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**Panel discussion on
Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Development
on the occasion of the
World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development**

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**Intervention by
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Annamaria Bogyay
Permanent Representative
*“The Role of Education in Intercultural Dialogue”***

Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Vanuatu, Senegal, Qatar, Slovakia and Colombia for co-hosting this crucial event on the occasion of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. As former Ambassador to UNESCO and 36th president of its General Conference, I have been working on this topic for decades, and am happy to share with you my experience and ideas.

The **2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** states that “cultural diversity (...) is indispensable for peace and security”, it “is a mainspring for sustainable development”, and the Convention recognises its “potential for the enhancement of the status and role of women in society”. Cultural diversity, of course, always has to go hand in hand with the **respect for human rights** and fundamental freedoms, democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures. The diversity of cultural expressions should be protected and nurtured by “*constant exchanges and interaction between cultures*”, *that is, intercultural dialogue*.

The preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage is the cornerstone of maintaining and nurturing cultural diversity. This is an especially pressing issue today, as **religious and ethnic minorities** are facing constant threat by terrorist and extremist groups in the Middle East and elsewhere. The destruction and looting of **tangible cultural heritage** does not only target the minorities, their homes, churches and artifacts, but also the future of entire communities, their collective identity and social fabric, and thus their intangible cultural heritage they carry within themselves. The protection of these communities, defending their right to freedom of religion and belief, and the re-construction of their rich heritage, therefore, is much more than a cultural issue. It is essential for restoring peace, reconciliation, long-term stability, and safeguarding the region’s multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional character. Hungary devotes particular attention to the the protection and of **Christian minorities** in the Middle East, and is actively participating in the reconstruction of their lives and colorful heritage.

These priorities are represented at a high level in Hungary: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade **Mr Péter Szijjártó participated at the 3rd International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East**, held in Brussels on May 14th, emphasizing Hungary’s commitment to promote the region’s multi-cultural character and enable those displaced return to their homes.

The protection of **intangible cultural heritage** is also key in ensuring intercultural dialogue as well as inclusive and sustainable development. The 2005 UNESCO Convention recognizes the

“equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, including the cultures of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples.” The traditions and knowledge of these groups contribute positively to sustainable development, and therefore should be preserved and promoted. **Linguistic diversity** is a fundamental element of cultural diversity, and a channel for intercultural dialogue. The **right to use the mother tongue in education** and public life is a pre-requisite for social inclusion and the freedom of expression.

Hungary has 13 **national and ethnic minorities** within its borders, and there are about 5 million Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary in minorities and in diaspora around the world. Our Government is making constant efforts to preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of all these national minorities.

Education plays a special role in preserving cultural diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue. Early childhood education is especially important in shaping children’s worldview, way of thinking and sowing the seeds of a culture of peace and respect for other cultures and peoples.

Throughout my Presidency at the General Conference of UNESCO, I have focused on promoting the importance of exploring the diverse cultural identities and traditions through education. I believe that people should first learn about and embrace **one’s own identity and cultural heritage**, to be comfortable with who we are and where we come from. Through this journey, people will become ready to respect and appreciate each other, other cultures and differences, and they will not be afraid to engage in dialogue with each other.

I feel it is essential to educate not only about the positive and glorious moments of our past, but also the painful ones. We must teach our children about the lessons of the past so that they grow up knowing the consequences of hatred, intolerance, discrimination and violence. Fully embracing this notion, Hungary, during its 2015 chairmanship of the **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)**, focused on the promotion of education about the Holocaust, including the Roma Holocaust, in order to advance the culture of peace.

Interreligious dialogue is key in achieving peace and creating an environment for sustainable development. We have to work with **moderate religious leaders and civil society** to combat extremism, and help communities in reconciliation and healing.

Education can take countless forms; it cannot be confined to the classroom. I have seen in so many places and so many times how education, culture, science, communication can build bridges among people. We can teach our children about the culture of peace through a vast array of activities such as poetry, music, art and sports. **Art** is a powerful tool for education and internalizing the idea of peace. **Sport** also has the power to bring people together, eliminate social

divisions and create an environment that values fairness, respect for one another, solidarity and equality.

Tolerance is not enough. We need mutual acceptance and respect to be able celebrate together our common, colorful heritage.

Thank you, Mr. President.