

Plenary Debate, 9th October 2018

National Statement of the Republic of Serbia

Madam President of the General Conference,

Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Director-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ongoing and future actions aimed at the revitalization of UNESCO through its strategic transformation are crucial for bringing UNESCO's mission forward and fostering its role in the world which is undergoing profound changes. In order to be effective, this strategic transformation has to bring about innovative and collaborative approaches, while at the same time building upon the results already achieved in various fields of UNESCO's activities. For these reforms to be successful it is necessary to invest continuously in trust-building, active dialogue, transparency and inclusiveness with strong focus on issues at the heart of UNESCO's original mandate and in accordance with its Constitution. The ongoing repositioning of the UN Development System set out by the UN General Assembly should also be taken into account.

Further refining of our Organization, overcoming existing and future challenges in order to secure its relevance and confirm its comparative advantages within the wider international system, should be a collective effort. We strongly believe that the renewed credibility of UNESCO on a world stage needs to be a shared ambition and, accordingly, a shared responsibility of the Secretariat, Member States and other relevant actors, based on their genuine dedication and active contributions to this noble goal. Results-based programmatic orientation focused on the real and tangible impact on the ground, continuous improvement of governance, promotion of the performance evaluation and greater transparency and accountability, as well as enhanced action on capacity-building and partnering and

networking, are among the most important prerequisites in this regard.

Strategizing and programming that start from Member States' needs and priorities, including UNESCO's overall commitment to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and its two global priorities - Africa and gender equality - should be reflected appropriately in the Programme and Budget. At the same time, those needs and priorities should be assessed more realistically, especially at the beginning of a quadrennium.

Avoiding polarizing issues that should be discussed elsewhere, thus keeping the Organization away from the damaging politicization, incompatible with its original competences, is of key importance.

Serbia continues to strongly support UNESCO's vision to transform lives through education, recognizing the exceptional role of education as a main driver for achieving not only SDG 4, but other SDGs as well, while leaving no one behind. We believe that all of us need to invest more in education and developing educational systems that can help everyone realize their full potential.

Serbia attaches great importance to youth, believing young people are a key resource of innovations and a driving force of social development, which is why we support the "opening" of UNESCO to young people. Among other activities, the Young Professionals Program is a good way to attract creative young people, while aiming to improve the geographical representation in the Organization.

Protection of cultural heritage is a shared responsibility of the international community and a collective duty to generations to come. It is also a fundamental tool to support the development of peaceful societies and achieve sustainable development. We are genuinely concerned because of the widespread destruction of cultural heritage in different parts of the world. While warmly welcoming the initiative "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul", we have to emphasize once more the need to avoid selective approach in condemning extreme violence and destruction of cultural and other forms of heritage, irrespective of the location of these crimes or their perpetrators. In this context, full implementation of international legal instruments and agreed operational tools for the heritage protection and capacity building are the essential components of the international community's efforts in this area.

In closing, allow me to reiterate Serbia's strong support to UNESCO, and to all of its noble endeavors aiming to promote multilateralism and contribute to sustainable peace, prosperity and brighter future for all.