

# **Speech for UNESCO General Conference, 15 November 2021**

**Chairperson of the General Conference**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**Honourable Ministers**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Good Morning

First of all, I would like to express the apologies of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the Republic of Mauritius, Honourable Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, for not being able to attend this general Conference, and I have been asked to intervene on her behalf.

I would also like to express my sincere congratulations to the Chairperson for his election and to the Director-General for her re-election.

Concerning the education sector during the pandemic, Mauritius has adopted a blended mode.

Tremendous work and effort have been put in during the unprecedented school closure we have witnessed in Mauritius.

Teaching and Learning has also been carried out virtually, whether online or through video broadcasts on national television.

It must be admitted that the pandemic has left - and, in many cases, continues to leave - the global education community with uncertainties as to the continuity in and of learning. Yet, our endeavour to keep learners connected during the lockdown phase due to the pandemic is in itself a tremendous feat.

Education is the bedrock of a just, equal, inclusive and peaceful society. The massive efforts made in a short time to respond to the disruption caused by Covid-19 to the education system are testimony to the resilience of our education community, to its unwavering dedication to the children of this country and to its steadfast engagement to the sector.

Concerning Climate Change and Small Island Developing States, I must say that UNESCO has been among the pioneers in the UN system supporting SIDS in their efforts to achieve sustainable development and carrying their challenges to the forefront of the global agenda.

The long-term SIDS Action Plan (2016-2021), unanimously adopted by its Member States during the Organization's Executive Board in April 2016, benefits from an inter-sectoral engagement across all of UNESCO's programmes, and its implementation mobilizes networks of sites and a wide range of partners and stakeholders in SIDS and other countries worldwide, including inter-regional, inter-institutional and inter-agency collaboration.

I would finally also like to point out that our Hon. Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth intervened during the World Leaders Summit on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 and during the Launching of Resilient Island States(IRIS), on the margins of COP26, on 2nd November 2021, in Glasgow where he stressed upon the need to limit the rising global temperature by 1.5°Celsius is no longer a desirable objective but a critical imperative if we want to avoid a major catastrophe.

For small island countries like Mauritius, global warming and rising sea levels represent an existential challenge which will cause tremendous damage and lead to massive displacement of people especially from low lying islands.

The Prime Minister, on behalf of Mauritius, made commitments to take action that will contribute to the following:

1. Reducing gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2030
2. Achieving 60 per cent of green energy in our energy mix by 2030
3. Phasing out coal in electricity generation before 2030
4. Promoting a circular economy involving 70 per cent of waste from landfills by 2030
5. Encouraging the use of electric vehicles and
6. Promoting smart agriculture and island wide tree planting programs.

He also added that SIDS remain in the top list of the current World Risk Report 2021 of countries with high-risk indices.

Our island is negatively impacted by the effects of climate change. Extreme weather events occur frequently. Flash floods have resulted in loss of life and caused serious damage to infrastructure. To build resilience, the Government of Mauritius has invested massively in adaptation programs.

A National Flood Management Program, costing Rs 11.7 billion will be implemented.

The National Action Plan of Mauritius for the decade 2020-2030 embodies the commitments of Mauritius to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports the implementation of international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway.

Thank you for your attention