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Paris, France, 9 November – 24 November 2021
Remarks by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Curaçao,
The Honourable Mr. Sithree van Heydoorn

President of the General Conference,
Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Director-General,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Government of Curaçao congratulates you, Mr. President, on being chosen to preside over the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. I wish you continued success in the conduct of the proceedings.

Mr. President,
It is such an honour for me to take part in this conference as I come to you virtually.
We are in a new learning reality of distance education since COVID-19 has surfaced.

The educational system worldwide since the outbreak of the pandemic has and still is experiencing challenges with closures of schools, online learning and teaching.

UNESCO in response to COVID-19 started a pilot in 2020 for Professional Development for Teachers for Blended Learning and Online Strategies, for which we are grateful as this gives

Caribbean SIDS teachers the opportunity to follow online training on Distance Learning and Teacher Training Strategies in our region.

The aim to train ten thousand teachers throughout the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean SIDS in the use of online education tools, resources and interactive platforms to effectively engage students through online learning, may seem ambitious to some, but I am pleased to say that it is being implemented successfully.

The goal of my Ministry is to ensure that “Every child, young person and adult in Curaçao has equal access to high-quality education and educational facilities where he/she is offered optimal opportunities to develop fully and integrally”.

Moreover, it is of vital importance that the Ministry is able to better direct, fund and monitor all education matters on the basis of facts and data. To achieve these goals, the Ministry and the schools must be data-driven, digital and integrated, among other things.

Through the Education Digitization programme, the Ministry strives to realize an optimized education through:

- Innovation through smart collaboration between all stakeholders
- Increasing digital literacy
- Thoughtful use and implementation of digital learning resources
- Providing a safe, reliable and future-proof infrastructure

The COVID-19 pandemic, has shown that the need has become greater to speed up the digitization process.

Mr. President,
Curaçao, as many other SIDS, strongly believes that UNESCO's role of supporting SIDS should continue. We applaud that there is a unit dedicated to the necessities of the SIDS, but firmly believes that the next step should still be SIDS as a Global Priority as is the case with Africa and Gender.

As a SIDS we have to continue implementing the goals of the SDGs that have a great impact on us such as Quality Education, Climate Change and No Poverty.

It is a well-known fact that UNESCO emphasizes the education of girls and women, and rightly so but let us not forget our boys! We definitely believe that UNESCO should continue to support this and where possible make the necessary funds available.

Curaçao once again has the opportunity of being a pilot, pioneer and model in the Caribbean for UNESCO projects which are very important for the development of our Caribbean region. These pilot projects are focused on holding consultations with the culture field for a National Disaster Risk Management Plan for this sector in the elaboration of meaningful strategies which will assist the sector in becoming more resilient.

Resilience of Caribbean SIDS to Disasters and Climate Change through Enhancing the Culture Sector is imperative, especially now. Culture is not only a product we share with visitors or a sense of pride that we have in who we are, but it is also a source of survival, a system in promoting our biodiversity among other. This was clearly noted during the pandemic with the closure of museums.

Mr. President,
Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response is important, and Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change and Youth Empowerment through Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage in Caribbean SIDS is a sine qua non! We are therefore also pleased to form part of this project as we recognize that heritage and particular world Heritage properties are exposed to the impacts of natural hazards, which threaten their integrity.

Our term representing the Caribbean in the Steering Committee Education 2030-SDG4 is coming to an end and it was an honour for our country to have participated in this. Thank you and the confidence given in us as Associate Member.

I restate that SIDS continues to need adequate support for building the resilience of the effects of Climate Change in our region and also count on UNESCO's support in the digitization process started in Curaçao.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of Curaçao I congratulate UNESCO for 75 years of existence. May this great organisation continue building peace in the minds of men and women for many more years.

Masha danki and Thank you !