

222nd Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO
National Statement by H.E. Mr. KANO Takehiro (Japan)



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Madame Chair of the Executive Board,
Madame President of the General Conference,
Madame Director-General,
Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and the adoption of UNESCO's Constitution. Regrettably, the principles and institutions of multilateralism face profound challenges worldwide, with persistent conflicts and growing unilateralism.

UNESCO is at the epicentre of such challenges, and our collective will to sustain this Organization is tested.

At this critical juncture, the present Executive Board session will take important decisions, nominating the new Director-General, the new President of the General Conference, and recommending the next biennium's budget — all to be endorsed by the next General Conference.

Amid challenges facing UNESCO, I, as a candidate for the Presidency of the 43rd session of General Conference, reaffirm my readiness to fulfill this responsibility, working with the next Director-General, Chair of the Executive Board, and all Member States, to advance UNESCO's shared values and objectives.

This commitment is based on Japan's steadfast support for UNESCO over the last 75 years — contributing financially and dispatching dedicated personnel across all sectors and regions.

With the valuable support of all Member States, I look forward to the honour of serving this important role with renewed commitment to support UNESCO.

Madame Chair,

UNESCO's budget for the next biennium is the most challenging agenda that this Board has to deal with. We must reconcile the need to operate this Organization in an uninterrupted manner with the availability of resources constrained by the political reality of the Member States, ensuring the smoothest possible transition from the current to the next administration.

We should take the challenges as opportunities to take bold reforms of UNESCO, making this Organization more efficient in administration and more focused on its core competences. That would make UNESCO more resilient, more relevant and more attractive to mobilize resources from potential donors. Japan will be engaged in constructive discussions in this session and beyond.

Let me highlight areas where Japan believes UNESCO should play a critical role.

Japan has supported UNESCO's operations within its mandate in Ukraine, and conflicts in Gaza or elsewhere. We also supported flood prevention in Yemen, teacher training in Ethiopia, and non-formal education in Afghanistan in recent years.

These efforts should continue, and we are pleased to announce new programs such as safeguarding cultural heritage in Aleppo, Syria and restoring traditional water systems in Lebanon.

Education is UNESCO's core mandate since its inception, and Japan has supported initiatives in this field for decades, such as "Education for All" and "Education for Sustainable Development," which is an integral element of SDG4 and a key enabler of other SDGs and is now incorporated in the 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development. Japan wishes to work with others in achieving SDG4 by promoting ESD and implementing the Recommendation.

Science is a critical area, particularly for vulnerable countries, in disaster risk reduction and ocean science. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction also emphasizes the vital role of science in this field. We are pleased that the emergency fund for DRR established last year now makes tangible impacts in several regions. We support the Ocean Decade with the leadership of IOC Chairperson Michida Yutaka and its Secretariat. We also welcome UNESCO and IOC's joint initiative to establish early warning systems in Pacific and Caribbean SIDS.

In Culture, let me first congratulate the success of MONDIACULT 2025 last week. Protecting and preserving all forms of cultural heritage is a matter of dignity, and we have supported capacity-building in Africa and SIDS to facilitate heritage inscriptions, producing concrete outcomes. The African-led Nairobi conference on heritage authenticity is a milestone that should lead to modernizing the norms of world heritage.

Madame la Présidente,

Dernier point, mais non des moindres, permettez-moi d'évoquer l'héritage commun de l'UNESCO.

Le film sur l'admission du Japon à l'UNESCO en 1951 me rappelle la joie et la passion animant nos prédécesseurs à l'idée de rejoindre la première organisation internationale de l'après-guerre, et je suis sûr que chaque Etat Membre a sa propre histoire avec cette Organisation. Je souhaite annoncer que le Japon a décidé d'allouer la somme de 150,000 dollars, afin de soutenir la préservation et développer l'accessibilité aux archives.

De même, le bâtiment Fontenoy, inauguré en tant que Siège de l'UNESCO en 1958, et son « Jardin de la Paix » dessiné par Isamu Noguchi et récemment restauré sous sa forme originale par des jardiniers japonais, français et américains. Ce bâtiment témoigne de la passion de nos prédécesseurs animés d'une volonté de rétablir le multilatéralisme, en tirant les leçons de la dévastation provoquée par la guerre.

Les archives, les collections d'œuvres d'art, et le complexe Fontenoy constituent notre héritage commun, légué par nos prédécesseurs et que nous avons le devoir de transmettre aux générations futures.

Japan associates itself with the statement by Kazakhstan on behalf of the ASPAC Group.

Thank you.