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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Nada Al-Nashif,**

**Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences**

**Ceremony of the 70 years of Austrian Membership in**

**UNESCO**

**Graz, 22 October 2018**

Distinguished Governor Hermann Schützenhöfer,

Distinguished Mayor Siegfried Nagl,

Distinguished Representative of the Republic of Austria (TBD),

Distinguished members of the Graz City Council,

Distinguished representatives of ECCAR member cities,

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to greet you on this important commemoration. I regret not being with you in person, but I wish to share a few thoughts with you as a token of UNESCO's double commitment: to the issues in question as well as to our partnership with the participating institutions.

It is a pleasure for UNESCO to be associated to today's combined celebration of 70 years of Austrian membership in UNESCO and the 70 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Austria has been steadfastly committed to multilateralism and to the universal values of human dignity, equality and justice. This commitment is evident in Austria's adherence to UNESCO on 13 August 1948. This was the country's first step towards the then nascent multilateral world that emerged after the atrocities of World War II.

In the course of 70 years of membership, Austria has contributed significantly to the advancement of the humanistic values that underpin UNESCO's very existence. The following are some of the many tangible signs of Austria's long investment in UNESCO.

- Ninety Austrian schools are part of the UNESCO Associated School Network,
- Austria hosts three biosphere reserves and three UNESCO Global Geoparks, areas of geological sites and landscapes of international geoscientific importance.
- Nine world heritage sites are situated in Austria.
- Six UNESCO Chairs based in Austria, including the Chair in Human Rights and Human Security, recently established at the University of Graz.

Austria's commitment to human rights is best exemplified by the distinguished place of Vienna in the hearts of human rights defenders, as it hosted 25 years ago the World Conference on Human Rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action remains a singular landmark in the development of human rights for its unequivocal recognition of the universality and indivisibility of all categories of rights and for setting the limits of respect for cultural specificities.

The momentous 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves as a reminder of the need for continued reflection, drawing on the ground covered thus far to chart the way towards a better future for all human beings. In that endeavour, we can rely on the directions provided by the rich normative arsenal created since 1948. We can also build on the powerful consensus behind the Agenda 2030 to place the human being at the heart of efforts to promote sustainable development and to leave no one behind. This universal, transformative and integrated agenda establishes clear directions for the international community, targeting social justice outcomes anchored in human rights. A key message that transpires from Agenda 2030, as well as from subsequent similar frameworks, notably the New Urban Agenda and the Global Compact on Migration, is the imperative of mobilizing a united front of all like-minded actors whether in government or in society.

Within such a front, cities can and are increasingly invited to play a critical role. Convinced of the importance of local governments in advancing inclusion at the grassroots, UNESCO launched in 2004 the European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR). Today, ECCAR is one of the seven national and regional branches of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR, which counts more than 500 members worldwide. To continue expanding the ranks of this network and raise awareness about the complexity of the challenges at hand, UNESCO will be celebrating on 31 October at our Headquarters, the World Cities Day. Our emphasis will be on the potential of creativity and innovation for an inclusive urban environment.

Within these endeavours, the city of Graz, our gracious host, has been a singular ally since it joined ECCAR in 2006 with Vienna getting on board in 2014. I should say that Graz is a unique example of a broader commitment to the agenda of UNESCO as it carries the title of UNESCO City of Design within the Creative Cities Network and has its historic centre and the beautiful castle of Eggenberg in the World Heritage list.

I would like to extend our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Austria, the Government of the Federal State of Styria and the City of Graz for their unwavering support. Allow me finally to thank the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy – ETC for putting since the beginnings of UNESCO's Coalition their solid expertise at the service of our efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is a symbolic occasion but there is much at stake. We are witnessing manifold regression on the international stage, which has a serious impact on the universal enjoyment of human rights that we, together, believe in and advocate. But there is hope because we can count on the engagement of committed partners like those we find in Austria and this is, as ever, a cause for celebration.