HUNGARY’S STATEMENT (DRAFT)

to be delivered by H.E. Mr. László TURÓCZY, ambassador and permanent delegate, member of the Executive Board

at the 209th session of the Executive Board
on 03/07/2020

Dear Chairperson, dear Director-General, dear Colleagues,

Hungary is honoured to be member of the Executive Board again, after a pause of 10 years and we look forward to engaging with all member states of the organization during our tenure. We hope to bring our perspective as a small, but engaged country to the service of this august body.

The constitutional and oversight role of the Executive Board makes it primordial that we ensure continuity of its work and smooth functioning. As options to work and conduct statutory meetings in digital environments are explored all over the UN family, we firmly believe that UNESCO and its International and Intergovernmental Bodies must also be prepared to face this new reality, including clear procedures for online sessions with appropriate procedures, leaving no space for ambiguity in the application of their rules in the events of virtual sessions.

As regards to the effects of the COVID pandemic, countries and institutions must come together and make culture and cultural heritage part of the solution for reviving economies. We believe that sustainable initiatives are needed to enhance the longer-term resilience of the heavily affected cultural sectors. A one-size-fits-all approach, or one-off measures will not work or suffice in overcoming the impacts of COVID-19 and UNESCO - as the only UN agency with a holistic mandate in culture - has a clear leading role in these discussions and in helping its member states transforming ideas into efficient local responses, in order to protect heritage during complex emergencies.

We also wish to recall and stress UNESCO’s unique mandate in the field of culture and science as a specialized agency of the United Nations system tasked with the safeguarding and
preservation of the world’s cultural and natural heritage in all its forms, including living cultural heritage, cultural expressions, creativity and museums.

We believe that UNESCO should approach this question from an integrated, cross-sectoral perspective, and it should deploy efforts to mainstream the issue of the impact of climate change on cultural and natural heritage, and advocate for concerted action within the related existing UN mechanisms and organizations such as the UNFCCC, WMO, UNEP, and UNECE with a view to ensuring UNESCO’s leading role, in line with its mandate on this issue, including with regard to UNESCO partners notably ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM.

In line with the global trends, Hungary has also observed major changes in its regional climatic conditions more intensely in the past 30 years. The impacts of climate change will continue to have far-reaching consequences for human and natural systems, which is why UNESCO’s mandate in the field of science is especially important. 2020, “super year” for nature and biodiversity and a landmark year for the submission of the joint nomination of the "5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube", prepared by Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary. This transboundary nomination was established on the basis of the 5-lateral Ministerial Declaration of March 2011 in Budapest and other relevant frameworks of cooperation such as the Croatian-Hungarian intergovernmental subcommittee for nature conservation for the existing bilateral Mura –Drava–Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

Climate change and the COVID-19 outbreak have raised awareness on how the spread of infodemic phenomenon can be harmful, and showed that tackling disinformation and providing access to the accurate information from credible sources is more vital than before, therefore UNESCO’s Communication and Information sector plays an important role as a laboratory of ideas. That is why initiatives like Open Science standard setting is more important than ever.

As climate change strongly impacts food–water-energy-ecosystem nexus we would also highlight the role of UNESCO in the implementation of the water related SDG 6, especially the role of the International Hydrological Program and UNECE Water Convention as a co-custodian agencies.
UNESCO has a leading role in education. Fight against all forms of discrimination is one of our priorities, especially when it comes to the use of a minority language in education. In the spirit of the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education we do utmost to ensure the agreed principles and this is what we expect from all States Parties of the Convention as well. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is an important tool for empowering people, men and women all over the globe, to change their attitude and act together towards sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly showed us how dependent societies are on women. In most cases women do the lion’s share of the work when it comes to teaching, nursing or taking care of kids at home. This situation highlighted the need for making a big and visible step towards one of UNESCO’s global priorities, namely women’s empowerment.

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII. It was also 75 years ago when the leaders of the world decided to establish UNESCO to prevent the mankind from devastating wars. As a leading agency of the UN, UNESCO has to set a good example, implement programs that give adequate answers to challenges and operate its governing bodies to preserve its good reputation.

The COVID-19 resulted in a situation demanding extraordinary efforts in every domain, at every level, by actors ranging from the individual to the State. Every individual, every State or International Organization has its role to play in combatting this pandemic, which is far from being over. In this context we commend the efforts of the Director-General to enhance the impact and visibility of UNESCO including through the cooperation with different UN entities.

Thank you, Chairperson.