Forum 11 Closing Speech by the Chair of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison, 17th December 2019

On behalf of the Liaison Committee and on my own behalf I apologize for the last minute changes and cancellations due to the specific context of the transportation strike and I extend my thanks to the participants, panelists and officials of the forum who responded and adapted accordingly to the situation.

Thank you all for your presence, your contributions and your work, especially to Richard, our young co-pilot and to Nick, Philippe, Fatima, Marie-Christine but also to Géraldine and other colleagues from the sectors and NGOs for their support. I extend my thanks to the Secretariat, to Ms Sabina Colombo, chief of the Unit for civil society partnerships, and to Armin, her assistant, for their cooperation and support.

Among the key words of the forum were: Quality education and Youth; Digital divide; Technology, Science and Gender; Artificial intelligence; Empowerment; Poverty; Human dignity; Disabilities; Citizenship; Advocacy and Public Policies; Ethics; Sharing of information and communication; Solidarity and Collaboration; Partnerships; Culture and Art.

Art is the best way to discover oneself, not be afraid and trust others, as Gaspard and the representative of the Netherlands delegation explained to us. Economics is not the only benchmark and our well-being also needs to be assessed to measure inequalities.

We need to change mindsets and attitudes to achieve sustainable development and peace. We need to listen to the youth and we need the youth to engage and be engaged.

Multi-stakeholders and intersectoral partnerships have a key role to play as well as NGOs as informers and whistleblowers feeding into UNESCO’s reflection so that it remains a laboratory of ideas.

A bottom up approach and input from the field and political advocacy are essential.

Our Forums represent the ideal spaces for dialogue between the various actors of civil society, including NGOs, official partners of UNESCO, and international organizations, INGOs, Member States, the academic world and researchers (4% women only!).

The last 207th Executive Board thanked the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee for its constructive contribution in the dialogue between Member States and NGOs and invited it to pursue its efforts in reinforcing modalities of dialogue within appropriate spaces including the ICNGOs and the international Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO.
It is necessary for NGOs to have this interactive dialogue with Member States, Permanent Delegations and National Commissions with the kind support and facilitation of the Secretariat.

In the face of differences and inequalities, we must fight against discrimination, not be afraid, trust and accept others because each being is essential to society. Art bears evidence to the inalienable dignity of men and women.

Ethics "is not a supplement of the soul but (...) a more just, intellectual and ethical way of thinking ... What matters is to make the link, to be willing to love. To love is the result of a decision, of free will but also of work. To love is political, because Love, being attracted by the other and towards the other, and being aware of the other build a human being." (Abridged from Cynthia Fleury’s quote)

Thank you for your attention,

Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré