

**ZIMBABWE STATEMENT DELIVERED TO THE 41<sup>ST</sup> UNESCO  
GENERAL CONFERENCE BY PROFESSOR dr. AMON  
MURWIRA, MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, INNOVATION,  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT ON 12  
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President of the General Conference,  
Chairman of the Executive Board,  
Madam Director General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me commence my delegation's statement by congratulating you Mr. President on your election as President of the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference. My delegation also extends its congratulations to Madam Audrey Azoulay on her appointment as Director General for a second term.

Exactly two years ago we assembled here to adopt the Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 (40 C/5) with the hope that we would accelerate our efforts towards attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG4. However, a month after the Conference we found ourselves confronted by the threat of Covid -19, forcing us to divert much of our attention and resources to fighting the virus. This posed as a threat to the gains we had made in the education of our youths, girls and women.

Madam Director General, we salute you and all your staff for your efforts and timely interventions, particularly at the onset of the pandemic, which saw UNESCO playing a central role in mobilizing global partners and doing its best to manage a potential generational catastrophe in education and ensuring that no one was left behind. The pandemic exposed the inequalities in our education systems. It also further increased the visibility of the digital divide and gender inequalities making it imperative and urgent for us to address them.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** the challenges we are facing now are global, hence they require global solutions. More than ever before, the call for the world to work together is getting louder and louder. Global cooperation is no longer an option but an imperative. From the lessons learnt so far from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that we cannot return to the world as it was before. Clearly, a new chapter has been ushered in for education and my delegation would like to express its shared commitment to the continual development of education, science, culture and information as common goods of humanity.

My Delegation takes great interest in the report on the Futures of Education which was launched during this 41<sup>st</sup> session of the General Conference. As the title of the report suggests “Re-imagining our Futures Together: a new social contract for education”, we now need to be more imaginative and invest in the futures.

The new Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2029) presents us an opportunity to align our strategies and mechanisms with the demands of the new normal that we are operating in. My Delegation gives high priority to digital connectivity for education to facilitate education for girls and women and the marginalised groups in our society.

My Delegation is pleased that despite the pandemic, UNESCO was able to come up with two important Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and on Open Science which are very relevant to us as we are charting a new course which is dependant of scientific and technological applications.

**Mr. President,** in line with the aspirations of our National Development Strategy (NDS1), which aims to transform Zimbabwe into a middle-income economy by 2030, the Government of Zimbabwe has recognised the merit of embracing Science, Innovation and Technology anchored on our heritage- based Education 5.0 to drive all development in the country. Heritage-based Education 5.0 is an initiative and philosophy that spans teaching, research, innovation and Industrialisation in service of

our communities. In this regard we are putting greater emphasis on science technology and innovation to drive our national education and development agenda as we aspire to modernise and industrialize Zimbabwe by 2030. On its part, Government has facilitated the setting up of innovation hubs and industrial parks across our institutions of higher learning. Innovation hubs in the higher education sector help to stimulate creativity and we are honoured to share with you that these initiatives are beginning to bear fruits, which we are proud of.

**Mr. President, Madame Director General**

As we adopt the wide use of technologies and artificial intelligence, we should bear in mind that these technologies have to move hand in hand with the training of teachers. My delegation therefore calls for greater capacitation of teachers to enable them to acquire the tools and skills for effective use towards the continuation of education at all times. Zimbabwe looks forward to the greater use of technologies in other sectors. For instance in creative arts the project, ResiliArt, on building resilient cultural and creative industries with the participation of women and the youth has been a resounding success and needs to be expanded and strengthened. Furthermore, Zimbabwe is committed to implementing the UNESCO conventions in all the sectors.

In the spirit of multilateralism and international co-operation the Government of Zimbabwe is ready and open for partnerships at bilateral, multilateral, North-South, South-South and other levels that will contribute to the positive transformation of education, science, culture and communication and information sectors in the country.

**Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Going forward, we can no longer continue to do business as usual, both at the global and national level. In this respect, the Government of Zimbabwe will increase its support to the multisectoral regional office in Harare to ensure increased cooperation for the benefit of the country and the greater sub-region.

With regards to, Global Priority Africa, my delegation appreciates the support that UNESCO continues to accord to the region and we welcome the new Operational Strategy and the mechanism for monitoring its implementation over the next 8 years. We hope that with the support of UNESCO and its various partners we will soon arrive at ***'the Africa We Want'*** in line with the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

**Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen**

We want to end our statement by thanking Director General for the impressive manner in which she executed her responsibilities on behalf of Member States during her first term of tenure. We want to reiterate our congratulations to Madam Azoulay on her reappointment as Director General. We also want to extend our delegation's gratitude to the Chairperson of the Executive Board, Mr. Agapito Mokuy Mba who together with the Director General ensured that UNESCO's work continued during the most difficult unprecedented time in the history of our Organisation.

I thank you.