

# **Deutsches Plenarstatement von Staatsministerin Keul bei der 42. UNESCO Generalkonferenz**

**(8. November 2023)**

[Es gilt das gesprochene Wort]

Madam President of the General Conference,

Madam President of the Executive Board,

Madam Director General,

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Today's world community is deeply shaken by wars, conflicts and atrocious terrorist attacks.

Causing unbearable suffering to families mourning their loved ones.

Deepening the gaps between peoples and cultures. In the Middle East. In Ukraine. In Sudan. To mention but a few.

That is why Germany is convinced – I am convinced – that we need multilateralism more than ever.

We need UNESCO more than ever.

We all have agreed on UNESCO's constitution and its mandate which has education for peace at its very centre. As long as wars prevail, we have not worked hard enough. We have not yet accomplished our common goals here at UNESCO.

It is only in multilateral fora such as UNESCO, where each Member State, large or small, poor or rich, has one voice.

A real voice outside of the echo chambers of social media.

At UNESCO we must talk about shaping education, preserving culture and cultural heritage.

Talk about how to make information and communication reliable and secure and ensure frameworks for a safe and secure environment for journalists, media workers, scientists.

Colleagues, excellencies,

We have stressed in many fora, how much we condemn the brutal terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel and its people, and where we stand when it comes to Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law.

At the same time, we work incessantly to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza as we also see the heartbreaking suffering of the Palestinian people.

Here at UNESCO our task is to think about possible support that UNESCO can offer in situations like this.

Where children are out of school and educators unable to teach, where educational institutions are targeted, misused, destroyed.

We must not let us be divided by disinformation and propaganda.

Hamas does not represent the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

We cannot allow terrorism and war educate the generation of kids and youth when we strive to educate peacemakers.

Dear colleagues,

We have also discussed the unjustifiable Russian war of aggression against Ukraine since February 2022, a blatant breach of the Charter of the UN, extensively in many multilateral fora.

Since we witness how Russia intends to destroy Ukraine as a cultural entity, and does not spare cultural heritage and educational institutions, these crimes go to the heart of the mandate of UNESCO.

It is important to act decisively and at scale, as UNESCO does, in particular with regard to education, culture and freedom of the press.

It has provided 50.000 laptops for teachers, trained more than 15.000 Ukrainian school psychologists in trauma counselling. And it has provided training for 1.700 Ukrainian journalists.

Germany is hosting thousands of Ukrainian refugee students and teachers in German schools since the outbreak of the war.

There are many other ongoing wars, conflicts, natural disasters and crisis situations which we have to confront:

Take the climate crisis:

2023 was a wake-up call, with record high temperatures around the globe, fires, cyclone seasons and hurricane seasons with unknown intensity.

The catastrophic floods that hit Libya is one terrible effect of the climate crisis.

Or the education crisis, for example in Afghanistan:

We cannot be oblivious to the crimes perpetrated by the Afghan regime against the right to education of millions of women and girls – not to speak of many more daily human rights violations in Afghanistan.

Or the information crisis:

The rampant and intentional spread of misinformation that undermines democratic dialogue.

These situations need joint answers and solutions.

UNESCO is an organization that delivers such solutions by large-scale, transformative activities.

Just to name a few:

It has minimized setbacks in education during the pandemic.

It spearheads the discussion on Technology in Education.

Its new Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development is a normative milestone.

UNESCO's school network ASPnet has grown to 12,000 schools worldwide.

This is by far the largest and most effective international school network promoting quality education worldwide.

Together we must continue to work on UNESCO's mandate and on multilateral solutions.

At UNESCO we have witnessed enormous progress towards true global multilateralism in recent months.

The return of the United States to this forum is a truly historic milestone for UNESCO and we congratulate everybody who has contributed to achieving this.

Germany will continue to provide full-fledged support to UNESCO throughout its mandate.

We are one of the top financial contributors to UNESCO,

We provide funding for UNESCO institutions in Germany, such as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg.

We contribute through extrabudgetary funding.

We support our National Commission and its cooperation with National Commissions in Africa.

We also support World Heritage sites and Biosphere Reserves in African Countries bilaterally.

We have proposed to establish a new Category-2 Institute on Biosphere Reserves in Germany.

Germany is grateful for UNESCO's excellent work and will remain committed to contribute to its success.

This is why Germany runs for re-election to the Executive Board at this General Conference.

We hope that we can count on your support.

Thank you for your attention.