



202nd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO

DRAFT STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO ITEMS 4, 5 & 19 OF THE
PROVISIONAL AGENDA¹

BY **HON. DR. MATTHEW OPOKU PREMPEH**, MINISTER FOR
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EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chairman of the Executive Board
President of the General Conference
Director-General of UNESCO
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me much pleasure to have this opportunity to address the 202nd session of the UNESCO Executive Board.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to convey warm felicitations from NANA ADDO DANQUAH AKUFO-ADDU, President of the Republic of Ghana, to you and other distinguished members of the board.

¹ Ghana is allotted 5 minutes for this statement. Please kindly check against time.



Ghana notes with satisfaction efforts by UNESCO to ensure that Member States are well positioned to respond effectively to our collective resolve under SDG4. The roll-out of activities to enhance learning opportunities, particularly, for refugees and internally displaced persons are commendable. This year's mobile learning week for example, created the platform which highlighted innovative technology-driven approaches that strengthen inclusiveness in education, as well as preserve the continuity of learning opportunities.

Mr Chairman, in our bid to better the lives of young Ghanaians with the view to building a solid human resource base for socio-economic transformation, the Government of President AKUFO ADDO has given full effect to SDG 4.1 with the implementation of a Free Senior High School Policy this academic year. The programme, anchored in the four pillars of learning, targets the removal of cost barriers, the expansion of infrastructure, improvement in quality and equity as well as acquisition of employable skills for development.

Mr. Chairman, Government has absorbed all fees and charges for all students entering Senior High School and TVET institutions at that level this academic year, including the cost of textbooks, school uniforms and meals. In effect, all that parents have to do is to send their children to school.



It is worth mentioning, Mr Chairman, that with this intervention we have increased the number of children accessing secondary education this year to about 94% as compared to about 64% last year. Government is committed to removing all barriers in accessing Secondary Education and we look forward to sharing our experiences in this area with other Member States.

Turning now to the Natural Sciences, Ghana is concerned about the financial challenges facing the basic sciences and engineering sectors in building capacity for science education in Member States.

The effect, undoubtedly, on UNESCO's STEM and Inquiry-Based Science and Technology Education, particularly in developing countries is enormous. While we note the work of the IOS and its recommendations, Ghana would like to see, rather, a more strengthened and repackaged UNESCO's basic sciences programme which addresses the needs of Member States particularly in Africa.

In that direction, Mr Chairman, Ghana is happy to request UNESCO to grant a Category II status to the Africa Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS-GHANA) – a globally recognised pan-African centre of excellence for



post-graduate education, research and outreach to train Africa's young talents in the STEM fields.

Ghana as the immediate-past Chairman of AFRIMAB further seek your support to create a sustainable funding mechanism - AFRIBIOFUND which will promote transparency, equity and gender equality to meet the logistical and developmental functions of Biosphere Reserves in Africa.

To conclude, Mr Chairman, this session of the board is extremely important for our Organisation. We are preparing for the 39th General Conference to approve a new Programme and Budget as well as endorse a candidate as Director-General for the approval of the General Conference.

As we decide the future of UNESCO, let us be reminded of the challenges our Organisation has had to grapple with in recent years. We need a more united and strengthened Organisation. We need a rekindling of the vision of our founding fathers to promote dialogue among civilisations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for our commonly shared values; the building of peace, international understanding, eradication of poverty and sustainable development. It is in this light that Ghana is pleased to host the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day in Accra in May 2018.

I thank you for your attention.