

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FORTIETH GENERAL CONFERENCE  
H.E. MR ALTAY CENGİZER TO THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE  
BOARD  
8 JUNE, 2020

Thank you Mr Chairman, esteemed colleague,  
Madame la Diréctrice Général,  
Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

First and foremost, I should honour the precious memory of the thousands we have lost all over the world during this terrible pandemic.

I salute the efforts of our Chairman to convene this special session under difficult conditions.

I salute as well the efforts of our Director General in devising appropriate responses to the negative developments that are taking place today. I thank her for the broad, informative and well-updated briefing.

I thank for the efforts of our Swiss and Moroccan colleagues. They have indeed worked tirelessly at this unique juncture in UNESCO's history.

I was happy to listen to all of you. There were many visionary statements. I was happy to see the strong emphasis on multi-lateral solidarity.

I think it has become even more evident that this Organization has no choice but to rise to the current challenges, to be precise, its responsibilities. And this is exactly why, global cooperation is the key in this respect. We have to keep our faith in multi-lateralism.

If we look at the nature of challenges, how the threats to stability are increasing, the role UNESCO is apt to play will be better grasped. I have always maintained that UNESCO can be a game-changer. Unfortunately, in a twisted way, this sounds even more true today. We are a beacon of hope. We must fulfil this hope that belongs to our people.

Again, there has been and there is too much disinformation and misinformation. This complicates our task as we have to start really dealing with the multi-farious fragilities, the sickening inequalities.

Finally, I do not think that UNESCO can lag behind other UN and international, hence intergovernmental organizations. Whether we like it or not, there's this perception of paralysis which we need to leave behind as soon as possible.

Comme le Président de la République Française, Monsieur Emmanuel Macron a dit, "nous sommes dans une guerre." Cette guerre continue, et pour la première fois dans l'histoire du monde, elle appartient à nous tous. Nous devons être vraiment au courant de cela.

Merci!