

German Statement:

- President of the Executive Board
- Director-General of UNESCO
- Excellencies, Colleagues
- Ladies and gentlemen

The pandemic is still raging around us – we are all aware of the tragedies it is inflicting upon all of our societies. Preliminary estimates assume that progress on global human development has been set back by six years. All of this is known to all of us. What I would like to emphasize, is, once again, the swift and decisive response of UNESCO. Once more, in the pandemic, we realize the significance of the multilateral system in global crises – this is another proof for the necessity of the alliance for multilateralism that Germany has co-initiated. Germany continues to promote multilateral approaches during its membership in the Security Council, as [EU Presidency](#) and as President in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Even more [so](#) in the pandemic, Germany strongly supports UNESCO's leadership in coordinating the implementation of SDG 4 and in monitoring it, inter alia through the Global Education Monitoring Report. [We](#) welcome that the Global Education Meeting in October mandated UNESCO to design and lead a consultation, in order to develop a proposal to strengthen the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee – this in turn to be able to effectively steer and coordinate the global education cooperation mechanism. Also, UIL and UNEVOC continue their excellent work for strengthening lifelong learning and TVET in the context of the Education 2030 agenda. I would also like to highlight the excellent cooperation between Germany and UNESCO in strengthening Education for Sustainable Development in preparing for the 2021 launch conference in Berlin.

Protection of cultural heritage and curbing illicit trade are also high priorities for Germany – recently, we have celebrated together the 50th anniversary of 1970 convention. We were proud to host the anniversary conference as German government together with UNESCO and [the](#) Council of Europe. Germany provides support to UNESCO to safeguard the heritage of Beirut in the framework of the “LiBeirut” initiative, and we will upscale our multilateral work through [our own](#) programme “Kulturgutretter”.

We regret the recent decision of the Turkish authorities to change the status of Hagia Sophia and the Chora Museum – parts of the Historic Areas of Istanbul - without prior consultation. Both monuments are of outstanding universal value and inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. It is necessary to avoid any steps that would affect free access to these sites or that would endanger their outstanding universal value in any way.

Already right now, in the second half of 2020, we have provided support to heritage in Africa. SOSAfricanHeritage is an emergency relief programme right now implemented by the German National Commission with support of Federal Foreign Office – 22 World Heritage sites and Biosphere Reserves all across the African continent, in 19 Member States, receive more than half a million Euro each to overcome impairment due to the impact of the pandemic, such as looting or poaching.

There are many more examples for the continuous strong support of Germany, including the German parliament, to UNESCO and its networks. In order to strengthen the backbone of knowledge societies for the future, Germany has embarked on X-raying the state of the internet in our country, using UNESCO's tool box of Internet Universality Indicators. We will be happy to share these results with all colleagues, in order to promote human rights and freedom of expression online just as much as offline.