

## **UNESCO - 6th special session of the Executive Board – Statement of Finland**

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**Check against delivery**

Mr. Chairperson, Madam Director-General,

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

In the current COVID-19 crisis, UNESCO has truly proved its relevance. Issues that are at the core of UNESCO's mandate – access to quality education, freedom of speech, scientific and cultural cooperation, human rights – have a critical role to play in the global efforts to tackle the crisis.

The COVID-19 response has demonstrated Organization's role and strength as a global actor. The initiatives, such as the Global Education Coalition, have been timely and most welcome. Finland is highly concerned about the deepening of the learning crisis and disruption caused by the school closures worldwide. In the global COVID-19 efforts and the aftermath thereof, we simply cannot afford to neglect education. Special attention needs to be paid to gender aspects, as the COVID-19 crisis risks deepening existing inequalities and create new ones.

Free, independent and pluralistic media play an indispensable role in informing the public during the COVID-19 crisis. We appreciate UNESCO's efforts in countering disinformation and misinformation and in putting emphasis on the safety of journalists. Furthermore, UNESCO plays a crucial role in promoting open access to scientific information and in empowering societies built on trust, rule of law and human rights.

In order to mobilize a global response, it is essential to work with all relevant actors, including governments, other UN agencies, private sector and civil society. During the crisis, UNESCO has demonstrated commendable agility, convening power and ensured visibility and leadership of the Organization. As the impact of the crisis hampers progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO and its important mandate call for a reaffirmed commitment. It is of utmost importance that UNESCO remains a key actor in the post COVID-19 era.

Thank you.