

**Recorded Video Message from Hon'ble EM for the General Policy Debate in the
UNESCO General Conference**

Madam Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, UNESCO

Distinguished Representatives

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman

It is a great honour for me to address the 41st session of UNESCO's General Conference. On behalf of the people of India, I take this opportunity to congratulate the UNESCO family on completing 75 remarkable years of partnering development across the world.

As a founding member of UNESCO, India has had a deep and productive engagement with this multilateral platform that is defined by a common commitment for peace, solidarity and attainment of the SDG goals.

The year is also significant for India as we celebrate ***Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*** to commemorate 75 years of our country's independence. The event is an embodiment of the progressive spirit of India, a celebration of our glorious history and an articulation of our ideas and resolve for an ***Atmanirbhar Bharat*** or a self-reliant India.

Excellencies, while the Covid-19 pandemic has brought untold misery to the world, we must respectfully acknowledge the indomitable spirit of people and Governments across the globe to stand steady and fight unitedly against its onslaught. The world has rapidly devised and adjusted to new, technologically and digitally-driven normals .

India carried out the world's largest and fastest vaccination drive under the able guidance of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Two Made in India vaccines were rolled out in just 11 months of first infection. 1 billion vaccinations have been administered in just 9 months. More than 60 million vaccines have been provided to 95 countries under our Vaccine Maitri or Vaccine Friendship initiative.

Excellencies, India has actively promoted the use of technological and digital solutions in areas concerned with achievement of the SDG goals, especially for delivery of education.

e-learning is being facilitated through platforms like **DIKSHA or Digital Infrastructure for School Education** which has a storehouse of 3,500+ energized textbooks and over 60 million

page hits daily; **SWAYAM MOOCS** portal with enrolment of over 22 million ; **National Digital Library**, which has more than 38 million digital resources and more than 5.2 million students registered, **virtual labs**, **e-PG Pathshala** and several others.

The **PE eVidya** programme is providing multi modal delivery of education through online, TV, Radio, and mobile modes. For areas with limited access to online modes, TV channels- **SWAYAM PRABHA**, and **radio**, including Community Radio. The PM eVidya programme is benefitting nearly 250 million school children .

Specialized study material is being provided for the differently-abled students through Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language. Manodarpan initiative provides psychological support to students, teachers and families .

India is also working to eliminate the digital divide by strengthening digital infrastructure and enhancing access to digital devices.

Excellencies, I am happy to share that several initiatives have already been implemented under our National Education Policy (NEP) announced in 2020 that will accelerate the attainment of the SDG goals by enhancing access to education, and improving quality of teaching-learning. Some of these initiatives include National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy, sign language as a regular subject, teaching engineering in Indian languages, formation of an Academic Bank of Credit, stress on vocational education and skilling, multiple entry-exit options, forming a National Education Technology Forum and emphasis on the internationalization of education.

Gender equity and empowerment has always been a major priority for India. The government provides support for this through various schemes. I am happy to share that the Gender Parity Index for women in higher education is more than one now and the Gross Enrolment Ratio is also rising consistently.

Excellencies, I take this opportunity to thank UNESCO member states for their support for the inscriptions of the Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple in Telangana and Harappan city Dholavira in Gujarat on the UNESCO World Heritage List. India reaffirms its commitment for preserving cultural heritage across the world.

Excellencies, India has a vibrant science and technology research ecosystem. Today, we need policies and regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence which

have the potential to positively impact lives across the world. We are also committed to continue our engagement with UNESCO in areas like Oceanography.

Excellencies, I take this opportunity to reiterate that India values the association with UNESCO in all its core working areas of Education, Culture, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Communication. I reaffirm my country's commitment to continued association with UNESCO and look forward to working together in a mutually enriching and synergetic partnership to further our shared objective for peace, harmony, equity and unity.

Thank you.