

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board  
Madam President of the General Conference  
Madam Director General

Excellencies,

My intervention at this Board session will deliberately be short and contain one concise message, to avoid its dilution.

Dear colleagues,

Member states vowed in the UN charter “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security”. Defined as “the legal and moral foundation of international relations”, the charter therefore places ethics as an essential component within the whole United Nations.

However, it seems that we, the UN family, are failing on ensuring and promoting global ethics, the ethical principles that ensure accountability, respect for human rights, and conflict resolution. Wars are yet to be prevented from bursting, and extreme ideologies from rising; double standards are still common; and let us not forget the wretched allegations of abuse and exploitation from UN workers. The latter surely gets more attention because of the obvious breach of morals, but there are more insidious breaches, which are even harder to identify and consequently harder to correct. This is the case for UNESCO, which has inherited and accumulated issues over the years, thus hindering the full realization of its mandate.

The organization, as a mechanism for soft power, has good and effective programs and we have all called for their urgent and efficient implementation, but this can only be done if ethical principles are strongly embedded in the Organization; when transparency and accountability are actually implemented and not just inscribed in UNESCO documents; if we serve the common good and not any particular national interest; when all countries are treated equally, because, as an intergovernmental organization, there are no big or small countries, except when focusing on the most vulnerable ones;

and let me quote here President Macron who stressed the importance of multilateralism, in the UN General Assembly, from France’s experience stating that “The din of nationalism always leads to the abyss, that democracies are weak if they lack courage in defending their principles, and that accumulated resentment, combined with a fragile international system, can lead twice, in the duration of a human life, to a global unleashing of violence.”

Moreover, Excellencies, we need to use our resources soundly. Let us not forget that we are still in a financial crisis. Contingency plans were made, programs were discontinued or slowed down, and we need to reinforce them.

The Structured Financing Dialogue may help, but its results are yet to be seen, and depend on donors. Good management of our funds is therefore indispensable, and ought to be based on the strong principle that UNESCO is, like the UN, **for the people**, and has to implement programs on the ground. Once this principle is clear and agreed upon, managing the funds becomes easier.

Dear colleagues

I hope we go back to those basic principles of the UN Charter, and I hope we will be consistent in our ethical approach to decision making, in order to strengthen our normative power, and our impact.

After all, as Jawaharlal Nehru once said, UNESCO is “the conscience of humanity”.

Thank you