

217<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO  
Speech by H.E.Mr. Atsuyuki OIKE (Japan)

Good morning my dear colleagues,

Before starting my intervention, we would like to add our voice to many of the previous speakers to strongly condemn the launch of a number of rockets as well as infiltration into the Israeli territories from the Gaza Strip by Hamas and other Palestinian militants on October 7. Japan urges all the parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint in order to avoid further damage and casualties.

Today, I would like to make my speech in order to draw your attention to some policy issues that UNESCO is expected to realise.

First, Japan welcomes the United States' return to UNESCO. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Director-General for her leadership. The United States' return allows UNESCO to recover its universality and full legitimacy as an UN organisation. It reinforces financial capacity of UNESCO. In this regard, we welcome the draft 42 C/5 which enables the Organization to have solid structure and resources to implement all its priorities.

Madam Chair,

Second, Japan places importance on the Priority Africa and SIDS. In this light, we support the increase in financial resources to those areas in the next biennial budget.

With regard to the Priority Africa, I would like to underline the importance of sharing the common strategic views among the African countries, donors and the Secretariat through the discussions in the Group of Friends. Japan has been continuously supporting its flagship programmes such as the Cultural Heritage Protection, TVET, implementation of the "Recommendation on the Ethics of AI" as well as the Disaster Risk Reduction. It is of course true that each of the

flagship programmes has its own relevance, however, since each donor has its own expertise, some degree of flexibility on the conformity between flagship programmes and individual projects will be needed to further promote the Priority Africa as a whole.

Concerning SIDS, we welcome the elaboration of the SIDS accelerators and the Partnership and Resource Mobilization Plan, and the identification of 6 accelerators in line with the SIDS Operational Strategy. This is a magnificent compilation of our work so far on this issue. Regarding these accelerators, Japan has been supporting UNESCO's projects in such areas as ESD, Disaster Risk Reduction and the "United Nations Decade of Ocean Science". In this regard, I would also like to ask for support from all the Member States to IOC which is leading the Ocean Decade under the leadership of its Chairperson Professor Michida.

Madam Chair,

Third, UNESCO is expected to further respond to disasters all over the world. On top of its efforts to protect education and culture from the disasters, UNESCO should also take advantage of its wide mandate to show the world a new approach to deal with disasters, by making use of AI and digital technologies. In this light, we would like to mention one of the J-FIT projects in Yemen which is designed to develop the early warning system to protect World Heritage cities. I wish to ask a question to the DG, regarding the achievement of the project tomorrow.

Fourthly, as Russian invasion of Ukraine is still underway, the G7 leaders in Hiroshima Summit in Japan last May expressed, together with the invited non-G7 leaders and Ukraine, its clear opposition to any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force. We must safeguard this principle. UNESCO has to strengthen its support to countries such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Yemen.

In order to deal with those crises, discussion is of course important. Nevertheless, I am convinced that what is the most needed on the ground is concrete actions. In case of Afghanistan, the Japanese Ambassador in Kabul, gave a briefing on the local situation in the information session held on 29 September. While Japan deeply concerns and strongly condemns some measures taken by Taliban to impose further restrictions on women's and girls' fundamental human rights, we may need to take pragmatic approaches depending on regional environment or areas of activities.

Madam Chair,

Finally, with its wide mandate, UNESCO will be expected to make contributions in ever-broadening frontier such as "Recommendation on the Ethics of AI", "Recommendation on the Open science", regulation on "Ethics of Neurotechnology" and Global Convention on Higher Education. It is indispensable for UNESCO to play a role in providing a discussion forum for newly identified challenges in the world.

As one of the major partners of UNESCO, Japan will continue to pull its weight in all fora including the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee.

Thank you.

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