

**41<sup>st</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO**

POLICY STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY DR. YAW OSEI ADUTWUM (MP), MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, DURING THE POLICY DEBATE SEGMENT.

PARIS, THURSDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021 (MORNING)

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

I am happy to be here this morning to address the 41<sup>st</sup> General Conference of UNESCO. The Ghana delegation joins previous speakers to congratulate you on your election as President of the 41<sup>st</sup> General Conference of UNESCO. We assure you of Ghana’s support and wish you a successful tenure of office.

Excellencies, as we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our dear organization, Ghana applauds UNESCO for the dividends that have accrued to the peoples of the world through its foresight and watchdog functions. UNESCO’s international platform for promoting free and open debate in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information have contributed

immensely in addressing many of the challenges that have confronted our world in the last 75 years.

Mr. President, Ghana has progressively improved access to education at the pre-tertiary level, while keeping a keen eye on education quality. We believe that effective policy planning, management, and monitoring contributes to ensure the quality of education. We are also improving teacher quality and creating interventions that prevents teacher attrition at all levels. Indeed, Ghana's Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030) aims to improve access and quality of education as well as adult literacy, which rate currently stands at 80%. Additionally, we have reviewed our pre-tertiary curricula and are committed to implementing Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) models to harness the potential of the top 10% gifted and talented learners to spur up our socio-economic transformation.

Ghana appreciates UNESCO's determination to assist Africa in developing green skills and green economies, as well as promoting inclusion, self-sufficiency, and lifelong learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to equip learners, particularly the most vulnerable, with the necessary skills and competencies that meet the demands of the job market. In addition, our emphasis on Literacy, TVET, STEM and skilled-based higher education have become increasingly crucial in equipping learners with relevant skills for the world of work. It is worth noting that Ghana's TVET management has been restructured to bring all TVET related institutions from the other Ministries under the Ministry of Education. As part of the

process a new Agency, TVET Service, has been created to lead the implementation of TVET Education in Ghana to ensure curriculum harmonization, standardization, and policy coherence in the TVET space.

We have incorporated STEM into our pre-tertiary curricula to promote learners' interests and participation in STEM subjects and careers. Currently, we are far advanced to construct eleven STEM high schools and twenty (20) STEM centers across the country to advance STEM education delivery. We are committed in our belief that emphasis on STEM courses in our pre-tertiary institutions will equip learners to seamlessly transition into STEM related Tertiary Education to produce a critical mass of assertive and empowered Ghanaians for socio-economic transformation.

Our collective commitment to protect nature has become more important than ever before. Biosphere reserves have proven to be charting clear pathways toward biodiversity and nature conservation, thanks to Member States who continue to designate biosphere reserves to demonstrate their commitments to conservation and sustainable development.

Our experience over the past 50 years on the Man and Biosphere Program have demonstrated that biosphere reserves function as sustainable models for living in harmony with nature. UNESCO currently boasts of 727 network of biosphere reserves in 131 countries covering more than 5% of the earth's surface. With this achievement, there is no doubt that biosphere reserves

will significantly contribute to reach the 30% target of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework by 2030. It is in this light that we call on the international community to formally recognize the contribution of biosphere reserves in the negotiations of the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

The Director-General's astute leadership role to address contemporary challenges through the Slave Route Project: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage is commendable. As we all know, the Trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved people constitute an important landmark in the history of the World. We believe the time has come for UNESCO to repackage this part of world history for our common good -: to promote heritage tourism particularly for the millions of people of African descent, to renew their spiritual connections with their motherland and boost economic development in Africa.

We further urge UNESCO to use the Slave Route Project to assist African Member States to consciously integrate the General History of Africa (GHA) into the curriculum of academic institutions. Indeed, the pedagogical use of the General History of Africa will inform critical thinking, evaluation, and analysis of the re-emergence of the African civilization.

With more than 600 radio stations, 200 television channels, countless news portals and newspapers, freedom of expression remains the bedrock of Ghana's peace and aspirations towards sustainable development.

To guarantee citizens access to information, Ghana passed the Right To Information (RTI) law in 2019. Within two years, we have established the Right to Information Commission with more than 1000 employees across the country. Additionally, more than 400 duty bearing institutions have been trained in simplified procedures to respond to information requests from citizens.

In the area of journalists' safety and the fight against impunity, Ghana has established a multi-stakeholder Coordinated Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists under the independent National Media Commission. The framework brings together Journalists, security agencies, prosecutors, legal experts, and civil society partners to cooperate and protect journalists. A dedicated secretariat with a specialized safety tracking software has been set up to train journalists and how to investigate and pursue sanctions against those who perpetrate offences against journalists. Additionally, Ghana has mainstreamed safety of journalists into communications policies under the National Communications Authority to protect journalists from attacks, harassment, and intimidation in news houses

Experiences from the Covid 19 pandemic has taught us the need for international collaboration to address disinformation, fake news and hate speech to secure the fidelity of our information ecosystem.

In the light of the above, Ghana reiterates its supports for the programs outlined by UNESCO under Major Program V of the Draft Program and Budget (2022-2025).

Finally, Mr. President, Ghana is proposing at this session a new Category II Centre in Engineering Innovations, Manufacturing and Technology Transfer at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. This is contained in Item 5.4 of the agenda. We call on all Member States to support this initiative.

Thank You.