

219th Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO

Speech by H.E. Mr. KANO Takehiro (Japan)

Madame Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madame President of the General Conference,
Madame Director General,
Excellencies, Colleagues,

Since this is the first time for me to address at the official meeting of UNESCO, I would like to start by expressing how much pleased and honored I am to be here.

The year 2024 marks the centenary anniversary of UNESCO and its predecessor organization. Their records show that peaceful lives of people are so fragile to man-made as well as natural disasters, while also showing that people can resiliently work together to regain peaceful lives with dignity.

The world has seen enormous challenges in the last biennium, including the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine and conflicts breaking out in other regions, various kinds of disasters, aggravating climate change, and new technologies posing both risks and opportunities. Against this backdrop, UNESCO has been tackling those challenges well, under the leadership of Director General and its team, and within its mandate and approved resources available. But we should not be complacent. The expectation for UNESCO is greater than ever, and to meet such expectation, UNESCO needs to continue its reforms so that it can play as a key player in post-2030 global architecture. To that end, the current biennium is crucial, with no time to waste.

So, I, as permanent delegate of Japan, a longstanding, responsible member state of UNESCO, pledge to work closely with all of you in the coming years.

Madam Chairperson,

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is now in the third year, and it should continue to be given high priority as a global challenge. As part of our overall support to Ukraine, Japan decided to provide an additional assistance through UNESCO of approximately USD14.6 million. We commend UNESCO staffs working on the ground with Ukraine.

Likewise, Japan is watching closely other conflict areas, including the Gaza Strip now facing the critical humanitarian situation. Japan believes that humanitarian ceasefire should be realized promptly in order to ensure a conducive environment for sufficient humanitarian assistance activities, and to lead to the release of the remaining hostages. We support the Secretariat's initiative to get UNESCO respond to the situation in Gaza, and decided to contribute USD100,000, aiming to provide vital mental and psychosocial support in education, as part of our overall humanitarian assistance through various channels to Gaza. We hope that other Member States consider further effort to address the situation.

Madam Chairperson,

Earlier this year, Japan was hit by a major earthquake centered on Noto Peninsula, northern part of Central Japan. I would like to thank the Secretariat and Member States for their messages of sympathy. The earthquake is a reminder that Japan, like elsewhere, remains vulnerable to disaster.

Next year 2025 marks 10th anniversary of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and now it is opportune to reinvigorate international partnership to tackle various kinds of disasters.

In that endeavor, UNESCO, with its broad mandate covering science, education, culture, communication and information, can play a unique role in promoting multi-hazard, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches. Its recent program supported by Japan in Morocco to strengthen the earthquake observation and early warning

systems is a good example. Oceanography is another area, and Japan will continue to support IOC led by its Chair, Professor Michida, in fulfilling its role in the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

Africa and SIDS will continue to be priority for Japan. Our continued commitment to African development can be shown by the fact that we will host TICAD9 in Yokohama next year, inviting all African Leaders. With regard to SIDS, Japan is actively participating in the preparatory process for the 4th International Conference on SIDS. We also host PALM10 in Tokyo in July this year inviting all Pacific Island Leaders.

Japan appreciates UNESCO's unique role in those two key regions, in such areas as disaster management, education and culture, and will continue to support its programs. Also, Japan encourages the Secretariat to redouble its efforts in field office reforms for effective implementation of programs.

Madam Chairperson,

In culture, we support the follow up of the MONDIACULT Declaration, including MONDIACULT 2025 to be held in Spain. The World Heritage Convention is an important framework to preserve cultural and natural properties. We welcome the OEWG on world heritage, and contribute to the discussion on the credibility, representativity and balance of the World Heritage List. Intangible cultural heritage also plays an important role, particularly to protect the identities of those who were forced to flee their homeland. Japan will continue to support these frameworks.

In education, we support the Secretariat's effort to raise education higher on global agenda at various fora, such as the 1st ESD-Net 2030 Global Meeting in Tokyo last December. We also welcome the entry into force last year of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, and will encourage more countries to join the Convention.

In science, AI, neurotechnology and open science remain key areas of interest for Japan, and we will continue to support in development and implementation of standard-setting instruments.

Finally, I associate myself with the ASPAC statement delivered by China.

Thank you.