



Regeringskansliet

Tal från Anna Ekström

Tal av utbildningsminister Anna Ekström vid Unescos generalkonferens (på engelska)

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Paris, den 14 november 2019. Det talade ordet gäller.

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Mr. Chair of the Executive Board,

Madame Director-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honour for me to address the 40th General Conference of UNESCO.

Sweden fully aligns itself with the EU statement.

Let me start by reaffirming Sweden's strong support for UNESCO and its increasingly important mandate. We are proud that Sweden is the largest donor of voluntary funds to UNESCO.

I am proud to be part of the first feminist government in the world. This means that the Swedish Government puts equality between women and men, girls and boys, at the very top of our agenda. Without gender equality we cannot truly have human rights or sustainable development.

Therefore, I was particularly pleased to see that the evaluation conducted by MOPAN in early 2019 confirms that UNESCO has made important progress on gender equality.

UNESCO has a key role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. However, a

stronger focus on fewer working areas, reforms of the field network and strengthening of the corporate services are needed.

Greta Thunberg has become the voice of millions of children all over the world, urging us to take action on climate change. And indeed, we only has 10 years left to reach the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. The next Medium-Term Strategy must therefore get it right. I would like to highlight a few issues of special importance to my government regarding this strategy. We wish to see a continued strong human rights-based approach and a gender transformative perspective in all UNESCO sectors. The Strategy must also be focused on the realisation of the SDGs including on climate change.

Furthermore, we wish to see a sharper Medium-Term Strategy that truly prioritises and explains UNESCO's work to policy-makers and stakeholders.

Lastly, the Medium-Term Strategy should be accompanied by a reviewed resource mobilisation and partnership strategy covering the same period.

Mr. President,

UNESCOs' regular budget has remained the same for more than a decade, while Member States continue to ask more from the organisation. With several key reforms in place and given the positive MOPAN assessment, UNESCO should have its regular budget normalised to a level that compensates for cost increases. Sweden supports the regular budget level of 534 Million USD.

Over the last years Sweden has contributed with less earmarked and more long-term voluntary contributions to UNESCO. However, our support comes with high expectations, both on results and that UNESCO strengthens its communication of results. We encourage other donors to follow suit to enable UNESCO to fulfil its important mandate.

We welcome the new "Partners Forum" as a means to increase transparency and accountability regarding voluntary contributions. Sweden urges UNESCO to take note of the evaluation which recommended that a technical financial discussion be held in the next Forum as a Structured Financing Dialogue.

Based on the recommendation of the Executive Board Sweden has, together with more than 40 other countries, proposed an amendment to UNESCO's constitution regarding improved measures for assessed contributions.

Assessed contributions are the bedrock for funding in the UN and they ensure legitimacy and universality of its decisions. The Swedish government counts on your support for a well-resourced multilateralism and I look forward to the final approval of this amendment during the General Conference.

Mr. President,

We expect UNESCO's leadership to be a strong and proactive voice on fundamental human rights including on gender equality. Human rights are the foundation of UNESCO's constitution and should be promoted at every opportunity. We welcome UNESCO's leadership in comprehensive sexuality education, academic and artistic freedom globally and nationally.

UNESCO's mandate to promote freedom of expression has never been more relevant and UNESCO must continue to be at the forefront. Recently, we have seen a negative development across the world: journalists, artists and authors are increasingly threatened. Women journalists are often harassed both for what they write and for being women who express themselves.

We support the peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and the opportunities this brings. We continue to stress that the imprisoned Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak should be released.

UNESCO has always supported Member States in putting high quality education at the centre stage of national policies and priorities. Sweden believes quality education - a fundamental human right - is essential for sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Next year in October, Sweden will host a high-level international forum in Sweden on Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism. The Forum, which will be held in the city of Malmö, will focus on three themes; Holocaust remembrance, Holocaust education and the role of social media.

The founding ideas and principles of UNESCO are as urgent as ever. Sweden remains a strong friend of multilateralism and, especially, a strong and critical friend of the UN system and UNESCO.