

27. **The President:**

Thank you, Your Excellency. Our next speaker is His Excellency, Mr Ronald Jones, Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Barbados.

28.1 **Mr Jones** (Barbados):

Mr President, Director-General, Chair of the Executive Board, Your Excellencies, heads of delegation, distinguished delegates. Mr President, I wish to take this opportunity to offer our warmest congratulations to you on your election to the presidency of this 37th session of the General Conference. I also wish to thank your distinguished predecessor for her contribution.

28.2 Barbados notes the Executive Board's recommendation for Ms Irina Bokova to be re-elected to serve another term as Director-General. We extend our congratulations to her and commend her on her sterling work during the last biennium, which we all know was very challenging for the Organization.

28.3 Barbados extends special congratulations to Anguilla on its admission as an Associate Member of UNESCO. We welcome our sister island from the Caribbean to the UNESCO family.

28.4 I take this opportunity to thank Member States, particularly those from Latin America and the Caribbean, and most particularly to the Chair, Saint Lucia, for their able management of the newly established Ad Hoc Preparatory Group of the Executive Board and for supporting Barbados in its pursuit and execution of the Chairship of the Executive Board.

28.5 Mr President, I also wish to commend the outgoing Chair of the Executive Board. I am satisfied that, based on the reports of her stewardship, her sterling work and performance during this biennium has been a credit to the Organization. Barbados is duly proud of her outstanding achievement, and I bow to her.

28.6 Mr President, Barbados reaffirms its commitment to the ideals of UNESCO. We are heartened by the work of the Director-General over the last biennium to lead and manage the Organization in difficult circumstances. We generally support the reforms that have been initiated in light of the financial challenges.

28.7 Mr President, I note the concern raised by many of my colleagues relating to the financing of the work of the Organization in a period of shrinking financial resources. It is imperative for UNESCO to avoid the risk of losing its leadership as well as its credibility in the fields of competence it has built up in the almost 70 years of its existence.

28.8 The Government of Barbados reaffirms its commitment to supporting the Organization in the coming biennium and beyond, according priority to the provision of financial support. We endorse the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 (document 37 C/4) and the Programme and Budget (document 37 C/5). We consider that they chart a path toward the achievement of the Organization's objectives.

28.9 Barbados takes note of the work of UNESCO in the preparation of the post-2015 global development agenda within the United Nations system. We applaud UNESCO's efforts and wish to highlight their complementarity with the post-2015 development framework for education developed by the Commonwealth Education Ministers Working Group in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Mr President, this framework prioritizes the need to ensure free, quality basic education for a minimum of nine years continuously, minimizing differences in learning outcomes as defined by national standards between more and less advantaged groups and to provide post-basic education and opportunities for all youth and adults to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to participate fully in society and to secure decent work. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group, of which Barbados is a member, must be highly commended for the work that they have put in and the results they have produced.

28.10 We also wish to highlight the importance of teachers, teacher quality, training and development in a global effort to achieve quality education and improve outcomes for students. We therefore call for greater focus on enhancing teacher quality through adequate and appropriate training.

28.11 Barbados also recognizes the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and the development of employability and skills, particularly among our youth. TVET remains a priority for Barbados, particularly the preparation of our youth to enhance their skills, competencies and successful entry into the labour force.

28.12 Barbados, like many other small island developing States (SIDS), regards science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education as integral to their development and looks to UNESCO for much needed support.

28.13 Mr President, the Barbados Declaration and the Barbados Programme of Action are regarded as the blueprints for the sustainable development of SIDS. My delegation considers it vital that an appropriate follow-up be undertaken without delay. SIDS continue to be vulnerable to shocks over which they have little or no control. We are urging that SIDS continue to be accorded the attention they deserve, particularly in respect of climate change and disaster risk management and mitigation. The recently concluded inter-regional preparatory meeting for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), hosted by Barbados, provides a clear framework for action in the run-up to the Samoa Conference.

28.14 In the formulation of strategies for the implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan for 2014-2021 (GEAP II), we urge that issues of gender be integrated more seamlessly across all of the major programmes and that the specific concerns of countries like Barbados, which relate more to men and boys, be given due recognition.

28.15 Barbados commends the efforts that went into the recent establishment of the Caribbean Tsunami Information Centre (CTIC) which brings to the Caribbean a powerful tool to enhance local capabilities in the area of disaster risk reduction. It is important that funds be provided to ensure that it is functional. Barbados similarly urges that continued support be provided to the critically important work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

28.16 UNESCO must work to reinforce its emphasis on the achievement of education for all (EFA) and education for sustainable development (ESD). These hold the key to the empowerment of our citizens and to the development and promotion of creativity and innovation, which are essential to our sustainability.

28.17 Barbados signals its intention to continue to work within UNESCO to ensure the inclusion of culture in the United Nations' post-2015 agenda. The importance of culture in national development must continue to be emphasized.

28.18 We support UNESCO's advocacy for a greater role of culture in the sustainable development process in light of the Hangzhou International Congress "Culture: key to sustainable development".

28.19 We support an integrated approach to the implementation of the culture conventions and further lend our support to the global efforts in the protection and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage. Mr President, Your Excellencies, heads of delegation, distinguished delegates, I thank you.