CIPSH address to the General Conference of UNESCO
Luiz Oosterbeek, Secretary-General

Dear Mme. A. Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO,
Dear Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences has been founded in 1949, under the auspices of UNESCO, understanding the uniqueness of the Humanities for the understanding of the great challenges of Humanity: peace, conviviality, purpose, what it means to be Human, what conditions Human agency, how to articulate cultural diversity and the unity of the species, rejecting any forms of racism, xenophobia or other prejudice. Philosophy, History, Literature, Anthropology, Geography, all their sub-disciplines, but also the fundamental principles of meaning and ethics in other sciences, are at the core of this task of CIPSH. Involving 21 world scholarly federations, themselves engaging thousands of structures in all countries in the world, CIPSH and its members, with UNESCO, has been working to set agreed priorities to change reality, concentrating maximum efforts on those.

The challenges facing Humanity, also relating to sustainability, are many. However, they cluster into 3 main dimensions: replacing the anxiety of short term problems by a convergent understanding of dilemma (since no reflective and sustainable strategy may ever emerge from the panic of emergency); countering cognitive alienation through the socializing of knowledge (since the resilience of societies does not depend on the technical accumulation of competences but on its adaptive dissemination) and, moreover, moving beyond divides, preserving diversity but learning to becoming human (since all main challenges are global, and require world convergences).

1 This address will be read by MD Istake Manik, young researcher from Bangladesh, collaborator of the Secretariat of CIPSH.
In 2014, the General Assembly of CIPSH, hosted by UNESCO in Paris, decided to engage into an ambitious agenda, aiming at resuming the role of the Humanities in contemporary society, after decades of undervaluation of their relevance. Following this, the framework agreement of cooperation with UNESCO has been resumed and updated. and this is the moment to report to you our common advances, our ongoing key programmes, but also our growing expectations.

Above all, with this intervention we wish to bring to you, beyond all anxieties, all distress, the growing inequality, the fears of cognitive alienation, ... in spite of wars and the discourses of segregation, ... despite millions of refugees and the revival of walls and isolationism from some, ... CIPSH addresses this Conference to report on positive advances too, largely announcing that alternatives do exist and they are being built, in a process of co-construction that takes the Humanities, or Human Sciences, as the framework of reference.

In 2017, together with UNESCO, we organized the World Humanities Conference, whose final document recommendations has been endorsed by the General Conference of UNESCO two years ago, seating at the heart of a workplan, which is now being implemented.

Since then, four major international projects have been established.

The Global History of Humanity directly addresses the need to understand a common past of our species, with all its diversity, starting with a dozen of debates that can now be considered important to show the role of the humanities in responding to the challenges of a world that becomes at the same time more integrated and more fragmented. These debates, ranging from the origins of humankind and technology adaptations to patterns of consumption, will be published addressing a wider community of readers and supported by material for schools.

The World Humanities Report, aims at offering a portrait of the Humanities worldwide, considering regions, disciplines and themes, and identifying positive changes which are underway (concerning methods, institutions, networking or themes), which are the main risks (concerning archives, disciplines, methods, languages, platforms, heritage sites, research programs, and institutions) and which is the current institutional framework of the Humanities in different regions and countries.

A third main project has been to identify strong international universities’ networks dealing with key topics of societal interest, and fostering their structuring as UNESCO or CIPSH chairs. So far, 10 chairs have been established, involving over 150 very strong institutions, covering themes such as borders and migrations, language diversity, global understanding, new humanities or landscape management.
The understanding of the need to foster a close collaboration between the Humanities and the Arts led to the establishment, in partnership with UNESCO-MOST and Mémoire de l’Avenir, of the Arts and Society project, first presented at the World Humanities Conference and now experiencing a consolidation and expansion, also in partnership with the Global Chinese Arts and Culture Society.

We call upon governments, science and culture foundations and other international and national agencies to engage in supporting the expansion of these four projects. As Humanity faces common global challenges, from inequality to climate adaptations and conflicts, there is a need to build solid Humanities tools, which may recall that there is a common ground for humans, which encompasses their diversity and is driven by a common history and a need for convergent addressing of major dilemma facing the future.

All the mentioned programmes are undertaken by CIPSH but in very close collaboration with UNESCO, and with the support of several international and national institutions. This is also the case of the ongoing efforts to establish an international coalition as a means to complete and thereby strengthen the sustainability science domain, building from the Humanities, encompassing the Arts, the Social and Natural sciences, as well as other knowledge communities and traditions, aiming to be formalized within UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme. This will help articulating ongoing well-succeed territories-based experiences, further expanding them and improving on methodologies.

It is also in this context that CIPSH welcomes the proposal of recommendation 40 C/74 of the Executive Committee of UNESCO, for the General Conference to proclaim the 14th of January as the World Day of Logic. We do expect this important resolution to be approved, since it will convey an important message to the world, on the importance of reasoning and on what Humanity is about. CIPSH will be fully committed to organizing, encouraging and disseminating initiatives worldwide, namely involving its member organizations and the UNESCO and CIPSH Humanities chairs, in close collaboration with the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science / Division of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science, itself a member of CIPSH.

Dear Mme. A. Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO,

Ladies, gentlemen, dear delegates,

We are here, today, not only to report on activities or to ask for your support. We acknowledge a growing understanding, across countries and regions, on the need to resume the central role of the Humanities, also understanding this is a pre-condition for humans to be able to build effective converging agendas for the future. This implies revisiting and reinforcing the Humanities education at all levels, and overcoming the absurd divide between the investments on what societies want to have and on how
societies want to be. Such divide pushes all of the world to growing tensions, war and despair. CIPSH, and all its members federations and associations, are committed to collaborate with you in countering such divide.

Thank you for your attention!

Luiz Oosterbeek
Secretary-General of CIPSH