

Remarks by H. E. Mrs. Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili,  
Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Serbia to UNESCO  
at the Plenary debate of the 210<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board

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Mr. President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director-General,  
Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
Dear colleagues,

I am honored to address this 210<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board of UNESCO on behalf of the Republic of Serbia. We are very grateful to you, Mr. Chairman and to the Secretariat, for successful organization of this virtual Executive Board session. My country is a strong supporter of multilateralism and believes in the indispensable role of UNESCO. We are firmly convinced that UNESCO, with its well-established authority and diversified expertise, is capable for significant contribution to addressing existing and emerging challenges in the ever complex world. The COVID – 19 pandemic revealed and exacerbated these challenges and vulnerabilities, proving that if we wish to achieve more, we all must do more in overcoming narrow interests and promoting international cooperation and solidarity.

We welcome the continued focus on the strategic transformation of UNESCO that is in its crucial stage and thank the Secretariat for all their efforts and achievements in this regard. Alignment of UNESCO's strategic transformation with the ongoing reforms of the UN, especially of the UN Development System, is of great importance to ensure the best possible strategic positioning of UNESCO within the UN system. This is of particular importance in order to maintain its leadership within this system on matters in UNESCO's field of expertise.

In our opinion, building upon UNESCO's comparative advantages and innovative solutions promoting holistic, interdisciplinary and cross - cutting programmatic approach is a precondition for making UNESCO more impactful on the ground. Forward-looking reflection on two existing UNESCO's global priorities, to which Serbia is strongly committed, is also needed. Special attention should be given to the needs of developing countries, with focus on Africa and small island developing states.

Results-based programmatic orientation and strong focus on the concrete contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda can be major driving forces for re-energized activism of UNESCO in the coming years. We are pleased to see that this kind of approach is reflected also in the presented preliminary proposals concerning the Draft Medium –

Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022 – 2025. These proposals, based on a broad consultative process, in our opinion, constitute very good basis for finalization of our joint work on these strategic documents of utmost importance, offering necessary transformative vision for the Organization in a new global environment. We would like to thank the Director – General Ms. Azoulay for her efforts and presented proposals and we would be very glad to see her continuing her engagement at the forefront of our Organization as its Director – General also in the phase of the implementation of these strategic documents in the coming years.

Serbia continues to support UNESCO's vision of education as an instrument to transform the quality of life for people and societies. Education is one of key priorities and basis for the development of Serbia as well. In addition, UNESCO's activities in the field of protection of cultural heritage are one of key priorities from our national standpoint. We pay special attention also to the issues of promoting diversity of cultural expressions and development of creative industries, as well as addressing climate change disastrous impacts on cultural and natural heritage. That's why we co-sponsored the Draft Decision submitted under agenda item 40.

We believe that sustainable and efficient field network is essential for ensuring effective program delivery and visible impact of UNESCO on the ground. Reforms of UNESCO's presence in the world should be based on commonly agreed principles and carried out in close coordination with Member States. In this context, it is also necessary to ensure effective mechanisms of coordination of the activities of the field offices with Headquarters and concerned Member States, especially concerning the project implementation.

Avoiding polarizing issues, thus keeping the Organization away from the damaging politicization, incompatible with its original mandate, is a precondition for renewed credibility of UNESCO. We support the spirit of consensus and dialogue that prevails in our Organization. UNESCO is truly a unique brand that should be used to pursue the objectives of international peace and common welfare of humanity through development of educational, scientific and cultural cooperation. It is our common responsibility and interest to raise awareness and visibility of UNESCO's work worldwide. Serbia, strongly devoted to the mandate and the values of UNESCO, will do its utmost to support the Organization in achieving the goal of building more prosperous, resilient and solidary world. With this aim, inter alia, we joined a group of countries led by the Republic of Korea that decided to introduce in the Executive Board a Global Call against Racism, with the aim to add a strong voice to the loud calls from around the world for the action to address this pertinent issue. Also, the Republic of Serbia announced recently donation of 30.000 EUR for the Global Media Defence Fund.

Dear colleagues, we are looking forward to an open and constructive dialogue on all issues on the agenda of this Executive Board session.