Rede von Staatsministerin Prof. Dr. Maria Böhmer beim Empfang der Ständigen Vertretung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bei der UNESCO zum Tag der Deutschen Einheit im Rathaus des 16. Bezirks in Paris
26.09.2017
--es gilt das gesprochene Wort--

Monsieur l’Ambassadeur Krawielicki,
Madame la Directrice générale,
Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif,
Excellences,
Madame Klarsfeld,
Mesdames et Messieurs !

J’ai le plaisir de vous accueillir aujourd’hui dans les locaux de la mairie du seizième arrondissement de Paris !
Monsieur le Représentant de la Mairie, je vous remercie très sincèrement de votre hospitalité et de nous avoir permis d’organiser chez vous la réception de la Délégation permanente !

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3 October 2017 will be the 27th anniversary of German unity. In hosting this reception to mark the Day of German Unity, Ambassador Krawielicki, you are also commemorating the Peaceful Revolution.

In 1989, the people in what was then the German Democratic Republic overthrew the dictatorship by protesting peacefully. When the border crossing points were opened, families, neighbours and friends who had been separated for decades by the Wall were finally able to embrace again. The joy and happiness about this were simply incredible.
Following German reunification in 1990, people in eastern and western Germany have grown closer over the past 27 years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We share the same value system. Democracy, the rule of law and the inviolability of human dignity are the cornerstones of our coexistence.

These are universal values.

They shape UNESCO’s work. In the preamble to the UNESCO Constitution, “the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace” are assigned particular importance, as they form the basis for the recognition of the dignity of human beings as the most precious asset and as “a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil”.

The preamble also states that peace will only be lasting if it is founded upon “the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”. And we need to do more in this regard today!

We are currently experiencing how crises and armed conflicts are destabilising countries and entire regions.

We are experiencing how refugee flows are posing new challenges for us.

We are experiencing a new form of terrorism that is trying to eradicate people’s cultural identity.

For a long time, many people did not give much thought to World Cultural Heritage or to why UNESCO bestows this honour on the world’s most important properties.

In recent times, we have been forced to think about this question. The barbaric destruction of cultural heritage in Palmyra, Mosul and Timbuktu is a stark reminder to us of the importance of historical heritage for identity and peaceful coexistence between people.

We need humankind’s shared heritage to be protected internationally. The World Heritage designation is not only an award, but also an obligation to protect cultural heritage of outstanding universal value worldwide. UNESCO repeatedly is called upon to act here.
In order for UNESCO to be able to perform its wide-ranging tasks, it needs to be well equipped for the future.

Its performance is curtailed by the difficult financial situation, which in part results from unpaid contributions from members, a lack of staff, and above all, the increasing politicisation.

In the coming weeks, the election of a new Director-General will determine UNESCO’s future.

In cooperation with outgoing Director-General Bokova, we have achieved a lot!

For example, I recall the expert meeting on preserving Syria’s cultural heritage that we organised together last year in Berlin – with only six weeks’ notice!

Over the past months, I have spoken with most of the candidates for the office of Director-General. Each time, I underlined the urgent need for internal reform.

Germany stands ready to play an active role in this reform process.

I firmly believe that we could continue making valuable contributions to UNESCO’s further development as a member of the Executive Board.

Please allow me to request your support for Germany’s wish to be elected at the forthcoming General Conference for a second consecutive term on the Executive Board.

I assure you that we will continue doing our utmost to support the achievement of UNESCO’s goals.

Naturally, this also includes meeting our financial commitments as one of the largest contributors. We paid our contribution in full at the start of the year in order to stabilise the precarious financial situation.

It is of particular importance to us to have an even closer dialogue with the African UNESCO members. Just a few days ago, our Permanent Delegation hosted a dialogue event with representatives of the Africa Group in UNESCO.

Ladies and gentlemen,
In times of globalisation, the emergence of a new order, the spread of digital technology and climate change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with a blueprint for our actions and clear guidelines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable education is a key topic on UNESCO’s agenda. This is an issue that we need to address together. We would like to share our experiences in this area. And the valuable work of UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Bonn and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg shows the way forward, as sustainable education gives everyone better opportunities and has the potential to transform society.

However, it is a bitter experience to see that education and culture are being used to radicalise people and to justify violence.

We have received many reports from areas that have been liberated from IS informing us that perfidious attempts were made to incite young people, even children, to a life of violence through indoctrination in schools, books and the internet.

Germany supports UNESCO’s endeavours to create a culture of peace. As recently as June, we invited to a workshop here in Paris on the prevention of violent extremism through educational media. This event showed clearly that the role model function of teachers and the right approach to social media are of great importance if we want to protect the younger generations from extremism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude my speech by reminding you of the following excerpt from the appeal for peace by António Guterres’ on his first day in office as Secretary-General of the United Nations: “All that we strive for as a human family – dignity and hope, progress and prosperity – depends on peace. But peace depends on us.”

Je suis convaincue que l’UNESCO offre le forum idéal pour rendre notre monde plus pacifique et permettre à chaque individu d’accéder librement à la culture, aux sciences et à l’éducation.

Je vous remercie une nouvelle fois d’avoir honoré notre invitation et vous souhaitez une agréable soirée riche en discussions positives.