Distinguished President of General Conference,
Madame Director General,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Lithuania has always been strong advocate of multilateral cooperation. It strengthens our commitments to maintain peace and security, achieve Sustainable Development Goals, promote and protect human rights, ensure gender equality and provide education for all. Multilateral institutions are helping countries around the world to avoid catastrophic wars, achieve unprecedented levels of development and ensure protection of culture heritage even in the times of conflicts. The United Nations was created to provide the foundation and framework for rules-based multilateral system that nowadays come under immense pressure. We need action – to reform the whole United Nations system in order to preserve and reinforce the relevance and credibility of the United Nations and to ensure that it would be more efficient and transparent.

In this regard, UNESCO has to do its part - to improve accountability, transparency, efficiency and risk management to keep the pace with today’s society. The activities and resources of the Organization need to be prioritized through Strategic Transformation exercise and avoiding micromanagement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of global challenges UNESCO’s mandate in the United Nations system remains utmost important. The Organization’s work on education, science and protection of cultural heritage, as well as promotion of freedom of expression and protection of journalists have crucial impact for the future of our societies.

Nevertheless, the future brings not only challenges but also new opportunities in the field of Open Science, Future for Education and Artificial Intelligence. We believe that the Organisation has expertise in creating open and ethical environment and therefore should have a mandate to ensure ethical use of Artificial Intelligence at regional and national levels within its competences. Only with the human rights based approach, Artificial Intelligence can lead to great achievements in sustainable development, education and science.

Excellences,
We firmly believe that respect for human rights is a precondition of peace and security and is essential for sustainable progress. Lithuania is a vocal advocate of safety of journalists and protection of human rights defenders – these are indispensable elements of the right to freedom of expression. Our societies increasingly face hybrid threats, distorted information, which leads to the distrust in media. Now more than ever it is important to promote and encourage high-quality independent journalism and strengthen critical thinking and resilience, which is key in countering disinformation. Therefore, Lithuania actively engages in the activities of the Communication and Information Sector through earmarked and un-earmarked contributions. We are committed to uphold press freedom and protect journalists to keep truth alive.

Human rights include women and girls empowerment, as well as girl’s education, which are the driving forces for gender equality. Lithuania supports and takes part in the regional and national initiatives within the global L’Oreal/UNESCO programme for Women in Science. The successful partnership between UNESCO and private sector sets the example of excellent communication and spreads important messages to the society regarding science and young women inclusiveness in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Ensuring access to information and knowledge for marginalised social groups is also equally important. Lithuania actively engages in Information for All Programme. We use this platform to share ideas and projects with international partners, as well as to develop guidelines to create knowledge society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO is a unique organization with the role to preserve not only cultural but also historical heritage in different parts of the world. Therefore, UNESCO’s established Memory of the World programme is an exceptional opportunity for countries to keep their history alive. Ten years ago, document collection of one of the greatest events of Lithuanian history – The Baltic Way – was inscribed in the Memory of the World programme. 30 years ago, in 1989 our nation demonstrated unity together with Latvia and Estonia and proudly stood on the Baltic Way – an epic demonstration of 2 million people holding hands, from Vilnius via Riga to Tallinn, demanding independence, freedom, and human rights. We are proud that UNESCO recognized this historic event.

Distinguished colleagues,

Allow me once again to express our full support for UNESCO in its innovative initiatives and commitment towards constructive and fruitful work through dialogue and co-operation. Madame Director General’s leadership in strengthening UNESCO for the last two years is significant. You can count on our further support and contribution to UNESCO’s work.

Thank you.