

## **PHILIPPINES**

**Statement of H.E. Maria Theresa P. Lazaro  
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Philippines to UNESCO**

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Madame President of the General Conference,  
Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
Madame Director-General,  
Distinguished colleagues,

The Philippines thanks the Director-General for her statement.

Our world today is characterized by paradoxes and challenges so complex that no country, no matter how powerful, can tackle them alone. Global GDP is at record highs, but the gap between rich and poor is getting wider and harder to bridge. We have a plethora of global institutions, yet resurgent protectionism and unilateralism weaken their mandates and resources. The internet and social media connect all corners of the globe, but are also used to promote intolerance and propaganda.

A recent global peace index warns that the number of armed conflicts is rising. The retreat of peace worldwide is perhaps the most serious indicator by which to gauge UNESCO's impact vis-à-vis its original mission.

UNESCO was created to complement the purpose of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. The Constitution of UNESCO eloquently states "peace must...be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." Peace has been failing because it has not been based on solidarity, and we have not been able to construct defenses strong enough in hearts and minds.

This is pertinent as we continue to discuss Strategic Transformation and search for bearings. We often hear that UNESCO must return to its founding principles and core

mandate. For the Philippines, this means UNESCO should ensure that all its activities contribute to peace and international solidarity.

When culture, history, memory, and communication and information, become political battlegrounds – as well as the debate on Strategic Transformation cast as a simplistic reckoning of who is for or against – are we not merely drumming up our divisions? Peace does not equate to unanimity and uniformity. It depends, for it to thrive, on respect for diversity, recognition of human dignity, and reaffirmation of shared values.

Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director-General, wrote that UNESCO "can help the peoples of the world...to a realization of the common humanity and common tasks which they share, as opposed to the nationalisms which too often tend to isolate and separate them."

Having said this, we are all here as representatives of our governments for whom sovereignty, territorial integrity and national identity matter. Yet, Mr. Huxley was speaking from experience: if taken to an extreme, and not tempered by international cooperation and understanding, nationalism can rear its ugly head. Thus, in theory, by providing a forum for international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication and information, UNESCO can contribute to securing a more permanent and lasting peace.

We often lose track of this grand goal and fail to see the forest for the trees. We concentrate on extra-budgetary funding and projects without designing and measuring long-term outcomes on the ground, where the peace must be urgently built. Member States drive narrow self-interests over inclusivity and compromise.

I mentioned at the last Executive Board session, that UNESCO should be needs-driven. In this regard, we would like to inquire if there has ever been a global mapping exercise to identify Member States and communities in most need per sector? This would help prioritize our work in a constrained financial environment. Projects should also add-value to the work of other UN and regional agencies and organizations, and avoid duplication.

We understand that reform is an evolving process. Therefore, the time has come to move from procedural generalities to substantive and concrete results. As we have underscored in the Preparatory Group, the vision and results of the transformation process must be shared by Member States and the Secretariat. The high-level reflection group may provide interesting proposals, but ultimately the Member States represented by their permanent delegations shall decide. We request that proposals be presented formally to Member States for consideration before incorporation into future 41 C/4 and C/5 documents.

Lastly, our delegation presented item 33 on follow-up of the relevant recommendations of General Conference 39 C/ Resolution 87 on the governance, procedures and working methods of the Governing Bodies of UNESCO. We thank the numerous co-sponsors. We also appreciate the cooperation of the Secretariat and engagement of Member States. There was a fruitful discussion in the SP, and we hope for a smooth adoption of the decision in the plenary. The recommendations on governance endorsed by the General Conference seek to enhance decision-making and improve the working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO, including the Executive Board. We note that the Working Group on Governance is required to reconvene to study the overall implementation of recommendations. We look forward to the Working Group, chaired by the President of the General Conference, being organized in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.