

Remarks by H.E. Mrs. Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili, Permanent Delegate of
Serbia to UNESCO

at the Sixth special session of the Executive Board,

8 June 2020

COVID-19 and UNESCO

Mr President of the General Conference,

Madam Director-General,

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

As always, it is a pleasure to see you all, albeit in a different way than we are accustomed to, but special times require special measures, and in the context of Unesco governance, special session of the Executive Board. As we have all witnessed and continue to witness, the pandemic of Covid-19 made an impact on almost every aspect of human life, while the full range of socio-economic consequences are yet to be seen. Despite the shattering effects of the pandemic, the crisis showed that the activities and mandate of UNESCO are ever more relevant, first and foremost in the area of ensuring the access to education to all, emphasizing the need for scientific cooperation and innovations, promoting access to reliable information, as well as protecting those most vulnerable.

Having said that, I wish to specially mention UNESCO's timely reaction in mitigating the consequences of school closures around the world, by initiating the Global Education Coalition, organizing the meeting of ministers of education early on in the crisis, and providing necessary support to a number of countries in ensuring the access to distance learning. Serbia welcomes the measures taken in the area of

culture, scientific cooperation, information and communication, including the Priorities Africa and Gender Equality.

We welcome, as well, an active involvement of UNESCO in the activities of the UN system that are aimed to address the current crises in a comprehensive manner. We appreciate that UNESCO's priorities are reflected both in the UN Secretary-General Strategy on Responding to the Socio-economic Impacts of Covid-19, as well as in the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic response to Covid-19.

Complexity and seriousness of the challenges the world is facing at the moment makes it incumbent upon us to do all necessary in order to provide the most effective contribution of UNESCO to the activities of the UN system vis-à-vis Covid-19 pandemic, in the areas of its competences. The Republic of Serbia stands ready to actively support these endeavors, believing that multilateralism is the best way to address the negative impacts of Covid – 19 on our countries and societies.

In that regard, I would like to underline the relevance of forward looking approach of UNESCO and activities taken in that regard, such as the initiative “Imagining the World After”, and others, aiming to help Member States to take stock of this crisis and build resilience for the future.

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 put forward, as almost never before, the need for solidarity and multilateral approach, which are among the leading principles of UNESCO, thereby placing it at the center of the concerted efforts to overcome the difficulties that the world is facing. It is with this idea in mind that Serbia joined the Group of Friends on Solidarity and Inclusion with Global Citizenship Education, that was launched in May of this year, hoping we could contribute to the solidary response to the crises.

Thank you.