



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at the opening of the Panel of the International Expert Meeting at Ministerial Level:

"Madam Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO,
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia I would like to greet this major event, International Consultative Meeting on the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers, hosted by the Republic of Serbia in partnership with UNESCO. It gives me particular honour and great pleasure to welcome Madam Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO who is visiting Serbia for the first time. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very warm welcome, Madam, and express huge gratitude for coming to Serbia and honouring us with your presence at this important event.

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Our today's gathering also bears witness to Serbia's commitment to the UNESCO mandate and values and our dedication to being a staunch partner in the implementation of UNESCO global priorities including its strategic goals and programmes. The Republic of Serbia has made continued efforts to broaden as much as possible its cooperation with UNESCO and support the Organization's intellectual authority and its wide-ranging expertise, particularly in the context of new global development and the 2030 Agenda.

I am convinced that the world cannot become a better place without the protection and strengthening of cooperation in the fields of culture, education, science and communications as well as information, where UNESCO plays a pivotal role at the global level. Serbia attaches great importance to UNESCO's activities in the field of protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, natural and documentary heritage, as well as promoting the diversity of cultural expressions, and strongly supports UNESCO's priorities - Africa and gender equality, as

well as youth, education and culture.

We expect that this visit by the Director-General of UNESCO will contribute to the further intensification and diversification of cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and UNESCO in all areas. The Republic of Serbia is ready to contribute in various ways to the strengthening and implementation of the set priorities and goals of the Organization.

Media and information literacy, as an umbrella topic of this event, implies the very skills and types of knowledge that enable all people to actively participate in present-day social life, in a way responsible both to themselves and others. These are the skills that develop critical thinking and responsible conduct in public media landscape, while combating at the same time stereotypes, racism, hate speech and discrimination. Media and information literacy has become essential to living in the digital age, and even more so at a time when we are all aiming to empower the citizens to respond to social, economic and environmental challenges and actively contribute to the overall progress of our societies.

It should be noted that today's meeting is also a recognition of UNESCO's leadership and vision in the fields that may transform and promote the quality of life for people and societies but also be conducive to sustainable peace, tolerance and mutual understanding. This is particularly true of younger generations because the young shall inherit the world.

In a modern world of globalization and digitalization where everything seems to be readily available, we have been, paradoxically, also facing the rise of conflicts, misunderstanding, extremism and discrimination. As ignorance breeds prejudice and prejudice gives rise to friction and conflict, special attention should be devoted to literacy and education to prevent any form of intolerance. Therefore, the mission of UNESCO is more important today than ever before, at both national and global levels.

Serbia is grateful to UNESCO for recognizing the idea to review and enhance the relevant curriculum for teachers, as a key resource and a tool for the development of information, communications and technology landscape.

We hope that the deliverables of this event, as a result of intensified efforts made by 30 experts on the media, education, communications and information technologies from the whole world, will succeed in contributing to drawing up the "Belgrade Recommendations on a Draft Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curriculum" as well as to updating the handbook on media and information literacy.

The Republic of Serbia will continue its commitment, together with the UNESCO Director-General and all the Member States, towards the achievement of noble civilizational values and goals of UNESCO, not only in the fields of education and communications, but science and culture as well, bearing in mind their outstanding potential for translating into reality the positive vision of a world aiming for a comprehensive and lasting peace.

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I now give the floor to the Director-General of UNESCO, Madam Audrey Azoulay, and wish you all successful meeting."

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