Address to the 207th Session of UNESCO Executive Board

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Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the last session of the Executive Board meeting under the 39C5 framework. I would like to begin by congratulating the Executive Board on its effective work over the past two years and thanking the Chairman of the Executive Board for his outstanding contribution. The Chinese side appreciates the efforts and achievements of the Director General.

China has been a consistent and firm supporter of the noble cause of UNESCO. This year we have held in UNESCO Headquarters the Special Session on Girls' and Women’s Education and the UNESCO-Africa-China Forum on World Heritage Capacity Building and Cooperation, and in China the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, the International Conference on AI and Education, and the International Youth Forum on Creativity and Heritage along the Silk Roads. The Beijing Consensus, adopted by the International Conference on AI and Education, is the first international document by UNESCO and a milestone on education development in the age of AI. China is a committed supporter for education development in Africa, and will launch a new phase of the China-UNESCO Funds-in-Trust project. Next year, China will host the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee. The Chinese side is willing to continue to contribute our wisdom and energy to the lofty cause of UNESCO.

This is my fourth session as the Chinese Member on the Board. In the past two years, I have heard two words most often uttered. One is “mission”. UNESCO shoulders the lofty mission to ‘contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture’. The other is “consensus”. The history of UNESCO’s development shows that building and
safeguarding peace needs solidarity and hard work. Solidarity needs to be maintained with consensus. Any decision that is made without consensus cannot be truly implemented, and will be destructive to the Organization. In particular, at present, when the rising reflux of unilateralism has brought about uncertainties in many aspects, and when UNESCO is faced with severe complex challenges, including financial difficulties. At such a critical historic juncture, we should uphold the spirit of "consensus and mutual support" and build UNESCO into an "Ark" that bears the expectations of people of all countries and leads the future development of humankind. China calls on all Member States that value the Organization to remain vigilant against any confrontation and division that may endanger the development of the Organization, and to think over and make careful choices over the major issues that will affect the future and destiny of the Organization.

The Chinese side noted that there is still a deep divergence among Member States concerning the revision of the Constitution, especially on setting term limit on the membership of the Board. The Constitution is the fundamental law of the Organization. The Chinese side endorses the emphasis by the Director-General and the Chairman of the Board when they emphasized on adhering to the principle of consensus for the collective interests of UNESCO, and shares the views of many Member States on seeking consensus through dialogue and consultation. In revising the Constitution, we must adopt a highly responsible and extremely prudent attitude, adhere to the principle of consensus, seek the greatest common denominator, and resolutely oppose the forced promotion of the revision of the Constitution without full consultation and deliberation.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The most important experience of China in its today's glorious achievements is unity and stability, reform and opening up. Unity and stability are the premise and foundation of all work. China supports solidarity and reform, opposes confrontation and splits, and calls on Member States to unite more closely, adhere to the principles of consultation, joint construction and shared development, focus on common challenges and the projects we need most, and bring together the powerful forces for promoting sustainable development through practical actions to build a community of shared future for humankind and a better world.

Thank you.