

**UNESCO — UK statement by Ambassador Lodge – 209 EXB – 3<sup>rd</sup> July**

[BEGINS]

Mr President, Madame Director General, Colleagues.

The UK remains a strong supporter of UNESCO.

Girls' education is a top priority for the UK and the Prime Minister personally. The UK is proud to support UNESCO's leadership on this key education issue, and SDG4 more broadly.

As schools begin to re-open post Covid-19, we need to focus on getting all 1.5 billion children (650 million girls) back to education. We congratulate UNESCO's launch of the Global Education Coalition and we look forward to work progressing and supporting other UN initiatives such as such as UNICEF's back to school campaign "Opening Up Better".

Our voluntary funding for UNESCO's Institute of Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring Report are a sign of the UK's engagement.

Mr President, UNESCO plays a vital role in convening governments to address the significant impacts of COVID across its mandate. On Culture, new challenges - from the opportunistic trade in illicit antiquities, to the potential closure of thousands of museums - requires innovative thinking. The need to rebuild offers an opportunity to adapt and become more sustainable and resilient in the future.

At the same time, the UK is pleased to see UNESCO continuing its anti-doping work, member states must support and strengthen this effort.

The UK, as a committed defender of Media Freedom, appreciates UNESCO's expert work on Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom and values its cooperation on the Global Coalition and the Global Media Defence Fund. We look forward to the upcoming Canada Conference and World Press Freedom Day celebrations.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to highlight the UK National Commission's recently launched 'National Value of UNESCO' report. I thank the Director-General for her comment that its research may inspire others. The report illustrates how UNESCO designations can create exceptional networks, bring concrete value to local communities and contribute to the SDGs. As we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, UNESCO designations offer an extraordinary opportunity to assist in the creation of a grass-roots green recovery.

Thank you for your attention.