

**UNESCO Information meeting: Actions for Ukraine, following the decision of the Executive Board's Special session
24 March 2022**

Statement by Ms. Laura Davies
Permanent Delegate of the United Kingdom to UNESCO

I am delivering this statement on behalf of **Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United States of America (USA) and Uruguay and my own country the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.**

Let me start by thanking the Director-General for convening this meeting and the Secretariat for explaining how they intend to assess the situation in Ukraine and develop programmes there following Russia's invasion, with the involvement of Belarus, as decided at the 7th Special Executive Board. We stand unwavering in our support for Ukraine and its people. We continue to condemn in the strongest possible terms President Putin's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing devastation that Russia's military forces are causing in Ukraine. Russia's continued violation of international law, its indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian targets must stop immediately. We deplore the impact across UNESCO's mandate in Ukraine and beyond.

It is vital that UNESCO takes action to the full extent of its mandate to support the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and the right to education, as well as the promotion of science, the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, media freedom, free access to information, the safety of journalists and the fight against disinformation across Ukraine. We call on Russia not to impede support provided to Ukraine by UNESCO in any way.

Delivering on the Resolution of 16 March 2022 will be an iterative and long-term process: what we heard today was a good start, but there will be much more to do, and we will all need to continue to react to circumstances as they evolve. We want to understand better how we can contribute so we ask the Secretariat to continue to engage proactively and transparently with Member States on their thinking, activities and results, as well as on opportunities for us to support them.

We ask that UNESCO takes a fully joined-up approach to providing support in Ukraine, making full use of existing programmes and funds. Where needs are identified that go beyond these, our countries stand ready to discuss how we can best support. This could be financially, technically or through the provision of expertise. Many of us are already

contributing to programmes that are highly relevant and also providing specific services to displaced Ukrainians, such as schooling for their children.

Russia's war against Ukraine has created a devastating humanitarian crisis throughout the country. Its impact on global food security is exacerbating pre-existing humanitarian crises around the world. We therefore encourage all UN Member States to co-sponsor and vote in favour of the UN General Assembly resolution entitled "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine," introduced by France and Mexico and co-sponsored so far by 88 cross regional countries.

Finally, all UNESCO's activities on this matter need to continue to be guided by UN General Assembly resolutions 68/262 of 27 March 2014 and A/RES/ES-11/1 of 2 March 2022, both of which demand an immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of Ukraine as defined by its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters.