fences along the occupation lines to cut off remaining links between the war-divided societies, significantly affect the livelihoods of the local population. Deliberate eradication of cultural heritage, looting and illicit trade of cultural artefacts, restrictions on freedom of movement, and deprivation of the right to education in the native tongue, particularly in the Gali region, double our concerns and highlight the vital need for urgent response. In this respect, we acknowledge the paramount role of UNESCO. Our society considers the Organization as a key stakeholder and strongly expects its efficient involvement in the process, especially regarding the monuments of cultural heritage. We believe that only with consolidated efforts is it possible to eliminate such grave violations in different parts of the world.

39.10 Distinguished delegates, on 12 November, the President of Georgia will be among distinctive participants of the high-level event dedicated to the 75th anniversary of UNESCO. It will surely be a good opportunity to reaffirm our commitments towards the Organization's actions and to jointly discuss the essential role of UNESCO in the face of global challenges. Thank you very much for your attention.

#### 40. The President:

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Ali-Hameed Ashukri, Deputy Minister of Higher Education of Iraq. You have the floor sir.

١-٤١ السيد الشكري (العراق):

السيد رئيس المؤتمر العام المحترم، السيد رئيس المجلس التنفيذي المحترم، أصحاب الفخامة والمعالي ورؤساء الوفود وأعضاؤها المحترمون، السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، بمناسبة افتتاح أعمال المؤتمر العام لمنظمة اليونسكو في دورته الحادية والأربعين، أنقل لكم تحيات حكومة بلادي وتمنياً بنجاح مؤتمرنا هذا. السيد رئيس المؤتمر العام، يسرني أن أهنئكم، سيادة الرئيس على الثقة التي أولاهم لكم المؤتمر العام بانتخابكم رئيساً لدورته الحالية، وأرجو لهذه الدورة النجاح والتوفيق، وهي تعقد في هذا الوقت، حيث يحاول العالم بأسره الخروج من الصعوبات التي فرضتها جائحة كورونا، مع الأمان المحلصة بعودة الحياة الطبيعية لكل الشعوب لاستعادة أواصر العمل والتفاهم المشترك عن مجمل القضايا ذات الاهتمام المتبادل. وكذلك، فإنه من دواعي سرورنا أن نقدم التهنئة للسيدة أودري أزولاي بمناسبة تجديد ولايتها مديرة عامة للمنظمة، ونحن على ثقة تامة بأنهم ستكمل مسيرة العمل الرصين للمنظمة وتقودها لتحقيق الأهداف المرسومة بالتعاون مع الدول الأعضاء.

٢-٤١ السيدات والسادة الأكارم، تولى الحكومة العراقية اهتماماً كبيراً بملف الثقافة واسترجاع الآثار المهربة. وقد تكثرت الجهود الدبلوماسية والقانونية العراقية، بالتعاون مع منظمة اليونسكو، باستعادة في حدود ١٧ ألف قطعة أثرية مهربة. ويعد لوح جلجامش التاريخي واحداً من أهم القطع التاريخية التي تم استلامها مؤخراً بعد مضي أكثر من ثلاثة عقود على تهريبه. وإن ما تحقق من نتائج إيجابية يعد الدافع الرئيسي لإعلان العراق عن رغبته وحاجته الماسة في تجديد عضويته في اللجنة

الحكومية الدولية المعنية بإعادة الممتلكات الثقافية وردها إلى بلادها الأصلية لتحقيق المساهمة الفاعلة في إنجاح مهام اللجنة التي ستصب في مصلحة كافة الدول الأعضاء.

٤١-٣ كما تود الحكومة العراقية الإشادة بدور منظمة اليونسكو في تعزيز إدراج الكثير من عناصر التراث غير المادي في قائمة التراث العالمي لدى منظمة اليونسكو، فضلاً عن الجهود المستمرة لتعزيز قدرات التواصل المجتمعي مع التراث الثقافي عبر توسيع آفاق المشاركة الثقافية والتركيز على توسيع مدياتها وفعاليتها المجتمعية وفق مبدأ الحق في الثقافة أو الثقافة للجميع، كواحدة من الحقوق الأساسية المكتسبة.

٤١-٤ كما نتقدم هنا بالتحية للدول التي ساهمت في مساعدة العراق لتخطي أزمته في مجال استرداد الآثار المهربة. ونقدر الجهود الكبيرة التي تقدمها منظمة اليونسكو والسيدة أودري أزولاي في إطار المبادرة الإنسانية المعنونة "إحياء روح الموصل" من خلال إعادة الإعمار وتقديم الدعم والمساندة بعد تعرض المدينة للتهجير والدمار على يد عصابات داعش الإرهابية. فكنتم خير عون وسند لمساندة الموصل لاسترداد عافيتها والحفاظ على آثارها وتراثها العريق وأصالتها، فضلاً عن إسهامكم في تخطي الصعوبات، والحفاظ على دور اليونسكو الريادي في مجال تخصصاتها، وتحقيق رسالة المنظمة وتجسيد أهدافها السامية، وتأكيد دورها الفريد في ترسيخ أسس السلام الدائم والتنمية المستدامة.

٤١-٥ كما نشد على أيديكم في اتخاذ التدابير المقترحة في إطار مشروع الاستراتيجية الوطنية للتربية والتعليم. ونقدم شكرنا لمنظمة اليونسكو على ما قدمته من دعم غير محدود للبرامج التربوية والثقافية والعلمية التي نفذت لصالح العراق خلال الفترة الماضية وأثناء فترة تفشي وباء كورونا المستجد.

٤١-٦ السيد الرئيس، أصحاب السعادة، السادة المؤتمرين الكرام، كما تعلمون إن العراق من ضمن الدول المؤسسة لمنظمة اليونسكو، إذ إنه انضم إليها منذ عام ١٩٤٨، ولم يحظ بفرصة الانضمام لعضوية المجلس التنفيذي منذ ٢٧ عاماً، لذا نتمنى دعمكم لمساندة العراق كي يشغل هذا الموقع من جديد ليستعيد مكانته الحقيقية بين الدول، وأن يحظى العراق بتمثيله الحقيقي في المنظمة ضمن استحقاقه المشروع من الوظائف.

٤١-٧ وختاماً، أتقدم باسم جمهورية العراق بالشكر لمنظمتنا اليونسكو على كل ما قدمته من دعم ومساندة، وتقبلوا منا رسائل حب واعتزاز جئت بها من العراق، بلاد ما بين الرافدين، مزينة بآيات العرفان والشكر لكم جميعاً. وأود أن أطمئنكم إن العراق سيبقى بخير على الرغم من التحديات التي يواجهها من قوى الإرهاب، والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

#### 42. The President:

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs of Italy. You have the floor sir.

#### 43.1 Mr Della Vedova (Italy):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, after more than a year of the global pandemic, the G20 Ministers of Culture Meeting that we organized last July in Rome was a testimony to the unprecedented level of interaction between cultural, digital and environmental transitions. The three phases of today's world, a world more fragmented and more united at the same time, which needs culture, education, communication and science to heal its wounds and recover from the pandemic, as well as to face the environmental challenges at the core of COP26 agenda in Glasgow. Multilateral needs, multilateral tasks. The world needs UNESCO and its founding principles, such as respect of human rights and promotion of gender equality.

43.2 More than ever, 65 years after its creation, the most intellectual and imaginative United Nations agency turns out to be the most realistic one. UNESCO can count on our support to this end. Madame Azoulay, whom we wish to congratulate on her re-election, can always count on Italian support. UNESCO is called upon to play its role in the multilateral response to the multiple crises that we are facing, as it did recently for Afghanistan, recalling the importance of the respect of the rights to education, in particular for women and girls, protection of cultural heritage, and security of journalists. There is no sustainability without science, especially basic science, which is at the core of the UNESCO International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste during the last 50 years. There is no life and no sustainable peace without water, as we learn from the annual reports of the World Water Assessment Programme hosted in Perugia, the natural science and cultural meeting at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe in Venice, a place where nature and culture have met and mingled for centuries, admirably blending fragility and beauty. We can only achieve sustainability through education. As recalled by the G20 Education Ministers' Declaration that was approved in Catania in June, we praised UNESCO's actions to support teachers and learners through the present generational catastrophe. The activities listed above are among the several national reasons for us Italians to be proud to host school in our territory. Also, they are a multilateral way for Italy to continue being a land of and for culture.

43.3 The shift in concept of heritage – natural, cultural, tangible intangible digital virtual – makes the 58 Italian sites more and more world heritage properties. The digital transitions tell us a lot of how much this concept was brought to worldwide attention by the UNESCO. The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage continues to be very fruitful. This is why Italy is particularly honoured to host, in late 2022, in Florence, in agreement and close cooperation with UNESCO, an important international event in celebration of the landmark 50th anniversary of the Convention. We will host it to take stock of a century of reflections and historical achievements, but also to identify goals, priorities and challenges for the convention next fifty years. Let me mention that we consider the need for a more representative World Heritage List as the most important challenge for the Convention. Indeed, rather than a static, identity-centred concept, Italy considers heritage as a dynamic activity and has a firm commitment to protect the precious, magnificent patrimony and the unique instrument for sharing with other States and parties our knowledge and experience. The Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage is an instance of our active commitment for half a century,

of fighting illicit trafficking and recovering stolen cultural property, paving the way to the establishment of the Italian “Unite for Heritage” Task Force. The taskforce is intended to be deployed abroad in fluid coordination with, and upon invitation by UNESCO, with the goal of addressing threats to irreplaceable cultural resources and protecting and preserving cultural heritage damaged, trafficked or endangered by conflicts and disasters. This was stated last October by the G20 Summit in its Rome Declaration, which in turn recalls the objectives of resolution 2347 (2017) of the United Nations Security Council, as well as the Rome Declaration of the G20 Ministers of Culture.

43.4 On the environmental side, during our G20 presidency we launched the UNESCO international network of environmental experts – UNESCO Earth Network. In line with the long-standing engagement, commitment and shared experience in protecting world heritage, Italy decided to put forward its candidature to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee after 20 years of absence from this body, a long hiatus which we believe it is time to end. We count on your valuable support at the election to be held in two weeks at the 23rd session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention. Finally, Italy aligns itself with the European Union statement. Thank you.

**44. The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Delfina Gómez Álvarez, Secretary of Public Education of Mexico.

**45.1 Sra. Gómez Álvarez (México):**

Distinguido Presidente de la Conferencia General, distinguida Directora General, muy distinguidos representantes de los países miembros: estamos celebrando todos estos días 75 años de la creación de la Organización. México fue uno de los países fundadores de este organismo, dotado de un espíritu genuino para fortalecer la paz y el desarrollo de las naciones a través de la educación, la ciencia y la cultura. Y a lo largo de este tiempo, la UNESCO ha reafirmado con sus acciones el compromiso para trabajar a favor de los pilares que le dieron origen, otorgando apoyo a los Estados Miembros para orientar sus políticas educativas, para atender sus problemas sociales y culturales.

45.2 Felicitamos efusivamente al representante del Brasil, Santiago Irazábal, por su muy importante elección, contará con todo nuestro apoyo y quiero aprovechar también esta ocasión para expresar el reconocimiento de México a la gestión de la señora Audrey Azoulay, quien de manera muy acertada ha conducido a la Organización y tuvo la visión de convocar muy a tiempo a los ministros de Educación para enfrentar con acciones concertadas la contingencia sanitaria derivada de la COVID-19.

45.3 A partir de marzo de 2020, muchos países, creo que todos los presentes, nos vimos en la necesidad de suspender nuestras actividades escolares como una de las múltiples acciones que llevamos a cabo para detener los contagios de esta nueva enfermedad. En el caso de México, muchos otros presentes aquí, tuvimos que adaptar las actividades escolares presenciales para acercar la educación a los hogares, la educación a distancia de nuestros estudiantes que en el ciclo escolar reportaron, en nuestro caso, inscritos 33,6 millones de alumnos entre los 3 y los 29 años. Para el ciclo escolar 2020-21, aún con clases en línea, se inscribieron también 32,9 millones y por motivos asociados a la COVID-19 o por falta de dinero o recursos no se pudieron inscribir 5,2 millones de personas.

45.4 La educación fue considerada como una actividad prioritaria para el retorno de las actividades y por esta razón se inició de inmediato una campaña de vacunación enfocada en nuestros docentes y personal administrativo, con la participación del Secretariado de Salud, la Secretaría de Educación, las instituciones también de salud, la Secretaría de la Defensa y la marina. Todo se sumaron a este esfuerzo de los gobiernos de las entidades federativas de México y se logró vacunar, en menos de un mes, al 88% de las maestras, maestros, personal administrativo y de apoyo que laboran en escuelas públicas y privadas de todos los niveles educativos desde educación inicial hasta superior.

45.5 El regreso a clases fue cuidado para salvaguardar principalmente a los niños y jóvenes, a los docentes y al personal con planes de sana distancia y siguiendo los protocolos que recomendaba la UNESCO y nuestro propio sistema de salud. Apoyado por su curso en línea gratuito y para cada nivel educativo, alumnos, maestros y padres de familia, se ha podido evaluar la eficiencia terminal y la adquisición de competencias de más de un millón de inscritos y vamos a presentar esta información públicamente muy pronto.

45.6 Hoy en día, México regresó a las clases presenciales en el momento justo. Ya no podíamos seguir aislados y la emergencia sanitaria había disminuido gracias a los cuidados que se habían tomado. Y a tres meses de regreso a clases puedo decir que no ha habido un rebrote de contagios y los casos asociados al regreso a clase son mínimos, ya que los protocolos de actuación se han ejecutado adecuadamente. Para el último día del mes de octubre, registramos una apertura de 169 664 escuelas, en las cuales imparten clases más de 1 508 000 trabajadores de la educación. Aprecio mucho que escuchen ustedes este esfuerzo, porque estoy seguro que todos los aquí presentes estamos luchando contra el mismo desafío. Acompañados de la incorporación a nuestros alumnos a clases presenciales, hemos iniciado ya nuestras reuniones de planeación con la Secretaría de Educación Pública y los estados y los Consejos Técnicos, estamos de nuevo en marcha,

45.7 En otra área que a todos nos afecta y muy brevemente menciono que los días 4 y 5 de octubre tuvimos la ocasión de albergar la conmemoración del Día Internacional contra la Violencia y el Acoso Escolar y se firmó el Acuerdo de Campeche, liderado por México, Francia y Marruecos, que constituye un llamado a la acción a todos los países miembros de nuestra comunidad.

45.8 Distinguidos delegados, quiero cerrar mi intervención reiterando a todos ustedes el compromiso de México de colaborar estrechamente con todos ustedes para que la Conferencia Intergubernamental MONDIACULT 2022 cumpla con los altos propósitos de actualizar las políticas culturales de cara a los grandes retos de nuestro tiempo.

**46. The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Natasha Cayer, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Canada to UNESCO.

47.1 **Mme Cayer** (Canada) :

Monsieur le Président, Madame la Directrice générale, distingués Délégués, je suis heureuse de réaffirmer que l'engagement du Canada à l'égard de l'UNESCO est aussi fort que le jour où l'Organisation a été créée, il y a 75 ans. Je félicite la Directrice générale de sa réélection et je l'assure du soutien indéfectible du Canada à l'égard de son Programme de transformation stratégique et de l'ambitieuse Stratégie à moyen terme de l'UNESCO.

47.2 Les deux grandes crises auxquelles nous faisons face aujourd'hui, les changements climatiques et la pandémie COVID-19, témoignent de l'importance d'agir ensemble. À cet égard, l'UNESCO peut apporter beaucoup. Nous voyons déjà les effets dévastateurs des changements climatiques, particulièrement dans les petits États insulaires en développement et dans toute l'Afrique. L'UNESCO doit rechercher des solutions multilatérales pour que les considérations relatives au climat, à la nature et à la biodiversité soient intégrées dans ses travaux.

47.3 La Décennie des Nations unies pour les sciences océaniques est l'occasion d'accélérer les avancées scientifiques qui visent à promouvoir la santé des océans et du climat. À un moment où les principes scientifiques éprouvés font l'objet d'attaques sans précédent, la Recommandation sur la science ouverte renforce la contribution de l'UNESCO à l'égard de la cible 9.5 des ODD en matière de recherche scientifique. Nous nous réjouissons de la Recommandation et que la Recommandation réaffirme l'importance de la coopération scientifique, qu'elle inclut les droits de la personne et qu'elle prône une approche intégrant la dimension de genre.

*(Mme Cayer poursuit en anglais)*

47.4 Mr President of the General Conference, distinguished delegates, we need to engage and learn from indigenous peoples and their valuable ancestral knowledge, and to be aware that Indigenous peoples residing in Northern communities are disproportionately affected by climate change. Canada is committed to truth and reconciliation, and to preserving and promoting the languages, culture and knowledge of indigenous peoples, and will be active in advancing the goals of the United Nations Decade of Indigenous Languages.

47.5 The upholding of human rights and fundamental freedoms must underpin all UNESCO activities and be a central consideration when developing and implementing all standard-setting instruments across UNESCO's fields of work. A good example is the recommendation of the ethics of artificial intelligence: an ambitious text which reinforces universal human rights as the basis for the development and use of AI systems. As chair of the Freedom Online Coalition in 2022, Canada will further the implementation of the recommendation while advocating for a feminist Internet that respects the rights of everyone and advances our shared vision centred on digital inclusion.

47.6 UNESCO's work on media freedom, digital access and digital literacy is also essential. This is why we are proud to support the amazing work of the Global Media Defence Fund. With hate speech on the rise, much more remains to be done to advance the respect for and inclusion of all vulnerable populations, including LGBTQ2+ people, who are too often the victims of violence and discrimination. We strongly support UNESCO's engagement in the fight against all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including anti-Semitism and islamophobia. This type of dehumanization is what enables genocides to occur. We are proud to support UNESCO's 'Preventing genocide through education' programme and we call upon other Member States to join with us in this effort.

47.7 In education, girls have been disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic. The Organization's crucial work to defend Afghan women's and girls' rights, particularly through its work in education, has been remarkable and must be continued. Improving girls' education worldwide and ensuring that progress on gender equality and women's rights is not lost, must be a priority if SDG 4 is to be realised. UNESCO must also support Member States as they try to ensure continuity of education through the pandemic. We are glad to see that the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in Montreal continues to produce quality data to help Member States monitor progress towards the Agenda 2030.

*(The speaker continues in French)*

47.8 Monsieur le Président, distingués Délégués, en matière de culture, le Canada et le Gouvernement du Québec accordent une grande importance à la diversité des expressions culturelles et à la Convention de 2005 à l'ère du numérique. L'accès à des contenus diversifiés en ligne joue un rôle central dans la constitution des sociétés démocrates et inclusives.

47.9 En terminant, soulignons que l'année 2021 marque le quinzième anniversaire de l'accord ayant établi la présence formelle du représentant du Gouvernement du Québec au sein de la délégation permanente du Canada. Nous nous réjouissons de poursuivre cette collaboration fructueuse au service des objectifs fondamentaux de l'UNESCO. Je vous remercie de votre entente.

48. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Ahmad Pakatchi, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO. You have the floor sir.

49.1 **Mr Pakatchi** (Islamic Republic of Iran):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen, first, congratulations to His Excellency, Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao upon his election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference. I would like to extend my profound gratitude to His Excellency, Mr Altay Cenziger, the esteemed outgoing President of the 40th session of the General Conference, for his unsparing efforts during his tenure. I would also like to congratulate Madame Audrey Azoulay on her re-election as Director-General of UNESCO, and I wish to reiterate my government's full readiness to continue our cooperation.

49.2 Excellencies, dear colleagues, it is delightful to be able to have this conference in person after the difficult period of COVID-19 we have experienced during these last two years. I would like on this occasion to express my respect for the

efforts made by the UNESCO authorities to manage this situation and to protect the continuity of UNESCO's activities without any critical interruption during the pandemic.

49.3 It is worth mentioning that besides the regrets and troubles caused, COVID-19 has created opportunities to upgrade and elevate educational systems, and to develop infrastructure for activities ranging from scientific exchange to public culture in Iran. For my country, it was an opportunity to equip an enormous number of schools and universities, and millions of students have acquired devices for distance learning, providing them with applications to widen their access to knowledge, information, and culture. It is worthy of note that national platforms have been developed for the various stages of education, *inter alia* the platform "Shad", as well as platforms for online university lectures, workshops, conferences, research teamwork, and virtual museums.

49.4 Furthermore, we have experienced regional crises which have caused a new wave of refugees to come to Iran. Despite the severe unilateral restrictions and unjust sanctions imposed on our country, the number of 900,000 Afghan students in Iranian schools has recently been increased by 350,000 newcomer refugees, which merits greater attention from the international community. According to Iranian law, all the refugee children from Afghanistan, whether or not they are documented, enjoy the right to study equal to Iranian citizens.

49.5 The Islamic Republic of Iran is proud to be active in the various fields of UNESCO's mandates and respects the efforts made by the Organization regarding the right to free and equal access to science, technology, and research results as the property of human beings in all countries. Furthermore, Iran supports the efforts made concerning open science, AI, bioethics, and other fields of dialogue between human values and advanced technologies in an ethical framework and with the aim of preventing damage, such as having remedies for misinformation.

49.6 Ladies and gentlemen, UNESCO has always been an arena in which all nations may better know and understand each other and achieve peace and friendship. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that UNESCO's platforms for cooperation at both regional and international levels, such as category 2 institutes, are very influential in the rapprochement of the countries of our region, like the significant activities of the Regional Educational and Research Centre on Oceanography for West Asia in Tehran. Also, I hope that the newly established category 2 centres, such as the International UNESCO Centre for Health-Related Basic Sciences and Human Nutrition in Mashhad and the International Centre for the Integrated Management of Watershed and Bio-Resources in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions in Tehran, will provide opportunities for increased close regional cooperation. Moreover, multinational and joint nominations regarding world natural and cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, and anniversaries in practice have been very efficient in creating solidarity between neighbouring countries, and it is my hope that this will be continued. Thank you for your attention.

50. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon His Excellency Mr Carsten Staur, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Denmark to UNESCO.

51.1 **Mr Staur (Denmark):**

Mr President of the General Conference, delegates, the Danish Government would like to congratulate the Director-General on her re-election. We are committed and ready to engage with UNESCO and other Member States in order to adapt the Organization and the entire United Nations system to a new era, as called for by the United Nations Secretary-General in his most recent report on "Our Common Agenda".

51.2 Mr President of the General Conference, human rights and fundamental freedoms have been at the core of UNESCO for 75 years. At the heart of human rights is a full use of the United Nations human rights monitoring mechanism and stronger participation in civil society. Some States have used the fight against COVID-19 to restrict freedom of expression for journalists, artists and scientific researchers – three groups covered by UNESCO's mandate. As the United Nations specialized agency with a mandate to "promote the free flow of ideas by word and image", UNESCO should always defend freedom of expression. We need to improve the Organization's monitoring system, so it provides a more complete picture of the situation around the globe. We need to track progress, but also to identify problems and challenges, making full use of the existing frameworks within UNESCO.

51.3 Denmark acknowledges UNESCO's leading role in the coordination of the international collaboration – especially when it comes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4. UNESCO has a leading global position in influencing education of children and youth and UNESCO standards often guide local efforts, a leading position that, perhaps now more than ever, can change the world.

51.4 Children and youth have taken to the streets, demanding that world leaders take responsibility for the climate, and many children and youth are engaged in making our education institutions climate role models. Climate change is arguably the greatest challenge of our time. No corner of the world is immune from the consequences of climate change. An important step towards a green transition is that we have enough skilled workers to advance the practical use of clean and sustainable technologies. In Denmark, we strongly believe that vocational education will become a prominent gateway to green and sustainable technologies. We cannot just think our way out of the climate crisis. We need skilled workers who can build the climate-friendly houses, offshore windmills and all the climate solutions, that the world will need and demand. Therefore, the Danish Government aims at including sustainable development as a general part of our school system, for example by including sustainable development in the legislative objective for vocational education and training. We believe that providing children and youth with skills for the future in a time of climate-change is a crucial tool for each one of them and for a green world.

51.5 Denmark strongly supports Target 4.7 on global citizenship. In Denmark, the law states that the Danish Folkeskole, the public school system, has to provide pupils with knowledge and skills, which prepare them for further education and make them want to learn more, making them familiar with culture and history and give them an understanding of other countries and cultures. School must help the pupils understand human interaction with nature and promote the individual

student's development. The school has to prepare the students for participation, co-responsibility, rights and duties in a society with freedom and democracy. This task must be defined by intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

51.6 UNESCO certified projects, such as world heritage sites and biosphere reserves, are critical in helping to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Global exchanges of experience and best practices within UNESCO can inspire us all and help accelerate actions towards Agenda 2030. With this in mind, Denmark has decided to present its candidature for election, during this General Conference, to the International Coordinating Council of Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme for the term 2021-2025. We hope to work with partners across the world to advance this agenda.

51.7 Denmark is committed to a strong and efficient UNESCO, within the United Nations system. We strongly believe in rules-based international cooperation, in working together to attain progress and fighting injustice. In UNESCO, we need more Member States undertaking and sharing that responsibility. That is why we favour more rotation in the Executive Board. We need to demonstrate that we are able to accommodate the longstanding call for more inclusivity and diversity in the Organization's governance. We are happy and proud to extend our support, together with the other Nordic countries, for the candidature of Iceland to the Executive Board, following a stellar contribution of Finland over the last four years. Thank you for your attention.

52. **The President:**

Thank you very much. Now I call upon Her Excellency Ms Marcela Miriam Losardo, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Argentina to UNESCO.

53.1 **Sra. Losardo** (Argentina):

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, señora Directora General, señoras y señores ministros, embajadores, delegados: es un inmenso placer en mi calidad de Embajadora designada delegada permanente de la República Argentina ante la UNESCO, intervenir hoy ante esta Conferencia General para evocar las prioridades de nuestro país y compartir nuestra visión sobre la misión de esta Organización en ocasión de su 75º aniversario.

53.2 Asimismo, queremos felicitar a la señora Audrey Azoulay por su reelección como Directora General de la UNESCO y el remarcable trabajo que llevó a cabo en estos últimos cuatro años, como también al Presidente Santiago Mourão, que seguramente nos desafiará con éxitos en esta nueva gestión.

53.3 Vivimos en una época en las que nos enfrentamos a grandes desafíos. Todos y cada uno de ellos se han visto impactado por una crisis sanitaria mundial que, aún hoy, amenaza la ya frágil justicia social y requiere de cada uno de nosotros que redoblemos los esfuerzos a fin de garantizar la consecución de los objetivos de esta Organización.

53.4 Frente al cambio climático y a sus consecuencias sociales, frente a las desigualdades, frente a la brecha digital y a la inequidad de género, la educación es la respuesta. Derecho humano fundamental, motor del desarrollo, la educación es la clave que sí o sí nos va a permitir construir sociedades más justas.

53.5 Para mi país, las políticas educativas se deben cimentar a partir de la concertación y el diálogo social, construyendo acuerdos y alianzas a largo plazo, haciendo que los esfuerzos por garantizar el derecho a una educación de calidad se transformen en una política de Estado efectiva y duradera. En este sentido, la Argentina participa activamente en numerosas comisiones, foros y comités para lograr cooperación a nivel nacional, regional e internacional, como ocurre con la Comisión Interamericana de Educación y el Comité de Dirección de Alto Nivel del ODS 4.

53.6 Nuestro Gobierno considera imprescindible que la UNESCO continúe apoyando y acompañando a los Estados Miembros durante el proceso de reapertura de escuelas y el regreso a las clases, incluyendo la capacitación de los docentes. Es por ello que el Gobierno argentino ha tomado la decisión política de implementar una agenda de reparación educativa que permita garantizar la presencialidad plena y la recuperación de los aprendizajes escolares.

53.7 Lograr la igualdad de género es también una de las prioridades de la República Argentina, la creación de nuestro Ministerio de las Mujeres, Género y Diversidad ha puesto la lucha por los derechos de las mujeres y diversidades frente a toda forma de desigualdad y de violencia. Coincidimos con la UNESCO en que todas las formas de discriminación por motivos de género constituyen violaciones a derechos humanos y representan un importante obstáculo para el logro de los Objetivos del Desarrollo Sostenible.

53.8 En este 75º aniversario, que tiene lugar en un contexto tan particular, la UNESCO debe repensar el rol de las ciencias y promover el libre intercambio de ideas y de conocimientos. En tal sentido, la iniciativa sobre Ciencia Abierta es un ejemplo claro de cómo la UNESCO debe permitirse promover este tipo de ideas revolucionarias. La ciencia abierta nació como una utopía y poco a poco se está volviendo una realidad.

53.9 Como hemos visto a lo largo de la pandemia, la colaboración científica internacional ha permitido que la investigación sobre la COVID-19 avance mucho más rápido de lo esperado, llegando a desarrollar vacunas en tiempo récord. La Argentina sostiene, una vez más, que estas vacunas constituyen un bien público mundial, ya que nadie estará a salvo hasta que todos y todos estemos a salvo. Para poder dejar la pandemia atrás, es menester que todos los Estados Miembros puedan gozar de un acceso equitativo a las mismas.

53.10 Por otra parte, la Argentina se encuentra firmemente comprometida con las labores de la Comisión Ocenográfica Intergubernamental, con los objetivos de la década de las Naciones Unidas, de las ciencias oceánicas para el desarrollo sostenido y con el cumplimiento del ODS 14 de la Agenda 2030.

53.11 Señor Presidente, la UNESCO debe seguir promoviendo la creación de entornos culturales abiertos que acepten la diversidad y sus manifestaciones artísticas y apoyar a quienes la llevan a cabo. En este período de crisis sanitaria, hemos visto hasta qué punto la cultura es el cimiento de la vida social en la sociedad.

53.12 La Argentina participa activamente en el proceso de reflexión sobre la interpretación de sitios de memoria en el marco de la Convención sobre la Protección del Patrimonio Mundial, Cultural y Natural. Estos sitios constituyen la memoria tangible de los pueblos, cumplen la función fundamental de asegurar que la memoria siga siendo memoria, que el pasado nunca más se repita y que juntos podamos construir un futuro mejor. El Museo Sitio de la Memoria ESMA (Ex Centro Clandestino de Detención, Tortura y Exterminio) que la Argentina presentará para su inscripción en la lista de Patrimonio Mundial de la Humanidad, es un ejemplo de esto. La sociedad ha logrado convertir un símbolo de la desaparición forzosa de personas en un centro de actividades vinculadas con la defensa y promoción de los derechos humanos, encarnando el valor universal de la oposición pacífica al terrorismo de Estado y de la fortaleza y capacidad de persuasión del espíritu humano.

53.13 En este 75° aniversario de la UNESCO signado por la crisis sanitaria, debemos más que nunca buscar juntos soluciones comunes con los problemas compartidos. Renovemos nuestro compromiso con los principios fundamentales de esta Organización para que, como reza la Constitución de la UNESCO alcanzar mediante la cooperación de las naciones del mundo en las esferas de la educación, de la ciencia y la cultura, los objetivos de la paz internacional y bienestar general de la humanidad. Trabajemos juntos para convertir esta organización en un verdadero laboratorio de ideas que estén a la altura de los nuevos desafíos que se nos presentan. Para ello, siempre van a contar con la República Argentina y su compromiso inquebrantable con los principios democráticos y de la dignidad, la igualdad y el respeto mutuo de todos los seres humanos. Muchas gracias.

54. **The President:**

Ladies and gentlemen, we have listened to the last speaker for today, but I want I wish to inform you that the delegation of Serbia has asked for the right of reply to a statement made earlier. In accordance with Rule 70 of our Rules of Procedure, I will accord the right of reply for two minutes. You have the floor, Excellency.

55.1 **Serbia:**

Mr President of the General Conference, we exercise our right to reply in response to the statement made today by the Minister of European and Foreign Affairs of Albania. Serbia is strongly devoted to the principles of UNESCO and believes in its noble mission. One of the key prerequisites for unhindered implementation of UNESCO's mandate is the full depoliticization of its work. In this context, it is extremely worrisome to hear from this podium the calls for politicization and misuse of UNESCO as an instrument for the affirmation of illegal, unilaterally declared independence of the so-called Kosovo, contrary to international law, including the legally binding United Nations Security Council resolution 1244. I would remind you, in accordance with this, that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia, a United Nations and UNESCO Member State, under the interim administration of the United Nations. Also, Kosovo is the spiritual and cultural heartland for the Serbian people and State.

55.2 It is not in the mandate of UNESCO to make political decisions with regard to statehood. What we need in UNESCO is more unity, no more lines of division and creation of very dangerous precedents. In addition, in the case of so-called Kosovo, the lack of moral credibility and true and honest dedication to the principles of UNESCO is more than evident. Membership in UNESCO, a true symbol of united efforts of the international community to protect world cultural heritage, is certainly incompatible with the deliberate and systematic destruction of Serbian heritage in the province, with the perfidious aim to promote and remove the traces of centuries long existence of Serbian people in this area. Exactly because of that, four monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church in our province are inscribed on the UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger. Thus, today's Albanian statement should be considered inappropriate and unacceptable. In it, a number of references were made to the part of territory of Serbia, a country whose leadership is truly and actively engaged in promoting good neighbourly relations and the stability of our region. We call on Albania to do not only the right thing but the sound thing as they mentioned this morning, namely, to encourage Pristina to participate in European Union-led dialogue, which is the only adequate format to find a mutually acceptable solution for all the issues. It is the obligation on all United Nation Member States to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other United Nations Member States. This obligation lies on Albania as well, particularly having in mind its upcoming membership in the United Nations Security Council. Thank you.

56. **The President:**

Thank you Serbia for your statement. Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, we have had a very productive day today and I wish to thank all of you for your wisdom in speaking and patience in listening. The plenary will convene again tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. I wish you a very pleasant evening. This meeting is **adjourned**.

*The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.*