National Statement

by H.E. Mr. Ziya SELCUK, Minister of National Education of Turkey,
at the 40th session of the General Conference in the General Policy Debate

Mr. President of the General Conference,
Madame Director General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first say that it is very pleasure for me to see the representative of Turkey as the chair of the fortieth (40th) UNESCO General Conference. His Excellency Altay Cengizer is one of our very distinguished diplomats, and I wish him all the success in his future works at UNESCO.

Here, no one doubts that UNESCO is coming very close to an important threshold. This should not necessarily mean further divisions, and renewed conflict. We must try to avoid any outcome that will not benefit UNESCO. Indeed, we have great expectations for this Organization. We believe that UNESCO, as the soft-power arm of the United Nations system will refind, even more strongly than before, its powerful vision and sense of purpose which lie at the heart of its foundation.
UNESCO, in comparison with other organizations in the United Nations System, should rather strike us as the one which is already geared to welcome the future. To be precise, it is the only organization that displays the potential to deal with a number of modern issues that continue to rise to fore as a result of rapid technological changes and transformation. If we are to look at closely what is changing, how it is changing, we will see how extra-ordinary, indeed, the depth of change is. For the first time in the history of mankind what is physical, biological and digital are coming together to constitute parts of the same entity.

It is only natural that these new and complicated developments will have many implications, including those of an ethical nature, that require us to shape new and effective means. UNESCO is already at the forefront of this new horizon. We can choose to be informed optimists and see the clear opportunity for adding new relevance to UNESCO.

For all such reasons, we have to understand that UNESCO is the organization of the future, It is not an organization of the past. Yet, it can still take pride and the original vision from its past.

Turkey will fulfil its part and support UNESCO and the Director General in making this organization strong and reformed in order to counter many modern challenges. Let me say that we commend the Director General for her successful visit to New York, which helped
very much for an expanded understanding of the role of UNESCO in a world where new challenges and opportunities arise. She has strengthened the profile of UNESCO, as the new mandates show.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the global review of the Sustainable Development Goals has shown, we have to keep in mind that we are far behind achieving these goals. Apparently, we have to invest more in education, as only success in education can pave the way for achieving overall sustainable development.

We attached importance to Sustainable Development Goals in our two thousand twenty three (2023) Education Vision Document and we built our visionary document of four years with its strategic targets and actions upon the inclusive and equity education.

Needless to say that Education deserves to be at the heart of UNESCO’s work and our Organization must continue to provide strong and visionary leadership in this field, which is at the center of everything.

Turkey commends the Secretariat and the Member States for having finalized the Global Convention for Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education. We hope its adoption at this Fortieth Conference will ensure better qualities in Higher Education.
Safeguarding heritage, fostering creativity and combating illicit trafficking of cultural artifacts are our joint responsibility. Turkey will continue to implement the cultural conventions, and collaborate closely with the Member States in order to promote the added value that UNESCO so capably brings in.

Turkey remains committed to UNESCO and its ideals, and we actively engage in the daily work of the Organization through our membership to different committees and the Executive Board. We try our best to be a constructive and active member of UNESCO, an organization in which our real hopes reside.

Mr. President,
Madame Director General,
Dear Colleagues,

You can trust Turkey at every level and in every meaningful initiative that will move UNESCO forward. With these thoughts, I wish all of us, fruitful and unifying discussions in these two weeks.

Thank you.