

Distinguished colleagues, let me greet all of you on this special occasion.

Under these unprecedented circumstances, the Executive Board cannot remain inactive and shall play its constitutional role by providing strategic guidance to the Director General to shape UNESCO's response to COVID-19 outbreak and to ensure full transparency and coherence of our common action.

In our view, UNESCO's contribution to the global efforts to mitigate the damage caused by the pandemics and its devastating effects to culture, education, science and communication could be based on following principles.

First - intellectual and moral **solidarity** of mankind, enshrined in UNESCO Constitution. More than ever, we need to join forces, setting aside prejudices and political rivalries. Countries shall refrain from attempts to use UNESCO for narrow national agendas.

Second – **collective action** in the spirit of true multilateralism to “leave no member state behind”. Diverging positions could be bridged. We regret therefore, consensus was not possible on decisions of this session. We fail to understand the reasons which brought about such situation.

Third – **assistance**, policy advice and capacity–building in addressing disruptions caused by COVID-19, especially **to the most vulnerable** that are being hit the hardest. The crisis deepens inequalities and the Organization shall closely monitor the continuous implementation of its normative acts.

Fourth – a **comprehensive approach** based on scientific analyses, reliable and accurate data regarding pandemic and its consequences. We welcome respective activities of the Secretariat, including monitoring of schools closure and reopening. We would like to underline that stigmatization or discrimination of states, peoples or individuals in connection to the coronavirus as well as the spread of false information and its misuse in the media shall be prevented. We call upon the Secretariat to cooperate with all interested partners in this regard on an equal basis.

Fifth - **close coordination** between member states and the Secretariat. We are grateful to the Director General for her quick and effective actions to ensure the business continuity of the Organization amid pandemics. However, we have to highlight that members states who are the stakeholders of this Organization, cannot be reduced to a mere status of spectators or general public to learn about new UNESCO's initiatives or even internal consultation processes from media.

Last but not least - **strict and full compliance** of all activities, including virtual ones, to the basic texts of the Organization – its Constitution, decisions of the governing bodies and relevant established procedures. This is the only way to create the atmosphere of trust, inclusiveness and fruitful cooperation. It is also a matter of good governance.

COVID-19 outbreak has become a maturity test for governments, individuals and international community as a whole. UNESCO is not an exception. Will we pass it or not depends only on us.

I thank you.