



United Kingdom
Permanent Delegation
to
UNESCO

British Embassy Paris
35 Rue du Faubourg St Honoré
75008 Paris

Telephone: (33)(1) 44 51 32 73
E-mail: dl.united-kingdom@unesco-
delegations.org

To the attention of the Secretariat of the Speakers' List

**UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE (39TH SESSION) 2017
UK AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS, MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER**

- Madame President, Madame Director General, Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to be able to offer the following statement on behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the 2017 UNESCO General Conference as the UK Ambassador and Permanent Delegate – and to reaffirm the UK Government's commitment to our work here.
- The UK's ongoing commitment to UNESCO has strong foundations. As a founding member of this organisation – and the mother country of UNESCO's first Director General – the United Kingdom has a particular interest in – and responsibility for – UNESCO's important work. As a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, and a significant actor on the world stage, we want to see UNESCO delivering on its mandate and making a positive difference to the lives of people across the globe
- As others have observed Mme President, the world is facing challenging times. Even though other parts of the UN family may be tackling the immediate challenges of hunger, poverty, and conflict, we here all understand very well the importance of UNESCO's work on education, on science and on the protection and promotion of our global cultural heritage. And we must not overlook the role UNESCO is able to play on freedom of expression and the protection of journalists
- In all these areas, we must focus on results – on ensuring that we are making the best use of the resources at our disposal to guarantee the most effective delivery of our projects and programmes and to deliver the greatest impact

where it matters – on the ground, in communities, in people's lives. In short, we need to make a difference.

- This matters, Mme President, not simply for the beneficiaries of UNESCO's efforts, but also for the sustainability of those efforts and the responsibility that our Governments have to our citizens – to those whose taxes and contributions provide the funding for UNESCO to operate
- We welcome the wider call of His Excellency the UN Secretary General for reform. And we are clear that at UNESCO – the Secretariat and the Member States – we must do our part. We must demonstrate greater accountability and transparency. We must ensure improved efficiency. We must manage risk more effectively. And we must collectively agree how we prioritise the resources we have so that we can work best to deliver UNESCO's mandate
- Recognising this collective effort, the UK stands ready to play its part. We are privileged and pleased to be on the Executive Board and will remain active and constructively engaged, including in supporting the new Director General during the crucial early months of their tenure. We welcome the confidence of fellow Group One members and look forward to chairing Group One in 2018, and I will endeavour personally to maintain the high standards set by my Portuguese colleague.
- A word Mme President about the National Commissions. They do an invaluable job. They do it well. They deserve our respect and our gratitude. I am delighted that the UK National Commission continues to play such a constructive part in UNESCO's work. The Commission serves as the hub for the UK's UNESCO designations, works with world-class volunteer experts, and provides policy advice, contributing nationally, internationally and here at UNESCO.
- Part of that strength is the UK's over 160 UNESCO designations, joined this year by the UK's 31st World Heritage Site, the English Lake District – the birthplace of the modern conservation movement.
- Mme President, others may be interested to hear also about a study the UK National Commission conducted to assess the Wider Value of UNESCO to the UK: UNESCO designations contribute over US \$130 million (£100 million) of financial benefit to the UK annually. This affiliation helps create many jobs

and opportunities - often in areas which are facing economic challenges. And of course it's not just financial: the UK National Commission's research shows the power of the UNESCO brand for UK UNESCO sites to access new programme, partnership and funding opportunities, and engage and bring local communities together.

- Mme President, in conclusion, I would like to thank Madame Irina Bokova for all she has done during her tenure as Director General – and to acknowledge the work of the Secretariat staff. We are grateful for all they have done.
- Looking ahead – the UK stands ready to work with the new Director General and her team in order to help UNESCO tackle the challenges it faces. They are many and it will not always be easy. But we must remain focused on those who UNESCO's mandate is there to support. There is important work to do. We are ready to work with others in order to deliver.
- Thank you