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Local/National News

Hepburn elected president of UNESCO General Conference

By Bahamas Information Services

NASSAU — The 58 Member States of the UNESCO Executive Board elected Dr. Davidson L. Hepburn President of the 35th General Conference of United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on September 14, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced.

Dr. Hepburn beat out distinguished candidate Professor Daniel Filmus from Argentina, during elections in Paris, France, the ministry stated.

Dr. Hepburn's candidature received the endorsement by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and his successful election signals the first instance that a Caribbean State has held the post of president of the General Conference during the 60 years of UNESCO.

He is no stranger to the international community, having previously served for 15 years at the United Nations, 10 of which were as Ambassador of The Bahamas to the UN. He has been involved with UNESCO since 1993 and has served as chairman of The Bahamas National Commission to UNESCO, as well as chairman of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations.

Dr. Hepburn is the recipient of many awards, including the Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur from the French Government for promoting Franco-Bahamian relations in language and culture.

He is fluent in three working languages — English, French and Spanish — having earned a PhD Degree in comparative languages and literature as well as a diploma in international relations from L'Institute des Hautes Etudes in Geneva, Switzerland.

He sees the election as an honour within itself. A greater responsibility will now be placed on the Government of The Bahamas and the other CARICOM States to take more of an active role in the important work of the organization, the ministry said.

Further, Ambassador Hepburn emphasized the importance in giving a voice to small developing countries, in particular, small island developing states (SIDS), and now that precedence has been set it is his hope that further SIDS will endeavour to take up high posts in the international arena, the ministry said.

Bahamas High Commissioner to London, His Excellency Paul Farquharson, QPM, accredited to the Court of St. James and Ambassador to the Republic of France was happy to witness the election of Dr. Hepburn to the very high post.

He felt this that this serves as a testament to a great Bahamian son in Davidson Hepburn. This success will mean that any young Bahamian aspiring to serve their country overseas can achieve the highest of office if they put their mind to it, the ministry said.

The president shall declare the opening and closing of each plenary meeting of the Conference. He shall direct the discussions, ensure observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions. He shall rule on points of order and, subject to the present rules, shall control the proceedings and the maintenance of order.

The president may, in the course of the discussion of an item, propose to the Conference the limitation of the time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each speaker may speak, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate.

He may also propose the suspension or adjournment of the meeting or the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion.

The president shall not vote, but may designate a member of his delegation to vote in his place.

The president, in the exercise of his functions, remains under the authority of the General Conference.

The president of the General Conference shall sit ex officio in an advisory capacity on the Executive Board.

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