

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF DELEGATION

OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS

On 27th OCTOBER, 2011

IN THE PLENARY SESSION

OF THE GENERAL POLICY DEBATE

AT THE 36th SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE

Madam President

Heads of Delegation

Delegates

I take this opportunity to offer to you Madam President our warmest congratulations and thank our distinguished outgoing president and brother from our region for his sterling work during his term in office.

Barbados also welcomes the addition of its sister small island states Curacao and Sint Maarten into the UNESCO family during the inaugural session of this 36th session of the General Conference.

Madam President, Barbados had the honour of hosting the First Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994, almost 20 years ago. The nations gathered in Bridgetown adopted the *Barbados Programme of Action*. We are heartened that the interests of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have gained greater recognition over the years. We very much appreciate the recognition given in the Draft 36 C/5 UNESCO's Programme and Budget to this special group of States, since our commitment to all issues pertinent to SIDS remains the same today as when it was first articulated.

Madam President the Government of Barbados is committed to the work of UNESCO across the spectrum of issues on which we deliberate. One area of particular interest to us is the protection and promotion of cultural diversity and heritage. We commend the work being undertaken under the World Heritage Convention especially as it relates to biological diversity, land degradation and climate change. Barbados wishes to reiterate its thanks to the World Heritage Committee for its recent inscription of Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison on the World Heritage List. It is a special achievement for a Small Island Developing State. We express gratitude for the acknowledgement and support of the international community. Barbadians have responded warmly to the challenge of protecting their tiny part of the heritage of humanity.

We are also heartened by the development of the concept of Historic Urban Landscapes. We are concerned that SIDS are underrepresented within the World Heritage system. Barbados is of the view that this aspect of UNESCO's work has the capacity to capture the diversity we seek, while celebrating individuality and identity while enabling capacity building.

Madam President Barbados considers that continued national development in a changed and evolving world depends heavily on the contribution of our young people. We provide free education from primary to tertiary levels. We are now increasing the number of government funded nursery schools with a view to providing increased access to education from the nursery level as part of an enhanced early childhood programme. At the same time we have started the implementation process of a new Human Resource Development Strategy recently passed by Parliament.

Barbados would like to use this occasion to express its thanks for the UNESCO Youth PATH programme, which has concluded after a ten-year period in the Caribbean. As a small island developing state, we saw this as an enabling activity and I am pleased to inform that the Barbados component will continue, as we have been able to see the tangible results from the participants who have gone on to function as responsible adults and contribute to the development of the cultural and environmental landscape. Since the launching of the UNESCO Slave Route Project in 1994, there has been an international effort to undertake research, dialogue and public education about the realities and brutalities of the African slave trade and slavery, in which more than 11 million Africans in the trans-Atlantic slave trade alone were sold into bondage in the Americas. Of course, the virtual erasure of the worst form of human exploitation from global memory resonates strongly with UN ideals and its duty to uphold human rights. It is hoped that UNESCO's commitment to 'breaking the silence' will unlock human understanding of human rights abuses and fully appreciate the peoples and cultures that survived one of the greatest assaults on human dignity.

The Government of Barbados has taken note of an absence of adequate statistics on the Culture sectors of the region is a matter of considerable concern. We are seeking to diversify our economies through the development of the cultural industries. To do this successfully the collection of comprehensive statistics on this area of activity is critical. We look forward to working with UNESCO to ensure that our countries can take advantage of the recently revised UNESCO Framework on Cultural Statistics.

With respect to natural sciences, Barbados is pleased to note the efforts of the Secretariat in restructuring its activities, and heartily commends the new Assistant Director General, Ms Gretchen Kalonji, for the innovative approach to natural sciences for the new biennium. Bearing in mind the limited capacity in SIDS for science, technology and innovation, we strongly support the development of STI policies and capacity building for small islands within this biennium, as well as the strengthening of the technology transfer component.

Barbados, as you know, is strongly committed to ensuring the effectiveness of the UNESCO Natural Sciences Programme for all nations, and for SIDS in particular, and continues to provide financial and logistical support for IOC activities in the Caribbean region for the benefit of all. However, we have come to a stage within the IOC, where, because of its sterling contribution to effective ocean and coastal management globally, more and greater demands are being made on the Commission, in the form of new programs and priorities posed by Member States, without the requisite funding to sustain them. It is for this reason that Barbados is pleased to note the defined limits of achievement described in the biennial benchmarks for each main line of action, and would wish to commend the IOC Executive Secretary, for her decisive actions in this regard. Barbados calls on the members of the General Conference to secure the future of IOC programs by supporting the program and budget as prescribed, and allocating extra-budgetary funds where feasible. The IOC's contribution to the Regular Process for the Global Marine Assessment is paramount and we urge all coastal states to support and participate fully in this endeavour during the coming biennium.

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Madam Chairman

The Government of Barbados recognizes that UNESCO faces many challenges. However, that is why we are together here. We all recognize and are committed to certain fundamental principles such as peace, harmony, mutual respect, equality, human rights. The Government of Barbados representing a small island developing state is determined to play its part in ensuring continued success of UNESCO.

I thank you.