

Diary of an extraordinary day

A few days ago, I had the chance to speak at UNESCO to mark the Pope's historic visit to France. So, in this diary entry, I'd like to look back with you on that incredible day.

My day got off to a flying start at 5 am, when I caught the train to Paris. During the journey, I was able to fine-tune and rehearse my speech, despite wanting to get some more sleep and feeling increasingly stressed by the unique nature of the situation.

At 8 am, I arrived at UNESCO and was welcomed by the organising team, with whom I'd already been in touch ahead of the event. Once in 'Room II', the room where the round-table discussion was to take place, I met Lucky Geluk from the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Lucky is also part of the UNOE network, and we had both been selected for this exceptional event; having her by my side during the round-table discussion was reassuring.



the moderator of the round-table discussion and not just a member of the audience.

The forum began at 9 am, and after the opening and welcome speeches – and several long, nerve-wracking minutes during which I genuinely feared I wouldn't be able to remember my speech – I was called up onto the stage. I was able to present to the audience the topic I'd been assigned – “Learning in the age of AI: Opportunities, challenges” – and then I sat down alongside the panellists, including Lucky, to ask them questions and chair the round-table discussion. The hardest part was keeping an eye on the time to ensure the event ran to schedule whilst listening to them; the guests were so passionate and interested in the topic that I forgot on several occasions that I was



At 12 noon, we left the room and headed to the seventh floor of UNESCO for lunch with a breathtaking view of the Eiffel Tower. I had the chance to eat alongside Lucky, as well as other international students who'd been invited to the same event.

We all made our way to 'Room I' at around 2 pm, the hall where the Pope was due to give his speech an hour later. The whole building was buzzing; those who had registered to see the Pope were taking their places in the lobby, the gardens and the hall. The morning panellists were pleasantly surprised to find they had reserved (and privileged) seats. As for me, I was in the third row, right in front of the lectern. That's when I realised just how lucky I was to be here for such an event and how honoured I felt to have been chosen by the organisers for the morning round-table discussion.

At 3 pm, the Pope arrived at UNESCO; from 'Room I', we could hear the shouts and applause of the audience in the corridors and gardens. Then the Pope entered the auditorium to the sound of the audience's applause, and had UNESCO's Director-General Khaled El-Enany not taken the floor, I truly thought the applause would never stop. After a brief introductory speech by the Director-General, the Pope finally took the floor. His speech was in line with the discussions at the round table that had taken place that morning; and although it was full of warnings, there was also hope for the future.



UNESCO photo album shared on [Flickr](#)

It was with a slightly lighter heart, and feeling happy with my day and the people I'd met, that I made my way to the station to return to Nantes.

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