

National Statement of the Republic of Korea

3 July 2020, 209th EXB of UNESCO

Mr Chair, Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, dear colleagues.

At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation for the diligent and timely efforts made by Madame Azoulay and the Secretariat in response to the unprecedented global challenges caused by Covid-19.

Covid-19 has exposed and exacerbated our underlying socioeconomic inequalities. The pandemic is fundamentally testing nations' commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation.

Yet, during these trying times, we take comfort from the hope that this pandemic may yet bring out the best in UNESCO. To the world faced with the daunting task of overcoming the pandemic's impacts and preparing for a better post-pandemic world, UNESCO can provide a compass for navigating perilous waters by putting to use as well as newly creating many useful platforms from which we can collectively address the pandemic's cataclysmic effects on education, culture, science, communication and information.

Our world is at an inflection point where we need to accelerate our pace in order to attain the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in ten years' time. However, our progress may slow down and our fragile gains may even become reversible in worst case scenarios. We need to redouble our efforts with unwavering commitments to achieve SDGs.

If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is that humanity as never before shares a common destiny. Discrimination and hate are harmful to our shared sense of belonging to one global community where each person's act can affect others.

It is in this context that the Republic of Korea took the initiative for strengthening the spirit of solidarity and inclusion through education, hoping that we all can more effectively fight the pandemic and prepare for the beyond-COVID world through such efforts. The UNESCO Group of Friends for Solidarity and Inclusion with Global Citizenship Education was launched in May and there are currently thirteen Member States: Afghanistan, Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Serbia and Senegal. Other Member States are welcome to join our Group.

In this relation, the Republic of Korea, on behalf of other like-minded Board members, namely Argentina, Italy, Jordan and Serbia, would like to propose adopting a statement against racism at the current session of the Board when a consensus is achieved. We believe this initiative is timely and pertinent, especially against the current backdrop of global awareness of the destructive effect of racism and the need to fight against it. It will send a powerful message from the Executive Board of UNESCO to the international community that we oppose racism and UNESCO is willing to play a significant role in this fight. We have circulated a draft and wish to invite Member States attention and support.

Mr. Chair,

For the next two years, the EXB will engage in important debates on 41 C/4 and C/5. Korea will actively participate in the discussions with the view to enabling UNESCO to chart its course toward the successful completion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Korea's accession to UNESCO. I wish to thank the Director-General for her much appreciated contribution to the commemorative events held in Korea online and by broadcast.

Korea is a textbook case of how one of the poorest countries in the world, emerging from the ashes of a devastating war, could turn itself around in one generation's time, to become one of the donor countries. Korea was helped along in its rapid transformation by the tremendous support from UNESCO, particularly in education. Korea wishes to share its experience and is strongly committed to advancing UNESCO's mission.

Mr. Chair,

UNESCO's Constitution contains the declaration that the wide diffusion of culture and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.

International cooperative relations can only thrive when based on mutual respect and maintenance of trust. Keeping one's solemn promises is the most basic obligations of each Member State, because it has a bearing on all matters UNESCO deals with - including World Heritage.

When a cultural property is inscribed on the World Heritage List on the very clear understanding and pledge that the nominating State will take necessary and concrete follow-up measures, that nominating State is duty-bound to keep its words. Moreover, it is incumbent on the World Heritage Committee to make sure that the nominating

State implements the follow-up measures in good faith and as promised. In such a case, the WHC has to assure that its decisions are fully abided by both in letter and in spirit by thoroughly reviewing the implementation of its decisions at its regular sessions. We believe that the authority and credibility of UNESCO's cultural programs as well as the World Heritage List will be strengthened by adhering to this thorough review process.

UNESCO was created out of the belief that peace must be founded upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind. It is up to each and all of us to make sure that we uphold these values and protect our legacy from the past.

Thank you for your attention.