

Nasjonalt plenumsinnlegg for Statsråden

Director General, Excellencies, friends of UNESCO,

UNESCO stands at a crossroad. This fall we have heard a founding member announcing its withdrawal from UNESCO at a time when the UN is more important than ever. We regret this.

Director General Bokova, in this time of difficulty and severe financial constraint, you have managed not only to keep the organisation going, but increased UNESCOs visibility on the international agenda. Your legacy at UNESCO will live on and continue under the new leadership. Norway look forward to cooperate with the new Director General in the same committed and engaged manner that we have enjoyed working with you.

UNESCO embodies the hopes and future for children and youth of the world:

- Education, so they can develop their potential and contribute to society,
- Science, so they can understand the world, and create jobs we cannot yet imagine,
- Culture, so they know who they are and can create for the future,
- Communication, so they can make informed decisions and make their decisions known to the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world has experienced unprecedented progress during the last decades. Global political cooperation and common "rules of the road" have brought us to where we are today.

Investing in education is the most effective way of promoting sustainable development. That is why Norway is working hard to promote education globally and why Norway has doubled its aid to global education over the past four years.

Prime Minister Solberg and Ms Bokova were key partners when The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunities was established in 2015. In its report to the UN Secretary General, UNESCO is rightly identified as a cornerstone in the global architecture of education.

We stand by UNESCO in the implementation of the SDG-4. We have chosen to do so through support to the Education Sector and its key institutes.

We are pleased to see that the CapED Program is at the very core of the new program for the Education Sector.

We are proud of the tremendous progress made on the global convention for recognition of higher education, and I congratulate the Secretariat and the Drafting Committee who have made a historic breakthrough in this field. This Convention will make life easier for millions of students that move across borders all over the world.

I am equally pleased that UNESCO is an active partner in the important work of the Education Cannot Wait Fund.

Much have been accomplished, but many challenges remain, as the Global Monitoring Report for Education shows us. We also know that there is a long way to go before our oceans are clean again, until our common cultural heritage is safe, until the respect for freedom of expression is universally recognized and journalists are safe.

This is why Norway believes we must have an even stronger UNESCO for the future.

Norway is a candidate for the World Heritage Committee to actively contribute to this.

Madame Bokova,

Norway has doubled its voluntary contribution to UNESCO during your tenure. Not because we want to fill the gap of those member states who do not meet their obligations. But because we believe in this organisation. And we therefore urge all member states to fulfill their obligations.

If we sum up the Nordic extra budgetary funding, I am proud to say that we are the largest extra budgetary contributor to UNESCO, providing about 24% of the total extra budgetary contribution. We invest in UNESCO, and like all of you, we care about UNESCO. Sweden

has done an impressive job as Executive Board member. I know Finland will work as tirelessly for the best of UNESCO and ask everyone to join me in voting for them.

Norway fully shares the UN Secretary-General's vision for the UN and we actively support his reform agenda.

True to the UN Reform Agenda, Norway endorses many of the suggestions laid before the General Conference by the Governance Working Group. UNESCO is in need of reform. It is necessary for UNESCO to continue and speed up reform and deliver more efficiently.

The progress we have made cannot be taken for granted. We must defend what we have achieved while working together to ensure sustainability in all we do.

To face the multitude of challenges there is no other solution than to work together.

This is not a time to drive wedges and pull apart. It's a time to stand side by side and pull together.

Thank you!