

**National Statement delivered by Mr. Shanta Bahadur Shrestha,
Representative of Nepal to the 202nd Session
of the
Executive Board, UNESCO, Paris, 10 October 2017**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. President of the General Conference,
Madame Director General,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board
Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. First of all, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to UNESCO for convening this board meeting prior to the 39th session of the General Conference. I also take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to other representatives for their foresight, enthusiasm and vision for steering the course of this organization at this difficult time.

Respected chair,

2. I take this opportunity to highlight a few important positive changes in Nepal that has occurred since the promulgation of the Constitution on 20th September 2015. Alongside its regular functions, the Government of Nepal has remained steadfast in the implementation of the new Constitution. We are on right track to put in place the federal structure of the country. For instance, we recently completed the local level elections, in which an overwhelming majority of Nepali people exercised their voting rights. As a result, all 753 local government units are now functional. Similarly, provincial and federal level elections are going to be held in November and December this year. I am confident that this will see the dawn of a new Nepal, where inclusive democracy, prosperity and economic growth will be fostered to uplift the standard of living of its people.

3. Efforts to improve education will continue to remain as one of the major thrusts in Nepal. Following the completion of the Education for All (EFA) implementation, we have channelized our efforts in implementing

Nepal's commitment to meet all four stand-alone goals on education as enshrined in the SDG 2030. With the support of UNESCO, Nepal is developing a Road Map for Education for 2030. This process fully embraces the new context of the country. Our hallmarks will be equity, inclusion and quality of education. This is in consistent with the aspiration of Nepal to become a Middle Income Country by 2030.

4. Science and information technology will have a lot to contribute to shape the future of Nepal. We value UNESCO's efforts in improving water security and understanding climate change. As one of the most important resources, rivers originating in Nepal not only help sustain the lives and livelihood for all Nepalis but also symbolize its culture and traditions. We therefore urge UNESCO to initiate a dedicated inter-sectoral program to link "life and rivers".

5. Thus we also support the amendment tabled by Mexico and some other member states in implementing water programs of UNESCO as a separate Main Line of Actions.

6. Use of new technology and their openness can be instrumental in revitalizing economies, improving education and creating jobs, especially for young people. Nepal urges UNESCO to enhance delivery of such programs and also to make them more inclusive.

Respected chair,

7. While we are still engaged in the reconstruction and recovery works after the 2015 earthquake, Nepal recently experienced heavy floods in the southern part of the country. As a result, the education as well as other sectors of UNESCO's priority areas have been badly affected. While Nepal deeply appreciates UNESCO for its support in spearheading the rehabilitation efforts, the Government would like to see an enhanced cooperation in safeguarding our rich natural and cultural heritage, and for the reconstruction of damaged educational establishments.

8. Globally, either due to the occurrence of natural disasters or deliberately through barbaric attacks, there has been a significant increase in the destruction of cultural heritage. Nepal appreciates UNESCO's response in safeguarding cultural heritage and strongly urges that these efforts are further strengthened.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The significance and existence of UNESCO and its vision are more important in the course of the history than ever before. Nepal strongly commits itself to the implementation well as enhancement of the visibility of the agendas and areas enshrined in the constitution of UNESCO. However, Nepal is concerned that the lack of resources has greatly impacted UNESCO's ability to deliver. I hope this 202nd Session of the Executive Board will not only come up with a set of path-breaking recommendations to sharpen the focus of the organization to achieve SDGs, but also table a consistent resource mobilization agenda to empower UNESCO. At this juncture, I sincerely urge that concerned member states should consider augmenting their voluntary contribution to the organization, so that it would be able to fulfil the aspirations of its Member States for the betterment of their people's lives.

10. This session will also be electing a new Director General, who will lead UNESCO for the next four years. I am confident that we will all work together in a spirit of cooperation to successfully complete the election process and elect a visionary and dynamic director general. Finally, I express my gratitude to Her Excellency Irina Bokova, the Director General, for your support and cooperation to Nepal during your tenure.

Thank you.