



Republic of Namibia

**NATIONAL STATEMENT BY
THE HON. MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND
INNOVATION
DR ITAH KANDJII-MURANGI,
AT THE 41ST SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE**

12 NOVEMBER 2021

**Mr President of the 41ST Session of the General Conference,
Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO,
Excellencies,
Esteemed Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Your Excellency, Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourao, Namibia congratulates you on your election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference and give you the assurance of Namibia's support.

Namibia wishes to thank the outgoing President of the 40th session of the General Conference, Ambassador Ahmed Altay Cengizer, for the excellent manner in which he steered the work of the 40th session of the General Conference.

My country further congratulates you, Ms Audrey Azoulay, on your re-election as the Director-General for the next four years.

Today marks 75 years of UNESCO's demonstrable global significance as the torch-bearer of knowledge in the UN system in all its fields of competence.

Namibia applauds UNESCO's resilience revealed through the uninterrupted continuation of its governance and programme implementation during the COVID pandemic. We commend the Director-General, Madam Azoulay, and the entire UNESCO Secretariat for their dedication and relentless services.

At the core of the 41st session of the General Conference is the adoption of the important strategic documents that define UNESCO's trajectory for the next 8 years namely the Draft Medium Term Strategy for 2022 to 2029, as well as the 4 years Programme and Budget for 2022 to 2025.

UNESCO has a wealth of experience and multilateral support to successfully implement the identified priority areas and to effectively address emerging challenges.

The renewed impetus on positioning Global Priority Africa is most welcome as well as the ensuing Draft Operational Strategy on Global Priority Africa with its five Flagship Programmes.

Namibia appreciates the collaboration and support offered by UNESCO towards the successful hosting of the 2021 World Press Freedom Conference, which led to the adoption of the Windhoek +30 Declaration.

Through the Windhoek +30 Declaration Namibia renews her commitment to freedom of expression, press freedom and will ensure that reliable information remains a public good.

Furthermore, Namibia commends UNESCO for the support in the hosting of the Africa ICT Ministers' Forum.

Mr President, strategic development imperatives for Namibia are the following: Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), and water management. In this regard, Namibia launched the TVET Policy in order to transform TVET to become a vehicle for inclusive sustained economic growth and youth employment.

Namibia has revised the national Science, Technology and Innovation Policy that aims at strengthening dynamic and strong strategic partnerships for inclusive technological and sustainable development. A process that benefitted immensely from UNESCO's technical assistance.

Namibia has prioritized the promotion of STEM-related fields at tertiary level, particularly for the girl-child. In this regard, collaboration with UNESCO remains critical.

My country values the development of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and in this regard, Namibia will launch the National Policy on Indigenous Knowledge Systems in 2022. The focus is on recognizing the role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in transforming society into a Knowledge-based Economy.

The global COVID-19 health crisis has proven worldwide the urgency of, and need for, fostering equitable access to scientific information, facilitating the sharing of scientific knowledge, data and information, enhancing scientific collaboration and science- and knowledge-based decision making, to respond to global emergencies and increase the resilience of societies.

Namibia supports the adoption of the normative instrument on Open Science, and applauds UNESCO for shaping scientific knowledge and cooperation through the Draft Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers.

In cognizance of the rapidly changing digital technologies and their impact on the development of society, Namibia recognises the importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and commends UNESCO for the development of a comprehensive global standard-setting instrument to

provide AI with a strong ethical basis that will not only protect, but also promote human rights and human dignity.

To position our country for the futures of learning and teaching, His Excellency, Dr Hage Geingob, the President of the Republic of Namibia, established Namibia's Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Task Force on 1 July 2021, to conduct a country assessment on the readiness of Namibia for the 4IR. A body of experts that is expected to connect, compare, learn from, and link our country's strides in the areas of innovation and technology, to the world's best.

Namibia remains committed to driving TVET, STI and AI, through self-benefitting funds, and in this regard, calls on UNESCO to provide technical support.

As I conclude, I wish to announce that Namibia, in collaboration with UNESCO, will host the UNESCO- Southern Africa Sub-regional Forum on AI in Windhoek in 2022. I therefore extend an invitation to Member States to attend.

I thank you for your attention.