

**Intervention by Mrs Parwana PAIKAN
Chargé d’Affaires of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

Sixth Special Session of Executive Board

Paris, 8th June 2020

Mr. President, Madam Director General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by expressing our gratitude to you Mr. President and members of the Bureau for the excellent work to make this special session happen in a professional manner during the circumstances, where the COVID-19 pandemic has affected our basic daily lives and working modalities.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan as a newly elected member of the Board as well as a responsible member state, reaffirms its commitments to UNESCO’s programs and activities to response the COVID-19 crisis. Afghanistan aligns itself with UNESCO’s response to the call for solidarity and coordination and it’s prioritized forms of intervention.

Our Delegation sincerely appreciates the launching of the “COVID-19 Global Education Coalition” by UNESCO, to support member states in need to cope with the crises. We should ensure the continuity, equity and enhancement of the supports within the poor and vulnerable states during and after the crisis.

Afghanistan is now severely affected by the pandemic and the number of the cases are rising rapidly (especially with the return of refugees). The government has applied the necessary measures in all major areas including the ones aligned with UNESCO.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan appreciates UNESCO’s indispensable role in initiating collective actions to support cultural sector. As it was raised during the virtual conference of the ministers of culture, one of the main concerns in countries like Afghanistan is the report of illegal excavation of the archeological sides, which needs more attention and studies on the ground to prevent and stop

illegal trafficking of the cultural heritages. This is the area that needs to enhance call for solidarity and cooperation among member states.

It is necessary to think about it and imagine the world after Covid-19. Our focus should not remain on the crisis management we should also affirm our commitments on post-pandemic world to preserve and strengthen education, culture and science.

We would like to thank the facilitators their Excellencies the Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates of Switzerland and Morocco for their efforts in building consensus. Understanding the exceptional and unpredictable circumstances such this pandemic; our Delegation supports the idea of conducting the Board's meetings in a virtual format to achieve a successful outcome of our joint efforts. However, experiencing today's technical difficulties the practicality of successful outcomes of the sessions remains uncertain.

Thank you