

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Director-General,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Let me begin my speech by emphasizing the strategic importance of this Executive Board session for UNESCO, which now stands at cross roads. This session gives us a precious opportunity to discuss vital next steps to be taken by UNESCO under the new Director-General, Madame Azoulay. Japan, as an unwavering supporter of UNESCO since its accession in 1951 reaffirms its strong commitment to the success of this session.

Mr. Chair,

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.” This noble objective of UNESCO is getting to be even more important in today’s world, as tensions and conflicts are here and there, and social gaps are ever widening under the globalization.

This is the reason why we now need a stronger UNESCO, which actively promotes educational, scientific and cultural programs, and thereby leads the international efforts to realize a sustainable world.

But in the time of need, UNESCO has suffered stagnation and setbacks such as politicization and financial crisis. I am afraid that if nothing is done, it could lead to a grave loss of the mankind. Hence, this is a time we have to squarely face challenges, and carry out necessary reforms in both political and organizational aspects.

In this respect, Japan values proactive approach taken by Madame DG to address the need for reform, including the proposal for UNESCO’s strategic transformation. If UNESCO carries out reform programs with strong determination, Japan is ready to render full support for the reform of UNESCO, despite the difficult developments for past few years.

Mr. Chair,

I wish to introduce to you three initiatives that Japan intends to promote.

The first is political reform. For the past few years, UNESCO has been involved in too many political issues. Hence, Japan supports DG’s determination to address the political reform.

Above all, it is essential to advance the comprehensive review of the “Memory of the World.” Japan welcomes DG’s efforts to submit the draft plan of action to this session. In order to promote the comprehensive review

(as delivered)

based on the Board resolution, it is vital to ensure a quiet environment. Japan appreciates DG's decision to close the next nomination cycle for the MoW. We also request DG to take discreet approach for nominated dossiers. Furthermore, Japan stresses the importance of active engagement of Member States in the review. Japan reaffirms its commitment to this crucial process.

The second is organizational reform. This reform should be carried out in a constructive spirit, with a view to making UNESCO stronger and more attractive. Japan is ready to contribute to this reform, through, for instance, sharing with UNESCO its own experience to enhance accountability.

As for finance, we need to seek a creative financing mechanism in order to fill the critical gap as described in 39C/5. Japan will actively contribute to the success of the Structured Financing Dialogue.

The third is core business reform. As for education, Japan has proposed in this session, together with a large number of co-sponsors, the draft decision to develop a new plan for ESD beyond 2019. The proposed decision aims at establishing a post-GAP framework which should become a major vehicle for UNESCO to fulfil its noble mission as the lead agency for the Education 2030 Agenda.

As to the protection of cultural property, Japan welcomes DG's flagship initiative: 'Reviving the Mosul Spirit'. Japan is ready to explore ways for contribution in this field.

Japan is also ready to deepen its commitment to UNESCO's other mandates such as "Ocean Science", disaster risk reduction, water related issues, and emerging challenges like ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

Mr. Chair,

So many challenges lie ahead of us. But we also recognize UNESCO's huge potential. I believe that UNESCO can achieve its noble mission once it accomplishes the political and organizational reform. Japan is ready to assume humble part of such noble mission together with all Member states and Madame Director-General.

I thank you very much.