

205th Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO – National Statement of Finland

8 October 2018 pm

Plenary, items 5.III.D, 6, 15

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Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Madam President of the General Conference,

Madam Director-General,

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

Finland aligns itself with the EU statement.

This Executive Board session comes at a very important point for the organization. We start our discussions on the next budget and programme and at the same time we follow up on UNESCO's strategic transformation. We take this opportunity to warmly welcome the Deputy Director-General Mr. Xing Qu who has started in a very efficient and constructive manner. We highly appreciate the approach built on dialogue, transparency and mutual trust shown by the Secretariat in the steering of the transformation process. Finland fully supports the process for the strategic transformation of the organization.

With the ongoing UN reform, the UN Development System is moving onward. This offers an opportunity for UNESCO to capitalize on its comparative advantages. It is important that UNESCO is in full alignment with the reforms underway within the entire UN system, and continues to follow them closely.

We thank the Director-General for her active participation at the United Nations General Assembly. We wish to highlight the launch of the Secretary-General's Youth 2030 Strategy that seeks to significantly strengthen the UN's capacity to engage young people. We see here potential also for UNESCO, including in the field of Prevention of Violent Extremism. We are pleased to note that UNESCO's action on PVE builds on the UN resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security. As the first country, Finland is currently preparing a National Action Plan on Resolution 2250. We also look forward to hosting a UN conference on the participation of young men and women in peace processes in Finland next spring.

UNESCO should build on its strengths when fine-tuning the organization and reaffirming its strategic position in the UN system. It is of key importance that UNESCO stays at the forefront of the global Education agenda. UNESCO's mandate to lead the coordination and monitoring of SDG 4 is essential. In that respect the upcoming Global Education Meeting in Brussels is a major event gathering all key players. We look forward to the participating of UNESCO at the highest level to show the firm and continuous commitment of the organization to the 2030 Education Agenda.

Finland is a strong supporter of UNESCO's mandate on freedom of expression across sectors. Finland was happy to support, together with the Netherlands and Lithuania, UNESCO's IPDC Talks event celebrating the International Day for the Universal Access to Information in September. The main event was held this year in Tunis highlighting UNESCO's regional and country presence in fulfilling the Agenda 2030.

The free flow of information and ideas lies at the heart of the very notion of democracy, and is crucial to the realization of important rights and liberties. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we must reaffirm our commitment to uphold its principles. Human rights as well as gender equality must remain at the heart of all UNESCO's action.

We remain concerned about the financial situation of UNESCO, but see also positive developments. The next programme and budget will be built on the integrated budget framework, giving a more transparent and comprehensive picture of the organization's global resources. We commend the Secretariat as well as Sweden for the organization of the first Partners' Forum. The event was a successful step in opening up UNESCO more to private sector and civil society partners.

UNESCO has already taken major steps in making the organization more relevant and effective. This session of the Executive Board will be an important opportunity to outline further the direction for the organization, both for the next biennium and longer term. We look forward to fruitful discussions.

Thank you.