

**National Statement of the Republic of Turkey
210th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board
3 December 2020**

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Mr President of the General Conference,
Madame Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

2020 has been an unexpectedly unusual year. Still we in UNESCO have responded to the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic well by making increased efforts to continue the effective functioning of our Organization. In this regard, we would like to thank you, Madame Director-General, and the Secretariat for your untiring work.

Today we believe that we can look forward to the next year with proven resilience and renewed hopes. The possibility that effective vaccines under development against this deadly virus may be available soon is a good reason to be hopeful and optimistic.

The pandemic and the multiple problems it caused in many areas remain, however, as challenges waiting to be addressed. UNESCO should continue to dynamically consider developing new ways and tools to overcome them. Even the fact that today we are able to convene a regular Executive Board session virtually is an example of such determination. In this context we would like to thank you, Mr Chairman, and all the Bureau Members of the Executive Board for your efforts to ensure that this governing body can continue to assume and fulfil its duties and responsibilities.

Mr Chairman,

In fact, this crisis showed how multilateralism and international organizations are still very much relevant and that they can make a difference. The pandemic has moved us, in UNESCO, from “business as usual” towards “business unusual”. This unusual way of doing business, however, does not change in any way the intergovernmental nature of our Organization. Intergovernmental organizations are Member States driven, and the decisions are to be implemented by the Secretariat. The implementation process must be handled through a transparent, accountable and inclusive governance structure, which is subject to continued political oversight by Member States.

In this regard, we also feel the need to remind, like you did yesterday, Mr Chairman, that undue politicization of the Organization’s agenda benefits no one and serves no purpose. At the end, it drains unnecessarily our capacities. Therefore, we must respect our Rules of Procedure and the division of responsibilities among various UNESCO bodies. Every initiative or proposal should run its course through established procedures.

As to the substance of our work here in UNESCO, we have to bear in mind that the impact of the crisis is already felt, widening and deepening the existing inequalities between our nations and within our societies. We have to further articulate the measures to prevent drastic and potentially long-lasting consequences of the pandemic. We cannot allow disadvantaged people everywhere to become even more disadvantaged.

In this respect, we are happy to see that this understanding is being widely assumed that there is a need to pay increased attention to the challenges which cause the deepening of the insecurities facing people in the least developed parts of the world. Again, UNESCO has vital roles and key responsibilities in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the field of education. We have to examine and discuss the draft Mid-term Strategy C/4 and the Programme and Budget C/5 of our Organization from this perspective.

Mr Chairman,

The current situation is there to see for all of us. Even if it seems difficult, we have to continue our efforts to achieve SDG4 since education is the fundament of our societies. We have to be enlightenedly critical about our own work and how we fulfil our responsibilities. There is always room for improvement. The implementation of the recommendations 44 to 47 of the General Conference which will enable us to have informal consultations and negotiations before our Executive Board sessions is one example how we can make such improvement.

Last but not the least, we wish to emphasize that it is important to be sensitive about the budgetary transparency and accountability in UNESCO especially given the fact of shrinking national budgets due to COVID-19 pandemic. Fair and equitable representation of Member States in our Organization remain an important concern for us.

Turkey, as one of the twenty founding states, would like to reaffirm its commitment to the ideals and goals of UNESCO in the year of its 75th anniversary. We will continue to contribute in a constructive manner to the work of our Organization guided by its founding principles. This is exactly what we have been trying to do here, at the heart of UNESCO, and will continue to do.

Thank you!