



**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA**  
**TO THE**  
**202nd SESSION OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**ROOM X: FONTENOY BUILDING**  
**10 OCTOBER 2017**

President of the General Conference

Madame Director-General

Chairperson of the Executive Board

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me start by expressing my Country's condolences and solidarity with all those sister countries affected by national disasters recently.

My Delegation expresses its gratitude to the Director-General for the information that she provided yesterday, as well as the Secretariat, on whom a lot of pressure is brought to bear given the many demands of Member States, including new initiatives, in spite of the financial constraints that UNESCO continues to face.

Chairperson,

The Executive Board is on the cusp of a momentous period in its history where it can choose to reorient UNESCO in a direction that takes it to a new level of effectiveness, through the decisions that we will be making during this session, in particular, decisions pertaining to the election of the new Director-General and the Draft Programme and Budget. In this regard,

my Delegation has always held the view that if we are united in our vision for the Organization, we will be able to find solutions together for the common interest of humanity.

It is therefore our responsibility to elect a Director-General who is a visionary, who will be guided by principles of ethical leadership and who will mediate differences among Member States such that UNESCO becomes depoliticised. A Director-General who will also raise UNESCO's profile globally and take it to the next level of efficiency and effectiveness, especially as we enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution where robotics have a potential negative impact on the labour market. UNESCO should play a major role in leading and finding solutions to this potential threat.

In terms of the budget, my delegation will continue its constructive role in an attempt to find an amicable solution to the difficult task of reaching agreement for the 39 C/5.

South Africa always pays its annual assessed contribution on time, in full and without any conditions to ensure that UNESCO continues to implement its programmes, including those aimed at capacity-building. We call upon other Member States to demonstrate their commitment to UNESCO by doing the same.

South Africa has benefitted from its close collaboration with UNESCO in many areas including the recognition of a young female South African scientist, Dr Fanucchi for her outstanding contribution to science during this year's L'Oréal Women in Science Awards.

Additionally, the Garden Route, which is well-known for its scenic beauty, was designated a Biosphere Reserve this year and added to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The Khomani Cultural Landscape was further inscribed in the World Heritage List during the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee.

South Africa, as a Chairperson and representative of the Africa Group on the Bureau of CIGEPS, participated in the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI) in Kazan, Russia which adopted the Kazan Action Plan (KAP). This was followed by a meeting of a core group, which met here at UNESCO. The Kazan Action Plan will be the main focus in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 SDGs through physical education.

South Africa hosted a successful launch of the 2017 World Water Report in Durban, again a sign of our commitment.

My Delegation also wishes to recognize and thank those who continue to support the African World Heritage Fund, a Category 2 Centre hosted in South Africa, which contributes to capacity-building and supports upstream processes in terms of World Heritage on our Continent. In this regard we would like to note that the UNESCO-Equatorial Guinea International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences will be awarded on the occasion of the AWHF Board Meeting scheduled in Equatorial Guinea in December.

In order to strengthen our continued collaboration with UNESCO, we have presented our candidature to the following International and Intergovernmental Bodies (IIBs), the IBE, the ICC of the MAB, the CIGEPS and IFAP. We count on your continued support to enhance our active engagement with UNESCO as we exit the Vice-Presidency of V(a) and conclude our membership of the Board in 2019.

Chairperson,

Insofar as how we organise and prepare for our work to make the work of the Board much lighter and more efficient and cost-effective, whatever mechanism we find should meet the principles of inclusivity, efficient preparation and cost-effectiveness.

In keeping with the principles of transparency, democracy and inclusivity, my delegation also supports the proposal to recommend a minimum of two candidates to the General Conference as the highest decision-making body of UNESCO, for decision-making. We also support the principle of rotation in the membership of the UNESCO Executive Board, while cognizant of the sovereign right of each Member State.

Chairperson,

My delegation would like to state that it supports the respect, promotion and protection of all human rights. This includes indigenous peoples, hence we are a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We do not however, support the use of human rights as a conditionality for development assistance. It is for this reason that the UNESCO Policy on engagement with indigenous peoples is of concern to my delegation as it is not clear how UNESCO intends to apply the policy in practice.

South Africa has come from a difficult past and we are apprehensive about any initiative that risks dividing us, rather than promoting nation-building and social cohesion. We will continue to advocate for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in all UN Fora.

On the issue of the Addendum to the Strategy for the Reinforcement of UNESCO's Action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict, we are concerned that this does not take into consideration other branches of international law, such as international humanitarian law, particularly as disasters very often, result in the movement of people, including across borders.

We support the proposal of the Russian Federation for the United Nations to proclaim 2019 as an International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements, an initiative that we have co-sponsored.

Similarly, our delegation would like to commend the sponsors of the initiative on UNESCO's role in supporting literacy in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Literacy is a peculiar challenge in our Continent, and we therefore pledge our support to the initiative, and request that our name be added to the co-sponsors' list.

We would be amiss if we did not reiterate the importance of gender equality, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). We will continue to make our modest contribution in this regard, including to education in general, in our part of the world. In this regard, we are pleased to report that South Africa has integrated the General History of Africa into its primary school curriculum.

Chairperson,

Our delegation would like to recall the importance of capacity-building, including in the field offices for the implementation of the flagship programmes of the Priority Africa Strategy 2014-2021, such that they have impact where it matters the most.

Finally Chairperson, we look forward to the commemoration with UNESCO of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of our late former President Mandela. In his words, it is now in our hands to make a difference, through our contribution to humanity.

I thank you.