

Remarks by Stefania Giannini on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the People's Friendship University of Russia

Kremlin, Moscow, 8 February 2020

Dear Academician Vladimir Filippov, Rector of the People's Friendship University of Russia

Excellency Mr Valery Falkov, Minister of Science and Education of the Russian Federation

Excellency Mr Valentina Matvienko, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of RUDN

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

What an incredible honour it is to be standing here this evening at the State Kremlin Palace to celebrate 60 years of friendship through education.

On behalf of the Director-General and of all UNESCO, thank you for this special invitation.

UNESCO and RUDN have travelled the past sixty years together.

Sixty years in the life of a university is still young, yet it spans a period that fills volumes in terms of momentous change.

The very founding of this university in 1960, at the height of decolonization, is deeply entwined with UNESCO's mandate.

This is to promote intellectual and moral solidarity through education, science and culture.

Fundamentally, such knowledge-sharing is the foundation for peace building, giving people the power to shape their future.

Scientia unescamus – let us be united by knowledge.

The motto of your universities expresses the spirit that has guided you over the past six decades.

Your university exemplifies all the missions of higher education institutions.

In an increasingly competitive global environment, the People's Friendship University has never lost sight of higher education's fundamental humanistic mission.

This is to open minds and serve society – to design solutions that improve human well-being and contribute to shaping better societies – ones that are tolerant, innovative and sustainable.

To be united by knowledge, we have to learn to know each other and appreciate the diversity that makes up our wealth – and our shared future.

Because our world is more interdependent than ever in the past, and because of this, more vulnerable. Isolationism cannot survive.

Multilateralism is the only path to peace and prosperity.

Higher education is the intellectual arm of multilateralism and the People's Friendship University embodies the ideals of international cooperation, with students from 158 countries.

You are a true academic United Nations, bringing together bright minds from across the world. Your prestige not only comes from your standards of excellence.

You have also gained this reputation by investing in diversity as one of the greatest assets for inventing the future.

Such a meeting of cultures sparks creativity and fertile innovation, nourished by different realities.

Behind great universities, there are exemplary leaders who inspire and motivate.

I would like to pay tribute to Professor Vladimir Filippov whose authority and vision have repercussions well beyond the frontiers of your prestigious university and of this great nation.

Your career and personality are intertwined with UNESCO's mission and education ideals.

As minister, as rector and as a distinguished academic, you have always been a fervent advocate of international cooperation to advance education.

I am thinking of your influential role in the landmark World Conference on Higher Education held just over 10 years ago, of your membership on the SDG Education 2030 Steering Committee, of your role on the Governing Board of the Institute for Information Technologies in Education here in Moscow to cite only a few eminent contributions. You have been a UNESCO Chair holder for two decades, sharing your expertise in comparative educational policy.

We live in a time of complexity and uncertainty, one of momentous and accelerating change.

Keeping a compass calls for wisdom and vision.

Professor Filippov has this rare combination, and I know that UNESCO will continue to rely on his wisdom as we enter this Decade of Action for Sustainable Development.

This concerns each one of us and our shared future.

It calls for new models of creating and sharing knowledge – across disciplines and frontiers.

This is about nurturing talent and responsibility for the future.

I commend all the students and faculty of the People's Friendship University – continue uniting the world around knowledge and happy anniversary!