

## **202<sup>nd</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO**

**4<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 2017**

### **ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY, MRS MARIAM Y. KATAGUM, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT DELEGATE OF NIGERIA TO UNESCO**

Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director General,  
Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

1. This biennium has been a very busy and challenging one for UNESCO. More than ever before, we have been able, as the Executive Board, to keep a continuous presence in the life of the Organization. In that context, we have also made great strides in involving Member States, non-members of the Board in our regular dialogue on the fears, the fortunes and the performance of our Organization.
2. Various efforts at improving our efficiency and effectiveness have been initiated. In all of these, we have, in an iterative manner, constantly evaluated and consequently adjusted our actions without shying away from admitting when things do not work out as expected. Overall, these have been worthy experiments, for while underlining their usefulness, some of the weaknesses have also been exposed.

3. In this context therefore, we wish to recall that one of UNESCO's general missions is to promote the development of scientific knowledge. In 1946, Sir Julian Huxley, the first Director-General of UNESCO wrote that "the application of scientific knowledge provides our chief means for raising the level of human welfare". Hence UNESCO helped build scientific institutions in Europe and other regions. More recently, there has been a wide recognition of the role of science in achieving the SDGs. It is for this reason that we view, with great concern, the declining capacity in basic sciences and engineering within the Organisation, which resulted from the low rating given to the programme by Member States. UNESCO's work in STI policy should be complemented by the International Basic Science Programme, as a platform for intellectual cooperation and for the advocacy of investment in science.
4. Mr. Chairperson, statistics show that Nigeria has about two million internally displaced persons largely as a result of the Boko Haram crisis. As one of our concerns is access to education, a National Policy on Inclusive Education was adopted in July 2017 to promote the mainstreaming of children with special needs into regular educational programmes as well as address the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups, including IDPs. We therefore warmly welcome the report of the Director-General on UNESCO's activities to enhance learning opportunities for refugees and IDPs.
5. Nigeria congratulates Slovenia for the highly successful 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on OER held in Ljubljana. The preparations for the

Congress gave Nigeria the impetus to develop and present our Draft National Policy on OER for Higher Education, with support from COL. A Nigerian University System OER Platform has also been established and to date, about 58 universities have uploaded content onto the platform.

6. Mr. Chairman, let me draw attention here to the fact that every programme implementation report and most evaluation reports point to the negative effect of limited funds and staff on the capability of UNESCO to adequately fulfil its mandate. Therefore, Nigeria will support option I; that is \$667 million (with a \$518 Expenditure Plan).
7. On partnerships, Mr. Chairperson, on behalf of the Commonwealth Group, of which Nigeria is the Chair, we urge the Secretariat to identify concrete actions to implement the revised Memorandum of Understanding between the Organisation and the Commonwealth Secretariat, with a focus on the three pillars of cooperation: education; youth and sport; and peace-building and dialogue.
8. Dear Colleagues, we are now well into the constitutional process for the election of a new Director-General for the Organization. It is our hope that our deliberations and action, in that regard will be rewarded with a successful outcome for the leadership of the Organization in the coming years.

9. As we bid farewell to Ms. Bokova, we look back with appreciation for her contributions to leading UNESCO, through a very important period in its history. It is to her credit that she worked with commitment on efforts of renewal and review of the Organisation and creating "a UNESCO fit for purpose."
10. We thank you Irina for your leadership and your commitment to the ideals of UNESCO and we wish you continuing success in your future endeavours.
11. I thank you for your kind attention.