

Sixth plenary meeting of the 41st session of the General Conference

Thursday 11 November 2021 at 3.10 p.m.

President: **Mr Irazabal Mourão** (Brazil)

Visit of Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

1.1 **The President:**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I declare open the sixth plenary meeting of the General Conference. Distinguished delegates, it is my honour and special privilege to welcome Her Excellency Madam Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh. It would be difficult to enumerate the great number of accomplishments of Her Excellency the Prime Minister throughout her career in constantly striving for peace and development.

1.2 Allow me to recall that Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina was awarded the 1998 UNESCO Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize for her remarkable contribution to bringing peace through ending the 25-year conflict in Chittagong Hill Tracts with political courage and statecraft. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh throughout her life has been a strong proponent of peace, freedom and democracy. Along with poverty eradication, she has focused on the empowerment of women and has successfully completed legislation to ensure adequate representation of women in local government bodies. She has taken major initiatives to stop violence against women and children.

1.3 Prime Minister Hasina has been a strong advocate for the culture of peace at global, regional and national levels leading to the first-ever resolution by the plenary of the United Nations General Assembly on the culture of peace. She has also provided leadership in the field of education, particularly for the education of girls in her own country as well as advocating it for global support. Her government has greatly enhanced budgetary allocation for primary education focusing on girls' education. Her Excellence will also be presenting the first UNESCO Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize for the Creative Economy this evening in this very room. Your Excellency, we are truly honoured by your visit, especially in this year of Bangladesh's golden jubilee of independence. We are looking forward to your words of wisdom. The floor is yours Excellency.

2.1 **Sheikh Hasina** (Prime Minister of Bangladesh):

Bismillāh ir-rahmān ir-rahīm (In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, *as-salamu alaykum* (peace be upon you) and a very good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to address the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. I congratulate Madam Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on her re-election. We are thankful to UNESCO for launching the UNESCO-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize for the Creative Economy, the first-of-its-kind award by UNESCO and in the world in this sector. We are also thankful to UNESCO for celebrating the birth centenary of our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. UNESCO has been a true friend of Bangladesh. Our Martyrs' Day, 21 February, marking the great sacrifice for establishing Bangla as the State language, was recognized as the International Mother Language Day. We are also grateful for inscribing the historic 7 March speech of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in UNESCO's Memory of the World register.

2.2 Mr President, the preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO states, and I quote, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". This captures the values that Bangladesh upholds. Our father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, embodies the ethos of peace, harmony and social coherence. In his maiden speech in 1974 during the 29th session of the United National General Assembly, he declared, and I quote: "Peace is an imperative for the survival of humanity. It represents the deepest aspirations of men and women throughout the world". This has been our guiding principle of our peace-centric foreign policy. We are one of the largest troops-and police-contributing countries in United Nations' peace-keeping operations. Globally we promote the concept of a culture of peace, a concept which anchors on the values of tolerance, respect and compassion.

2.3 Mr President, education is a basic human right. It is the most important foundation of the development of human society. Therefore, in Bangladesh we have a targeted approach on education with concrete policy interventions. We have made significant progress in the enrolment of primary education, gender parity in primary and secondary education and girls' education. Likewise, we have modernized faith-based education by addressing practical needs for a future working world. We are providing mother language-based education for citizens of ethnic groups. Around 83,000 schools in the country have been provided ICT devices. About 327,000 teachers have been given training. We have been distributing free textbooks to all students up to secondary level since 2010. This year, we distributed about 400 million free textbooks to our students. Teachers have been vaccinated on a priority basis as we have opened our schools after an improvement in the COVID-19 situation in Bangladesh. We are vaccinating students from 12 years-of-age on a priority basis.

2.4 Mr President, the pandemic has undermined our hard-earned achievements. It has revealed a major fault line in our education system. According to UNESCO, close to half of world's students are affected by partial or full school closure. Online education evolved as a new normal during the pandemic, yet it has also exposed a new divide. Advanced countries could swiftly move to online platforms but developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) were pushed further behind due to lack of resources and technologies. This has jeopardized our decades of gains in school enrolment, literacy rates and youth and-adult learning. I call upon this august body to declare remote learning and online education as a global public good. I also call upon UNESCO to work as a matter of priority with governments, the private sector and other stakeholders to rally partnerships and resources to make this happen. While digitalization has enhanced better services and the free flow of information, we are worried by the misuse of digital tools and platforms for spreading harmful content. This has a significantly negative impact on the peace and stability of society. All bodies such as UNESCO should work to address this issue.

2.5 Mr President, climate change is a life-threatening reality not only for Bangladesh but also for many other countries of the world. As a leading voice for climate-vulnerable countries, we have embarked on ambitious climate commitments. In all of the development projects that we are preparing and implementing, we always take care of vulnerability to climate change. Our country will always be very cautious about preparing our development projects so that our environment should be preserved. In that way, we have been trying our best to keep our country from any kind of disaster, but our country is prone to disasters, but we know how to manage it. We have taken many steps and our management is really very fruitful. We ask UNESCO to put greater emphasis on climate education and to support Member States to provide technical assistance and to raise greater awareness of climate challenges.

2.6 Mr President, the faster pace of global warming has affected our ocean environment. This calls for urgent scientific research and knowledge. As a coastal and frontline county within the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) we have initiated measures for nature-based solutions. We would like to see a stronger presence of IOC in our region. The success of UNESCO largely depends on its impact in improving the lives of our peoples, as we are passing through a difficult time. The need for a strong, dynamic, innovative multilateral Organization is felt more than ever before. Bangladesh is ready to work closely with UNESCO in its endeavour to construct the defences of peace. I thank you all and thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

General policy debate (*continued*)

3. The President:

Thank you very much for your inspiring words, Your Excellency. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain seated while Her Excellency is escorted from the room. Now dear colleagues, we will proceed. I call on His Excellency, Mr Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

4.1 Mr Mirzoyan (Armenia):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I should like, first of all, to congratulate His Excellency Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourão on his election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference and to extend my wishes of success in his mandate. I should also like to congratulate Madam Audrey Azoulay for being reelected as Director-General of UNESCO for a second term. We also thank all the Member States for supporting Armenia's candidature as one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Conference.

4.2 The extraordinary challenges that the world faces today, from armed conflicts to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of climate change, emphasize the importance of expanding cooperation in the fields of education, sciences, culture, communication and information. Therefore, today as we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of UNESCO, we reiterate our commitment to the values of UNESCO and support its strategic transformation process.

4.3 In 2022, Armenia will mark the 30th anniversary of its UNESCO membership, during which Armenia has been and continues to be firmly committed to UNESCO's mandate to advance universal values and fulfil our common goals, including those defined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That is why we have decided to stand for the Executive Board of UNESCO by submitting our candidacy for the 2021-2025 term.

4.4 Armenia is committed to promoting a future of education based on the principle of equal opportunities for all. We think that global citizenship education is an important tool to respond to global challenges. We also believe that education and awareness-raising are vital for advancing the prevention of hate speech and identity-based discrimination. This is also one of the main ideas behind establishing the UNESCO Chair on Education and Prevention of Genocide and other Atrocity Crimes in 2020 in Yerevan State University.

4.5 Armenia strongly supports UNESCO's actions for Global Priority Africa and small island developing States (SIDS). These actions should be further reinforced with special attention to the fields of education and culture. Armenia supports UNESCO's efforts to safeguard cultural heritage in conflict zones and condemns the attacks on cultural symbols because of their diverse origin or identity.

4.6 Ladies and gentlemen, during the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh and its people last autumn, the armed forces of Azerbaijan have been deliberately targeting civilian infrastructures, including schools, kindergartens, as well as the Armenian cultural and religious heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result, more than 22,000 children of Nagorno-Karabakh have been deprived of their right to education. Also, it has been almost a year since Armenia alerted the Director-General and the Member States of UNESCO on the severe threats to the Armenian cultural property located in the territories fallen under the control of Azerbaijan.

4.7 We are grateful to Madam Audrey Azoulay for her efforts to send an independent technical mission in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in line with the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan continues to block the implementation of this mission. This obstructive attitude makes us fear the worst for the state of the Armenian cultural heritage under Azerbaijani controlled territories. Both during the military hostilities and after the establishment of the ceasefire, there have been numerous documented cases of deliberate destruction and acts of vandalism by the Azerbaijani armed forces against Armenian cultural and religious heritage, and the most notorious example is the double precise drone strikes on the Holy Saviour Ghazanchetsots Cathedral of Shushi on 8 October last year.

4.8 Along with the physical destruction of Nagorno-Karabakh's religious and cultural heritage, we witness unacceptable cases of distortion of the identity and changing of the architectural appearance of the Armenian cultural and religious heritage in the territories controlled by Azerbaijan, with more than 1,500 cultural properties and 19,000 museum exhibits. It is crucial to spearhead international efforts and act appropriately to prevent Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh sharing the tragic fate of 28,000 annihilated properties of the Armenian cultural heritage of Nakhijevan.

4.9 Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, mutual respect, and dialogue between cultures as an essential tool for bringing people together and promoting peaceful co-existence. It will enable us to achieve all of the Organization's priorities. Thank you.

5. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your words, Your Excellency. I call now His Excellency, Mr John Chrysostom Musingo, Minister of State of Higher Education of Uganda. We will watch a pre-recorded video. You have the floor Excellency.

6.1 **Mr Chrysostom (Uganda):**

Honourable Musingo John Chrysostom is my name, I am Minister of State for Education representing the Minister of Education in the Republic of Uganda. Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General of UNESCO, your Excellencies, ministers, ambassadors, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. Mr President, my delegation congratulates you upon your election to chair the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference. My delegation wishes you well in this important assignment.

6.2 Mr President, Uganda is committed to the achievement of all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and this commitment is manifested in our zeal to advance the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Goals through supporting the implementation of the ESD 2030 framework. As a country, we have mainstreamed ESD into the National Development Plan III and the Education Sector Strategic Plan. We have also put in place our own ESD 2030 national framework because we recognize that all the SDGs are hinged on the ideologies of Education for Sustainable Development.

6.3 Like many countries, Uganda has not been spared by the devastating effects of the coronavirus for close to two years now. Learning at all levels has been affected with close to 15 million learners out of school. The ripple effects of this pandemic are only starting to show and they include increased teenage pregnancies and early marriages. Tourism, performing arts and other programmes have been slowed down due to the pandemic. Our Government is now focusing on prioritizing key stakeholder's engagement to build trust, shape perceptions of risk, and improve responses to government policies in preparation for the reopening of schools early next year. This will entail adopting flexible and blended learning and delivery approaches that will support inclusive education at all levels.

6.4 Mr President, my delegation appreciates UNESCO's support towards the continuity of learning through the refurbishment of the ICT infrastructure of three teacher training institutions (TTIs) to support online teacher training, and building the capacity of 130 teachers from 23 teacher training institutions on the use of the teacher educator e-learning system to provide remote assistance and electronic assessments of students learning from home. In line with UNESCO's biannual Expected Result 5, UNESCO has supported Uganda to develop and implement the national teacher policy and strategies which have set the platform and context for sharing of knowledge and enhanced donor coordination. This will improve learning through a motivated and skilled teaching workforce, and consequently lead to the realization of SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda.

6.5 Uganda has been supported to implement the STEM programme for girls and women through mentorship of secondary school science teachers in the best approaches for teaching science subjects. In fulfilment of UNESCO's Priority Gender Equality, SDG 5 and our national gender policy, Uganda is implementing a participation programme in Uganda focused on the promotion of gender-responsive conservation and empowerment of women in the two biosphere reserves in the country, namely Mount Elgon and Queen Elizabeth National Park.

6.6 Uganda appreciates UNESCO's support to peace-building that has led to an initiative to consolidate peace-building amongst the post-war communities of northern Uganda. The national committee of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme has been tasked to undertake the preparation of a regional policy paper on the participation of youth in the affairs of Member States under the theme "Youth, Peace and Security".

6.7 Mr President, in the area of culture, Uganda has ratified three out of the six conventions. Uganda appreciates UNESCO's support towards revitalizing intangible cultural heritage elements listed on the Urgent Safeguarding List and introducing ICH in undergraduate academic programmes in universities. Uganda is currently engaged in capacity building for local government authorities to mainstream the culture function in their development plans in addition to strengthening the film sector. We affirm commitment to the continued conservation and safeguarding of heritage in all its manifestations as we work towards the completion of the restoration of the Tombs of the Buganda Kings at Kasubi to ensure its removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger by the end of 2023.

6.8 Information and communication are central in building knowledge societies. In view of this, Uganda has promoted access to information through community multimedia centres and advocated for the safety of journalists, particularly safety of female journalists basing on the United Nations plan of action.

6.9 Mr President, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to conclude by thanking the Director-General for her oversight role and the management of the Organization through innovative means during the global pandemic and for supporting Uganda in all UNESCO's fields of competence for the enhancement of sustainable development. I wish her a very successful second term in office. For God and my country.

7. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your words, Your Excellency. I call now His Excellency, Mr Darem Tabbaa, Minister of Education of the Syrian Arab Republic. You have the floor Excellency.

١-٨ السيد طبايع (الجمهورية العربية السورية):

السيد رئيس المؤتمر العام، السيدة المدير العام لليونسكو، السيد رئيس المجلس التنفيذي، أصحاب المعالي السادة رؤساء وأعضاء الوفود المشاركة، يسرني والوفد السوري المرافق المشاركة في أعمال المؤتمر العام لليونسكو في دورته الحادية والأربعين تأكيداً من حكومتنا لاهتمامها البالغ بالتربية والعلوم والثقافة، وبارك لمعالي المدير العام لليونسكو، السيدة أودري أزولاي، تجديد انتخابها لأربع سنوات على رأس المنظمة، ومقدرين التعاون الوثيق مع اليونسكو لتحقيق الخطط المرجحة. كما نشكر للسيد رئيس المؤتمر العام ورئيس المجلس التنفيذي جهودهما الحثيثة معنا خلال السنتين الماضيتين.

٢-٨ السيدات والسادة، لقد أصبح من الواضح اليوم أن سورية تعرضت لأشرف حرب مرت في التاريخ الحديث، حرب بين الجهل والعلم، وحرب بين النوايا الخبيثة والنوايا الطيبة، وحرب بين شعوب بسيطة تعيش بسلام، وقوى إرهابية تستبجح كل شيء لتحقيق أهدافها العدوانية. ومن هنا، كان دور التربية والثقافة واضحاً تماماً في الحفاظ على سلامة الدولة واستمراريتها، رغم محاولات عدة من القوى العالمية لتفتيت البنى الوطنية في المنطقة العربية، وبناء كاتونات طائفية كرهية متفرقة لا تؤمن بالآخر وتعيش في عوالم الظلمات. ولقد عملت حكومة الجمهورية العربية السورية بكل السبل القانونية المتاحة للوصول إلى مستقبل أفضل للإنسانية. فكان التركيز واضحاً وجلياً على تعزيز بناء الإنسان وتعميق وعيه وقيمه ضماناً للأجيال القادمة. وهنا، أذكر ما أكدته السيد الرئيس بشار الأسد، رئيس الجمهورية العربية السورية، في خطاب القسم الأخير في ١٧ تموز/يوليو ٢٠٢١، عندما قال بأن استقرار المجتمع هو أولى المسلمات، وكل ما يمس أمنه وأمانه مرفوض بشكل مطلق، قائلاً إن السبب الأهم للنزاع السوري هو غياب القيم، محذراً من أن أي مجتمع لا يكرس القيم ويحترمها لا يمكن أن يكون مجتمعاً مستقراً ومزدهراً.

٣-٨ واستطاعت حكومتنا في الجمهورية العربية السورية وضع استراتيجيات وطنية لمواجهة التحديات الضخمة التي واجهت التعليم والثقافة الوطنية من حروب وإرهاب وانتشار لوباء الكورونا، واستمرت في تطوير العملية التعليمية وتحسينها وحماية تراثنا الثقافي المادي واللامادي الذي هو تراث البشرية أجمع. كما أولت الاهتمام اللازم لبرامج التعليم الافتراضي الرقمي بالتوافق مع تطوير برامج الرعاية الصحية لمواجهة انتشار واثار فيروس كورونا. كما عملت على تدريب المعلمين وتأهيلهم للانتقال بهم من نظم التعلم التقليدية المعرفية القديمة إلى نظم التعلم الحديث الرباعي الأبعاد: تعلم لتعرف، وتعلم لتكون، وتعلم لتعيش مع الآخر، وتعلم لتعمل. وأولت التعليم الوجداني الاجتماعي والدعم النفسي والتربية الموسيقية والرياضة المدرسية والأنشطة والتعلم التعاوني أهمية خاصة. كما أنها أعطت التعليم المهني المرتبط بسوق العمل أيضاً هذه الأهمية، وخصصت جزءاً كبيراً من أنشطتها لدعم الأولمبيادات العالمية العلمية، وتنمية الطفولة المبكرة، إلى جانب تحسين البيئة التعليمية بترميم الأضرار التي لحقت بالمدارس والبنية التحتية نتيجة الإرهاب.

٤-٨ أصحاب المعالي، السادة رؤساء الوفود، رغم كل ما تعانته حكومتنا من ضغوط دولية لا مبرر لها سوى تخريب المنطقة والضغط على شعوبها، فإن حكومتنا تعمل جاهدة لتعزيز دور المنظمة وتحسينها في وجه الأزمات التزاماً منا بمبادئ العمل الأساسية لليونسكو، لذلك نعلن دعمنا للمبادرات الجديدة للمنظمة جميعها. كما نؤكد أيضاً موقفنا الدائم حول قرارات اليونسكو المتعلقة بالأراضي العربية المحتلة في فلسطين العربية المحتلة والجولان السوري المحتل، ونستنكر ممارسات سلطات الاحتلال الإسرائيلية واعتداءاتها المتكررة ضد أراضينا وأبناء شعبنا بهدف إرهابه وخلخلته بنية مؤسساته التعليمية والثقافية، وإلغاء دورها في حفظ للوطنيين الهوية الوطنية. ويمكنكم أن تصوروا جميعاً مشاعر أبنائنا وبناتنا تلاميذ المدارس وهم يرتجفون خوفاً من سماع دوي القصف الصاروخي الإسرائيلي المرعب الذي لا يزال يستهدف مناطق مختلفة من بلادي، كما نؤكد مساعي التراث العالمي والانتربول الدولي المشتركة لاستعادة القطع الأثرية التي سرقتها العصابات المسلحة ونقلتها إلى خارج البلاد. ونثني على الجهود التي تبذل للمحافظة على التراث الإنساني السوري المادي واللامادي.

٥-٨ وقدر سورية أن تكون عرضة للحروب عبر تاريخها الطويل، فهي الحارس الأمين للتراث الإنساني المادي والفكري. وقد تعودت أن تكون صامدة قوية منتصرة في وجه جميع الأعاصير، لأنها تقف دائماً إلى جانب الحق العادل لشعبها في تقرير مصيره دون أي تدخل أجنبي مخرب. وها هي بلادي تستعد لإطلاق مرحلة إعادة الإعمار وتتحضر لاستقبال العائدين من أبنائها المهجرين بسبب الحرب، وتضع الخطط اللازمة لضمان انحراطهم الفاعل في حياة المجتمع، أملين من منظمة اليونسكو مساندة جهودنا لبناء عالم أكثر إنسانية وعدلاً وأماناً، وشكراً لسماحكم.

9. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. I call now His Excellency, Honourable Mr Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, Minister of State for Education of Nigeria. You have the floor Excellency.

10.1 Mr Nwajiuba (Nigeria):

Good afternoon everybody. Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, honourable ministers and distinguished delegates, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, a warm welcome and greetings from the people and Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and our President Muhammadu Buhari. We congratulate our new President of the General Conference and the outgoing President, as well as the re-elected Director-General.

10.2 Your Excellencies, as we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant alterations to the way we conduct business, exposing our fragilities against uncertainties. Yet our responses have been a testimony to the human resilience to rise to these challenges, adapting and innovating to advance global governance. Nigeria therefore, commends UNESCO's efforts in addressing the effects of the pandemic and other developmental issues that have further been aggravated by the pandemic.

10.3 Much, however, remains to be done. For our part, Nigeria with a near 70% youth population, is braced to address the gaps evident in under-employment and unemployment, as well as other socioeconomic lapses by instituting sustainable programmes within UNESCO's mandate as follows.

10.4 In education, we note the increased availability of UNESCO's resources to the African region and decentralization as it affects the sector. As the only E9 country in sub-Saharan Africa, we will ensure full implementation of education-related policies, paying close attention to the performance indicators and outputs for results. We are reforming the teaching

profession by increasing the service years from 35 to 40 years, moving the retirement age from 60 to 65 years, as well as providing better remuneration to increase teachers' motivation. This is aimed to attract and retain the best hands in the sector. Nigeria recently hosted an international conference on the Safe School Declaration aimed at advancing the Safe School initiative to galvanize support and review progress in achieving the commitments to the Declaration.

10.5 Our Government is also sustaining the national homegrown school-feeding programmes, better education service delivery for all, and other programmes that target out-of-school children. We have adopted open, distant and flexible e-learning systems, STEM education, inclusive education for the challenged and the Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework.

10.6 On culture, our cultural policy is being reviewed to improve actions that align our policy with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. We are addressing the impact of climate change on cultural biodiversity and cultural heritage by integrating culture in the climate change agenda. Our interest in Lake Chad and request to UNESCO for the revitalization of the lake, for the common use of the Sahel regions, as well as the just-concluded UNESCO BIOPALT project, remains pertinent. Nigeria is nominating viable cities into the Creative Cities network. This agrees with UNESCO's programmes building on the mechanism of creative cities to promote inclusive and participatory urban development and local creative economies, targeting women and youth.

10.7 In the natural sciences, Nigeria appreciates UNESCO's partnership in establishing an eco-hydrology centre at the Jabi Lake in Abuja, the first of its kind in west Africa. When established, we count on your continued cooperation to make the project a reality. Efforts to address climate change adaptation and climate extremes informed our development of seasonal climate prediction, and annual flood outlook as early warning systems. At the just concluded COP 26 in Glasgow, Nigeria took further engagement to infuse climate change education in our school curriculum. We are working with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) to initiate the National Capacity Programme for Ocean Literacy. We have established national water resource capacity building study centres in the six geopolitical zones of the country to advance knowledge of integrated water resource management. Nigeria hosted the 33rd session of the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme last September. We appreciate the Director-General for personally participating and having a bilateral meeting with the President. We shall continue to support initiatives for the environment and count on UNESCO to sustain the trust fund for sustainable financing of the African Biosphere Reserves Network (AfriBioFund) and intensify action for a partnership with the African Development Bank.

10.8 Government policies and programmes to overcome poverty, literacy and ignorance are mostly targeted at improving the living conditions of the marginalized in society, and the Draft Programme and Budget for the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS) will no doubt complement this.

10.9 For the communications and information sector, Nigeria is developing a national digital economy. The Draft Programme and Budget (41 C/5) document before us and the Medium-Term Strategy are a comprehensive proposal developed out of an inclusive process, and thus Nigeria looks forward to their adoption. We appreciate efforts to reconceptualize Global Priority Africa and continue the efforts of the Secretariat to engage Member States in this regard.

10.10 In conclusion, Nigeria remains committed to UNESCO's programme and policies to achieve the SDGs and global agenda for sustainable development. The present reality is indeed a pointer to our vulnerability to unforeseen occurrences and the need to reinforce our belief in solidarity despite our differences. Truly, if we consider our differences as beautiful as the rainbow, then we can work together in harmony to save the present and future of our planet. This should start from our joint agreements at this UNESCO forum. I thank you all.

11. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. I call now Her Excellency, Dr Aishath Ali, Minister of Education of Maldives. You have the floor Excellency.

12.1 **Ms Ali (Maldives):**

Bismillāh ir-rahmān ir-rahīm (In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate). Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, *as-salāmu 'alaikum* and a very good afternoon. It is both an honour and a privilege for me to represent the beautiful islands of the Maldives at the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference. It is our pleasure to join Member States in welcoming and congratulating the new president of the General Conference. We wish you every success and assure you of our fullest cooperation. May I also take this opportunity to reiterate the deepest appreciation to the Director-General, Ms Audrey Azoulay, for her commitment to the goals of the Organization and her consistent support to the Member States. And congratulations Madam, for being re-elected for the post.

12.2 Mr President, the one-and-a-half years since January 2020 had been a transformational year for all the nations represented here, irrespective of their development state. The developed countries, as well as the developing ones, were confronted with an unprecedented emergency requiring school closures for extended periods. All the countries, big and small, were thrust upon uncharted territory. How were we going to continue to provide education in these times? To make matters worse, the pandemic engendered inflation and recession. The hardest hit were developing countries, especially small island developing countries like the Maldives. In the Maldives, we managed to ride the bumpy pandemic waves and continued student learning without jarring disruptions. We utilized television as the main medium to deliver lessons. The television programmes were complemented by online Internet-based interactions. We provided the students and teachers with free data packages to access the online classes. A rushed, ambitious programme was conducted to train all the teachers on online modes of teaching. However, the worst of the pandemic is thankfully behind us, and like the Maldives, most countries have returned to in-person schooling. I am proud to say that the Maldives was the first in our region to safely reopen all the schools. We have also completed the first dose of vaccination for 97.3% of students who are eligible for vaccination. Our focus now is on learning recovery and building a more resilient school system.

12.3 Mr President, in the recent past the Maldives has made important strides, especially in the primary and lower secondary levels of schooling. The result of policy initiatives over the last two decades have shown impressive achievements in terms of equity and access to public and free education from kindergarten to year 12. Since 2019, eligible students can do their bachelor degrees for free as well. We are happy to note that after 15 years in the making, the Maldivian Education Act has been implemented in August this year. Thus, there is now a legal framework that mandates us to provide access to free, equitable and quality education to all the children from ages four to 16 years.

12.4 Despite the positive indicators, our education sector faces serious challenges. These challenges became more pronounced with the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though we have seen a steady increase in the enrolment at the highest secondary level, the net enrolment rate has always been low. And now, there is a possibility of an increase in the dropout rates due to the economic impact of COVID-19. Our concern is the disparity in the quality of school education in different regions of the country. This gap became more distinct when teaching and learning shifted to online modes. With the period of extended school closures, we are very concerned with the losses in learning. We are concerned with the possibility of increased dropout rates. We are concerned with not being able to reach out to students who have special needs. We are concerned with at-risk students getting more and more vulnerable, and we are also concerned with not getting trained quality teachers. These concerns are further exacerbated by the unique challenges Maldives face as a country.

12.5 Mr President, to address the challenges I just mentioned, the Government has prioritized some key policy areas. These areas include ensuring equitable access from kindergarten through to grade 12, eliminating learning gaps and ensuring more effective schooling. Additionally, introducing vocational and technical education as part of mainstream education is a test area in government policies. The Government also aims to raise the social status of teachers by raising remuneration and expanding the opportunities for professional development.

12.6 Mr President, the Maldivian economy is heavily reliant on tourism. Our brand is our natural beauty. The pristine environment, the white beaches, the colourful reefs and the beautiful oceans. Sadly, the Maldives is one of those low-lying countries that could disappear off the map because of sea level rise. Thus, meeting the environment goals is critical to our country as we are determined to be part of the global solutions to reverse the current climate trends and to change the status quo. As our President, His Excellency Ibrahim Mohamed Solih mentioned in his remarks at the COP26, we are determined to lead by example by taking the most ambitious climate actions and committing to achieve a low emission development and a climate resilient future. It is the irony of climate emergency that we make negligible contribution to global warming, yet feel the greatest consequence of rising temperatures.

12.7 Mr President, all of us are tied by invisible bonds to our heritage and culture. Protecting and safeguarding our culture and heritage is a government priority. In this regard, strategies are being formulated to ensure the preservation and management of heritage, buildings and sites. At present, Maldives is working on inscribing the ancient coral stone mosques of the Maldives on the World Heritage List. This sector is in dire need of social awareness, expert knowledge and resources because it has received little attention in the past.

12.8 Mr President, with 36.5% of the Maldivian population under the age of 35, the Government has a unique opportunity to make transformational decisions which will enable the country to reap the best from its youth demographic. The Government of Maldives ensures that the future of the youth is secured and sustained in the areas of education, employment and health. I acknowledge UNESCO's commitment to youth development support in their participation in the national development, which will be quite crucial for small island developing States like the Maldives.

12.9 Mr President, we are currently living at a time of great uncertainty at the crossroads between a post globalization era and the period when long cherished ideals are being eroded by a new yet unnamed world order. Despite this uncertainty of the external environment, I am confident that UNESCO will remain at the forefront in promoting its timeless ideals for humankind and acting as a moral and ethical conscience for all people of all nations and races. Thank you.

13. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now ladies and gentlemen, I call Her Excellency, Ms Angelina Matsie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education of South Africa. You have the floor Excellency.

14.1 Ms Motshekga (South Africa):

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General of UNESCO, honourable ministers, distinguished delegates and citizens of the world, on behalf of the Government and the people of South Africa, I wish to join the speakers from this esteemed House who acknowledged and congratulated UNESCO for reaching such a noble milestone – its 75th anniversary. Let me also add our voice in congratulating the Director-General on the renewal of her mandate for the second term, to steer UNESCO beyond its 75th anniversary, and I wish to state that South Africa stands ready to work with you, and to provide you with our full support in your work.

14.2 We wish to state upfront that South Africa embraces UNESCO's principles of multilateralism, international law, the advancement of global human rights, the promotion of global peace and security, as well as advocating for the transmission of education and culture, liberty, justice and dignity for all humankind. Reflecting on the milestone of the 75th anniversary of UNESCO, we wish to invoke the spirit of our former Statesman, a global icon of note, and the Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela who said that education systems in the country should be characterized by social justice, principles of access, redress, equity, inclusivity, quality and efficiency, a call which continues to reverberate with us now, and will continue into eternity.

14.3 Once we thought that we were progressing well in the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the achievement of the overall vision and mission of the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) for 2016-2025, the COVID-19 global pandemic descended on the world in an unprecedented fashion, and exposed the deep levels of inequalities, inequities, injustice and indignation that still persist among most of our communities.

I think if we did not have the capacity to fully digitalize our education system, clearly as a country many of our people would have been left out.

14.4 Mr President and esteemed guests, the disparities do show that there is an urgent need for remedial action. South Africa commends the new Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029, and its accompanying Programme and Budget. We particularly note and appreciate the fact that the strategic framework includes among its priorities Africa and gender equality. Furthermore, South Africa welcomes the developments on open sciences, Global Priority Africa; the benchmarking of the Sustainable Development Goals on education, the adoption of the Draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and supports the call for increased resources to be available for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). I am pleased to inform this esteemed House that South Africa hosts the open science platform for the African continent.

14.5 So the role of UNESCO in global science programmes is needed now more than ever before. We need access to the advances of science, technology and innovation for our people. The rich unique biodiversity of South Africa on land and our two intersecting oceans, is our heritage to humanity. We look forward to continuing working with the Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme to conserve and restore our nature, and strengthen scientific monitoring of the decline in biodiversity the world is faced with. Similarly, we believe that water is essential to life. The devastation brought about by climate change, is impacting water security in our country and the entire world. We call upon the I Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) to make accessible tools and training programmes for the capacitation of water professionals in integrated water research and management programmes. We want to thank the Natural Sciences Sector for its efforts in assisting in reinforcing science education in our schools, especially for young girls.

14.6 Mr President, culture and heritage form a very essential part of the sectoral pillars of UNESCO. Africa is still significantly lagging behind in the inscription of sites on the World Heritage List. A high number of properties on the List in Danger are from the African continent, and these properties are now faced with the risk of being delisted. We believe that heritage is unique, and presents an inclusive narrative about each nation and continent. I am happy, Madam Director-General, to state that South Africa is at an advanced stage in ratifying the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education. We are also grateful as a country to have been given the opportunity to host the recent Global Media and Information Literacy Week, which we think is critical in the face of widespread disinformation. We also wish to thank UNESCO for awarding the PUKU Children's Literature Foundation with the 2021 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its work on "using digital technologies to promote children's literature in South Africa's indigenous languages". We also wish to congratulate South Africa's Puku Children's Literature Foundation which has been awarded the 2021 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize.

14.7 In conclusion, Mr President we really want to state that we are interested as a country to stand as a candidate for the Executive Board Executive Board for the term 2021-2025, as well as to serve as a valuable member of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme. We contend that through our nomination to the Executive Board, we will continue to support UNESCO in the implementation of its programmes, projects and activities. Your Excellency, Madam Director-General, we cannot wait to receive and welcome you in our beautiful country next year. We are convinced that your presence in our country will amplify the urgency of supporting UNESCO's strategic programmes and interventions in South Africa. We are looking forward to receiving and hosting you. Thank you very much.

15. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Dr Simona Kustec, Minister of Education, Science and Sport of Slovenia. You have the floor Excellency.

16.1 Ms Kustec (Slovenia):

Thank you very much. Dear Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished guests, colleagues, first of all allow me to congratulate Mr President for taking this very important chair today, and especially also to Madam Director-General Audrey Azoulay, best wishes for your second term, Madam Director-General, I am very much looking forward to our future cooperation and the precious results of your work in the next four years.

16.2 Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a time of immense transformation. The Republic of Slovenia remains committed to its position that UNESCO, as an organization with a 75-year-old tradition, is today perhaps even more relevant than ever before. Its unique expertise, coupled with the determination of UNESCO's Member States to take a major step towards the preservation of international peace and security through cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture reaffirms UNESCO's major mission to work on the so-called soft topics that are directly related to human beings' needs and growth. Education, science and culture and also sport should all be strengthened even more in contemporary times. I would like to underline that UNESCO should continue to reposition itself as an intellectual power within the United Nations system and should more extensively consult professional experts from Member States. We should respect, cherish and foster a bottom-up led approach, coupled with a strong commitment to evidence-based policy-making in all phases of UNESCO decision-making. Slovenia remains committed to achieving visible and strong results in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which UNESCO plays a leading role, even more so since UNESCO is responsible for at least nine Sustainable Development Goals. We fully support UNESCO to take the lead with regard to the implementation of SDG 4 on education, and we are also very grateful to UNESCO to recognize our country and our commitment by inviting us to serve as a member of the new SDG 4 steering committee.

16.3 Ladies and gentlemen. Slovenia fully recognizes UNESCO's new efforts, from the Paris Declaration about which we discussed intensively yesterday, to the work related to new efforts in the field of artificial intelligence, and in particular, in this regard, to its ethical dimensions. The development and application of artificial intelligence technologies will profoundly shape humanity's access to information, knowledge, transaction processes and education. Artificial intelligence carries great potential to foster open and inclusive knowledge societies, especially for marginalized groups, including

persons with disabilities, rural populations and indigenous peoples, to promote open access to education, digital persistence, cultural diversity and scientific progress. Let us not forget that with great potential comes also great responsibility. Artificial intelligence is likely to transform the future of education, science, culture and also communications. It goes without saying that Slovenia, fully and without any doubts, supports intensive work on artificial intelligence. In this light, the Slovenian Government proposed the establishment of an international research centre on artificial intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO, with consultation with all stakeholders at the heart of its work. I can say that we are receiving the utmost support of all Member States in this regard.

16.4 Let me also say that we are committed to opening the field of education to open educational resources in this regard, and welcome the Draft Recommendation on Open Science. I would like to express again my gratitude and congratulations for yesterday's big success when we were part of the organization of the High-Level Segment of the 2021 Global Education Meeting. This is something that we need to have for a healthy future. I am deeply convinced that the new global education cooperation mechanism will serve as a framework to invest in education and to mobilize for COVID 19 recovery and the future of education. I am more than sure that with this leadership, also the UNESCO management is going to be an effective, efficient and very positive one.

16.5 Coming from national to regional objectives and commitments, I would like to also emphasize that all remarks expressed in my national capacity in the UNESCO framework and strategy of work are aligned with the statements that I can also make on behalf of the European Union, on behalf of the country that is right now holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union. I am glad that we share key priorities together and that we are going to strengthen our cooperation in the future, because we are doing this for the best of our people and our knowledge on the global sphere. In conclusion, Slovenia looks forward to being part of the UNESCO journey, and we are supporting all your efforts. Happy 75th anniversary to UNESCO.

17. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Honourable Octavia Alfred, Minister of Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and Nation Excellence of Dominica. You have the floor Excellency.

18.1 **Ms Alfred (Dominica):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, distinguished ministers and heads of delegations, distinguished delegates, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I bring you warm greetings, congratulations and best wishes from the Commonwealth of Dominica, the nature island of the Caribbean, where Dominica's Morne Trois Pitons National Park was inscribed as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1998. Dominica is rich in natural resources and encompasses some of the most outstanding and coveted physical features found anywhere. The Morne Trois Pitons National Park includes numerous streams, rivers and waterfalls, five mountains, the Boeri Lake, three freshwater lakes and large tracts of tropical vegetation. Volcanic activity is also evident and adds uniqueness to our nature island brand, and eco-sustainability pursuits in the form of hot springs, fumaroles and a boiling lake, the second largest of its kind in the world. The park is the habitat for several animal species, including 45 species of birds, three globally threatened species, notably being two endemic species of parrots. This UNESCO heritage site forms the major components of the island's tourism industry.

18.2 Climate change has affected many countries, including Dominica. We are still recovering and building back better from the unfortunate onslaught of the extreme weather conditions of the tropical storm Erika in 2015 and Hurricane Maria in 2017. Both natural disasters caused widespread devastation and destruction to our education sector and its physical assets and our cultural heritage sites. Climate change is real. Its spreads are non-fictional. The damage inflicted leaves a serious dent in the economy, while the social and psychological scars to citizens cannot be masked. Small island developing States like Dominica have experienced the trailing and suction-like tentacles of climate change. The Government of Dominica continues to express its appreciation to UNESCO, through which its many programmes supports Dominica in its climate resilience and sustainable development agenda.

18.3 While we sit in this distinguished room addressing the issues of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed some of our pain points and vulnerabilities even further. At such a critical time, we are forced to think and to rethink and to amend the way we work and offer services and the way we teach and learn. The need for this renewed consideration of digital learning has become more urgent and relevant given our climate change experiences and global trends of the last few years, including the most recent COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted our homes, churches, communities and places of work in numerous ways. Thankfully, UNESCO, through its educational programmes, continues with the provision of capacity building opportunities, particularly with respect to ICT integration within the education sector. The blackboard blended learning, TVET and other educational training programmes could not have been more relevant and opportune as we seek to appease the digital appetites of our young people.

18.4 Mr President, the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica continues to implement programmes and plans with thematic emphasis on intellectual cooperation, peace, non-violence, justice and human rights. In keeping with UNESCO's goals and through a collaborative approach, it promotes education, science, culture, communication and information.

18.5 Ladies and gentlemen, Dominica wishes to publicly reaffirms its support to UNESCO's global education 2030 Agenda. Like UNESCO, our Government believes that education is a human right for all, and access to learning must be equal. In that regard, we have mandated universal primary and secondary education, and access to early childhood education is facilitated by provisional support. Tertiary education has been made easier over the years for scholarships and other incentives. By addressing youth's educational needs and enhancing their capacity, we are creating the kind of transformational environment that will facilitate the platform for greater engagement in public policy dialogue and development and practice to strengthen the future.

18.6 Esteemed delegates, Dominica is well known for the preservation of the diversity of cultural expressions that have their roots in our African, Kalinago and European history. On the mandate of culture, UNESCO continues to support our Government in the implementation of programmes that promote and safeguard Dominica's rich cultural heritage. Under the leadership of the UNESCO cluster office in Jamaica, we have ensured that critical stakeholders in the sector of culture, rural development, environment, tourism, youth and agriculture remain closely tied to the mandate and programme of UNESCO.

18.7 We have also ensured that our national priorities are well reflected in UNESCO's country strategic plans and work programme over the years. Therefore, we can now offer numerous best practices from which others can greatly benefit. It is in this regard we desire to upgrade our representation on the UNESCO Executive Board after 16 years, and we humbly invite you to support our candidate for membership on the Board for the period 2021 to 2025.

18.8 Mr President, I affirm on behalf of the Government and people of the Commonwealth of Dominica that UNESCO remains an important development partner in the enhancement of the critical areas of education and culture in our country. We are committed to continue to ensure the building and sustenance of strong networks that will produce real results. We are dedicated to continuing to solidify the fruitful collaboration with the UNESCO cluster office in Jamaica. We are attentive to the knowledge and beliefs that continue to flow within the region that will serve to profit the 2030 Agenda, as well as our national resilience and sustainable development pursuits. I thank you graciously.

19. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Djaanfar Salim Alaoui, Minister of National Education of Comoros. You have the floor Excellency.

20.1 **M. Alaoui (Les Comores) :**

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale de l'UNESCO, Mesdames et Messieurs les ministres, chefs des délégations, distingués invités, mesdames et messieurs. La 41^e session de la Conférence générale de l'UNESCO se tient dans un contexte mondial très particulier où les incertitudes sont de plus en plus nombreuses, les défis et les défiances aussi, grandement à cause de la tristement célèbre COVID-19. Au nom du Gouvernement comorien, de son peuple, et en mon nom personnel, je présente les condoléances les plus émues à l'UNESCO et à toutes les délégations dont les leurs ont succombé à cette pandémie.

20.2 Fêtant aujourd'hui son 75^e anniversaire, notre Institution se doit de chercher un souffle nouveau pour faire face aux enjeux du numérique, du réchauffement climatique, du fanatisme religieux qui nourrit le terrorisme, entre autres. Mais vous serez d'avis avec moi, Mesdames et Messieurs, que l'éducation, la culture et le patrimoine, les trois piliers de l'UNESCO, sont et restent plus que jamais les seules vraies armes capables de triompher et des défis d'égalité, de justice, de liberté et surtout de vivre ensemble, que pose le nouveau millénaire et de défiance que posent les théories fumeuses et complotistes qui se répandent très rapidement, notamment via les réseaux sociaux.

20.3 C'est au reste pourquoi je voudrais, au nom de mon pays, les Comores, de son Président, Son Excellence Monsieur Azali Assoumani, de son Gouvernement et en mon nom propre, remercier et féliciter le Président de la 41^e session, Son Excellence Monsieur Altay Cengizer, son successeur, Son Excellence Monsieur Santiago Mourão, le Président du Conseil exécutif, Son Excellence Monsieur Agapito Mba Mokuy, et la Directrice générale de l'UNESCO, Son Excellence Madame Audrey Azoulay, dont je salue la réélection pour les efforts qu'ils ont consentis afin que puisse se tenir en présentiel cette 41^e session en dépit de la délicate situation sanitaire qui prévaut dans le monde. La session nous permet d'échanger amplement sur les dix défis et défiances.

20.4 Excellences, Monsieur le Président, je voudrais vous assurer que mon pays, les Comores, souscrit entièrement au processus de transformation stratégique de l'UNESCO destiné à rendre notre Organisation à même de répondre aux défis contemporains, à l'instar des ODD 2030. C'est dans ce sens que notre Gouvernement a adopté le Plan Comores émergent.

20.5 Mesdames et Messieurs, mieux que quiconque, vous savez ici qu'un des secteurs les plus touchés par la pandémie de la COVID-19 est celui de l'éducation. En effet, ces deux dernières années ont mis à mal les systèmes scolaires du monde entier, c'est un fait. Mais les plus fragiles parmi eux, ceux des pays en développement comme le mien, ont été nettement plus touchés, et ce, malgré les efforts surhumains observés et observables partout dans le monde. Les disparités Nord-Sud se sont flagamment manifestées, ce qui les rend encore plus insupportables. L'accès à l'éducation a été un droit pour tous. L'UNESCO s'évertue constamment et énergiquement à en faire une réalité. Mais nonobstant des progrès incontestables, notamment dans le domaine de la lutte contre l'illettrisme et en faveur de la scolarisation des jeunes filles, beaucoup reste à faire pour que tout le monde ait pareillement accès à ce qu'il conviendrait d'appeler le SMIC, à savoir le « savoir minimum indispensable à une conversation. »

20.6 Là où d'aucuns parlent de revenu minimum universel, je propose de parler d'un SMIC éducatif universel que tous les humains partageraient. Dans nos pays respectifs, nous avons développé des socles communs de compétences que doivent partager tous les élèves. Il faudrait dupliquer cela à l'échelle mondiale en mettant au diapason les expériences des uns et des autres. Il faudra pour ce faire, vous l'aurez compris, plus de partage de ressources éducatives libres, comme « Imagine école » que l'UNESCO avec ses partenaires déploie dans une partie de l'Afrique francophone, plus de formation en direction des enseignants. En un mot, plus de coopération et plus de solidarité.

20.7 Mesdames et Messieurs, la liberté de mouvement, de parole et de conscience reste hélas aujourd'hui encore un rêve pour des millions de personnes dans le monde. La liberté pour la femme de disposer de son corps comme bon lui semble est loin d'être une réalité. Partout, celle des journalistes d'informer librement est bafouée dans plusieurs pays. En témoignent les nombreux journalistes en prison et ceux, nombreux, qui perdent régulièrement la vie dans l'exercice de leur métier. Des politiques des plus rétrogrades et des plus fermées gagnent étonnamment du terrain, tout autant qu'un discours de rupture, de rejet et de stigmatisation de l'autre se développe dans certaines régions du monde que l'on croyait

pourtant à l'abri de tels méfaits. Des médicastres professent la xénophobie ouvertement, et les idées rances des années 30 tentent avec un certain succès de s'opposer à la mondialisation et au métissage des cultures.

20.8 Notre Institution a du pain sur la planche, vous l'aurez compris, car il lui incombe, aux côtés des États membres, de trouver les voies et moyens pouvant lutter efficacement contre la propagation de ces idées monstrueuses et promouvoir toutes les libertés afin que tout homme puisse se réaliser selon ses désirs et ses orientations, loin de tout diktat social, religieux et/ou politique.

20.9 Monsieur le Président, Madame la Directrice, chère Assistance, dans le domaine de la culture, l'Union des Comores compte sur le soutien constant de l'UNESCO pour développer et pérenniser des initiatives en faveur de la sauvegarde de son patrimoine culturel naturel immatériel qui caractérise une forte richesse diversifiée. Les Comores demandent à la Directrice générale de veiller à l'équilibre géographique au sein de la Liste du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO. Aujourd'hui, mon pays, par la voix de sa Délégation, se réjouit de l'inscription de l'Île de Mohéli au Programme sur l'homme et la biosphère de l'UNESCO. Cette île, déjà classée de Réserve de biosphère de l'UNESCO, est un site bien préservé qui comprend une biodiversité exceptionnelle, dotée d'un sol volcanique fertile et d'un réseau hydrographique permanent.

20.10 Monsieur le Président, auguste Assemblée, il y a deux ans dans cette même tribune, mon pays, les Comores, à l'instar de ses pairs dans le cadre de la 40^e session de la Conférence générale de l'UNESCO, a adopté solennellement la Journée mondiale pour le peuple africain et ses descendants, la JMCA, proposée par l'ONG RAPEC, Réseau africain des promoteurs et entrepreneurs culturels, et initiée par John Ayité Dossavi. Ce Projet de résolution de l'UNESCO marque le 24 janvier de chaque année comme date passerelle entre les peuples du monde.

20.11 Je tiens ici à rappeler que mon pays soutient fortement cette belle initiative présentée par le Togo, et que nous devons tous renforcer les acquis et porter haut ce bel instrument qui témoigne de la diversité culturelle et civilisationnelle du continent africain. Je souhaite aussi, à partir de cette noble Assemblée, remercier ceux qui se mobilisent pour la prochaine édition, le 24 janvier 2022.

20.12 Excellences, Monsieur le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs. Rien des efforts à fournir pour un monde meilleur ne peut s'envisager sans une lutte acharnée et réelle contre le terrorisme et le fanatisme religieux qui en est à l'origine. On doit, contrairement à ce que préconisent certains pour qui le tout sécuritaire est la solution, lui opposer une alternative d'amour et surtout de culture. Sartre disait à juste titre qu'il ne suffisait pas de connaître une passion par sa cause pour la supprimer. Il faut la vivre, la combattre et surtout y opposer d'autres patients. Faisons, Mesdames et Messieurs, du savoir et de la culture, la passion de nos enfants, le hobby de ce millénaire. Les efforts fournis en la matière, autant par l'UNESCO que par l'ONU, sont considérables et à saluer. Cependant, ils doivent être continués sous peine de voir cette hydre se développer encore et encore.

20.13 Excellences, Monsieur le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs, pour finir, l'Union des Comores fait sienne toutes les déclarations faites par les États membres du Groupe V(a) et du Groupe V(b) prononcées dans cette auguste Assemblée. Au nom du Gouvernement comorien, je vous remercie de votre aimable attention. Merci.

21. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Ms Ena Elsa Velázquez Cobiella, Minister of Education of Cuba. You have the floor Excellency.

22.1 **Sra. Velázquez Cobiella (Cuba):**

Señor Presidente, lo felicito por su elección para presidir los trabajos de esta Conferencia. Señora Directora General, la felicito por su reelección para un nuevo mandato, confiamos en su liderazgo para fortalecer la Organización y alcanzar de conjunto los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de la Agenda 2030. Distinguidos delegados e invitados, esta Conferencia General se celebra en una coyuntura particularmente compleja, marcada por crisis sistémicas y multifactoriales y agravada por la COVID-19, de impacto devastador para las sociedades y economías de todo el mundo.

22.2 El enfrentamiento a la pandemia ha puesto de manifiesto la urgencia de la unidad, la cooperación y la solidaridad internacional, así como el valioso aporte de los organismos multilaterales para combatir las amenazas comunes en beneficio de toda la humanidad.

22.3 Distinguidos delegados, la Revolución cubana fue determinante para que nuestro país pudiera convertir en realidad los compromisos asumidos con la UNESCO. Cuba muestra indicadores educacionales que son referentes a nivel mundial. Nuestro pueblo disfruta del más amplio acceso a la mejor y más diversa cultura universal.

22.4 El florecimiento y los beneficios sociales de la ciencia en Cuba constituyen uno de los pilares de nuestro programa de desarrollo con palpables resultados. Una de las evidencias más recientes la encontramos en el desarrollo de tres vacunas de probada eficacia y dos candidatos vacunales para enfrentar la pandemia de la COVID-19. La vacunación de niños y adolescentes y la cercana meta de lograr la inmunización total de la población a finales de 2021.

22.5 Estos y otros logros demuestran la voluntad de un pueblo que no se doblega ante el más inhumano y prolongado bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero que se haya aplicado jamás contra nación alguna, recrudescido de manera oportunista y criminal en el difícil contexto de la COVID-19.

22.6 De la resistencia, la abnegación, la ineludible alegría y el amor por la vida de los cubanos dan cuenta innumerables obras artísticas y literarias, incontables proyectos científicos y educacionales.

22.7 Señor Presidente, señora Directora General, compartimos la firme convicción de que en el actual contexto de cambios socioeconómicos urge invertir en la educación, la diversidad cultural, la protección y salvaguardia del patrimonio, la investigación científica y la reducción de la brecha tecnológica para hacer realidad el desarrollo. Especial atención deberá brindarse a los más vulnerables, entre estos a los pequeños Estados insulares en desarrollo.

22.8 Reafirmamos el liderazgo de la UNESCO en los esfuerzos globales para garantizar una educación inclusiva y equitativa de calidad, así como promover oportunidades de aprendizaje permanente para todos. La educación debe continuar siendo la prioridad de prioridades en el compromiso político y financiero. Es inadmisibles que millones de niñas y niños sigan sin acceso a la enseñanza.

22.9 El cambio climático, la pérdida de biodiversidad y la creciente demanda de recursos naturales requiere igualmente del aporte de la UNESCO desde la educación y las ciencias. La contribución de sus programas sobre el océano, el agua dulce, el conocimiento científico y las ciencias sociales es fundamental. El vínculo ciencia y política potencia el desarrollo, multiplicar las buenas prácticas y el intercambio de experiencias en este ámbito debe ser un propósito fundamental de la Organización.

22.10 La cultura, fuente de diálogo y motor del desarrollo sostenible, fomenta la solidaridad, la paz y la cooperación entre los pueblos. La promoción y desarrollo de políticas culturales que garanticen el acceso y disfrute de esta como un derecho humano fundamental deberán continuar en el centro del mandato de la Organización.

22.11 Señora Directora General, la cooperación entre Cuba y la UNESCO se fortalece y abarca todos los sectores. En estos años, muchos han sido los programas y proyectos ejecutados con apoyo de la Organización, destacándose el aporte de la Oficina Regional de Cultura en La Habana, en el impulso de prioridades nacionales.

22.12 Comparto por su actualidad y relevancia el Proyecto Transcultural (Cuba, Caribe y Unión Europea), pionero en un enfoque integrador y multiplicador de la cooperación que pretende erigirse en polo regional para la formación cultural desde Cuba en interacción con otros países vecinos, dirigido al fortalecimiento de capacidades de jóvenes del Caribe y de América Latina en ámbitos de la creación, la gestión del patrimonio, los oficios vinculados a la conservación y restauración, la fotografía y el audiovisual, entre otros. También se propone fortalecer el intercambio con los países europeos. Cuba se honra de ser parte del mismo y de contribuir modestamente en el logro de sus objetivos.

22.13 Señor Presidente, señora Directora General, vivimos en un mundo donde las nuevas tecnologías de la información y las comunicaciones se utilizan cada vez más para amplificar discursos de odio y violencia. La mentira se vuelve práctica cotidiana. Se pretende interpretar y reescribir la historia desde la óptica de los poderosos, se crean estereotipos a conveniencia, se manipula y tergiversa sin límites. La cultura se convierte en una mercancía más y se promueven la xenofobia, el racismo y otras formas de intolerancia y discriminación. Enfrentar esta realidad es una responsabilidad colectiva. La historia demuestra que las guerras, invasiones, genocidios y otras atrocidades siempre comenzaron con palabras. El mundo necesita más que nunca de la UNESCO y de su autoridad moral e intelectual, tiene esta Organización la gran tarea de convertirse en la conciencia del nuevo y mejor orden mundial que queremos construir. La UNESCO representa los valores de solidaridad y cooperación que nos pueden salvar de la barbarie.

22.14 Señora Directora General, al felicitar a la UNESCO por su 75º aniversario, Cuba reafirma su firme compromiso con los valores y principios de esta Organización en la búsqueda de la paz y la promoción del desarrollo sostenible. Como señalara nuestro Presidente durante el reciente debate general de la 76ª Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, unir esfuerzos y voluntades por el bien de la humanidad hoy no solo resulta urgente, es moralmente impostergable. Cuba siempre está lista, pueden contar con ella. Muchas gracias.

23. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Ms Elise Thiombiano Ilboudo Foniya, Minister of Culture, Art and Tourism of Burkina Faso. You have the floor Excellency.

24.1 Mme Foniya (Burkina Faso) :

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Mesdames et Messieurs. Monsieur le Président, à l'entame de mon allocution, ma Délégation voudrait, par ma voix, vous adresser nos félicitations pour votre brillante élection à la présidence de la 41^e session de la Conférence générale de l'UNESCO. Aussi, au moment où notre Organisation s'apprête à renouveler le mandat de la Direction générale, voudrais-je, au nom de mon pays, rendre hommage, un hommage appuyé, à Madame Audrey Azoulay ainsi qu'à toute son équipe pour l'important travail qui a été réalisé. Je lui adresse mes très vives et chaleureuses félicitations et voudrais, au nom du Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, lui adresser nos vœux de réussite et l'assurer du soutien du Burkina Faso.

24.2 Mesdames et Messieurs, la présente session se tient dans un contexte sanitaire assez difficile, marqué par la COVID-19, auquel s'ajoutent des défis tels que la montée du terrorisme et de l'extrémisme violent, les crises sociopolitiques et environnementales qui annihilent la vie des populations ainsi que tous les secteurs de développement. Au moment où nous nous apprêtons à célébrer le 75^e anniversaire de l'Organisation, c'est le lieu pour nous de saluer la vision prospective et holistique de nos devanciers, de faire le bilan de nos actions, de repenser nos stratégies face aux nouveaux défis et enjeux actuels du monde.

24.3 Monsieur le Président, ma Délégation se réjouit de la contribution de l'UNESCO dans la mise en œuvre des objectifs de développement durable dans ses différents domaines d'intervention, programmes stratégiques et prioritaires au niveau national, et son appui, son apport à la lutte contre la COVID-19. Ma Délégation note avec attention le Projet de budget 41 C/5 et invite notre Organisation à recourir à des sources de financements innovants en tissant de nouveaux partenariats et exhorte les différents États à honorer leurs contributions financières. En outre, le programme de participation renforce la visibilité et les actions de l'Organisation auprès des populations bénéficiaires à travers des projets nationaux et sous régionaux financés aussi bien par des institutions publiques que privées.

24.4 Monsieur le Président, malgré les multiples efforts consentis de part et d'autre, des défis demeurent, touchant à des degrés divers de plus en plus de pays, n'épargnant aucun des secteurs clés de développement relevant de la compétence de notre Organisation commune. Le Burkina Faso est particulièrement confronté aux attaques terroristes dans certaines zones de son territoire, avec comme conséquence la fermeture de 2 735 établissements scolaires à la date

du 28 octobre 2021, affectant 316 261 élèves et 9 683 enseignants. Dans ses efforts de résilience, le Burkina Faso sollicite l'accompagnement de l'UNESCO et des partenaires pour la mise en œuvre d'un certain nombre de stratégies nationales touchant l'éducation non-formelle, l'entrepreneuriat des jeunes, l'insertion sociale et de l'emploi, la prise en compte des savoirs endogènes et spécialement l'éducation en situation d'urgence et la prévention de l'extrémisme violent.

24.5 Monsieur le Président, le Burkina Faso note avec intérêt les actions de l'UNESCO dans la mise en œuvre de la Priorité Afrique et de l'égalité des genres, et encourage la poursuite des efforts, notamment dans les pays en proie de l'instabilité politique, à l'insécurité et aux conflits communautaires. Il importe donc que des ressources conséquentes soient allouées à la mise en œuvre efficiente effective de ces priorités, comme l'indique la nouvelle stratégie.

24.6 Permettez-moi, Monsieur le Président, de remercier tous les États membres qui ont soutenu l'inscription des trois biens culturels du Burkina Faso sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO et de marquer ma reconnaissance au Comité, au centre, ainsi qu'au Fond du patrimoine mondial pour leur sollicitude à l'égard du complexe W. Arly-Pendjari, repoussant ainsi son inscription sur la Liste du patrimoine en péril. C'est l'occasion pour ma Délégation de réaffirmer notre volonté à assurer une gestion efficace des réserves forestières et fauniques impliquant en particulier le Burkina Faso.

24.7 Monsieur le Président, la 27^e édition du FESPACO s'est tenue du 16 au 23 octobre 2021 à Ouagadougou sous le thème « Cinémas d'Afrique et de la Diaspora : nouveaux regards, nouveaux défis ». C'est l'occasion pour ma Délégation de traduire mes sincères remerciements et les remerciements du peuple et de la Délégation, de traduire les sincères remerciements du Gouvernement à l'endroit de tous les partenaires techniques et financiers, notamment l'UNESCO, partenaire de longue date du FESPACO, les États membres qui, par leur soutien multiforme, combien inestimable, ont œuvré à la tenue de ce plus grand festival panafricain.

24.8 Cette édition a eu le mérite de susciter et de lancer encore la réflexion sur les nouveaux défis du cinéma africain, toute chose qui a débouché sur des recommandations fortes qui appellent à davantage de soutien des partenaires techniques et financiers, ainsi que la mobilisation inconditionnelle de la part de l'Afrique et de sa diaspora.

24.9 Le Burkina Faso se félicite de sa participation, de la participation remarquable de l'UNESCO à cette biennale du cinéma africain à travers une importante Délégation conduite par Monsieur Ernesto Ottone, Sous-Directeur général en charge de la culture. Aussi, le Burkina Faso félicite la Direction générale pour son engagement dans la lutte contre le trafic illicite des biens culturels, la protection du patrimoine culturel des pays en conflit et pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel.

24.10 Ainsi, le Burkina Faso dispose d'un portefeuille d'actions dont la mise en œuvre implique l'UNESCO. Et parmi les actions inscrites, le Burkina Faso émet le souhait que les résultats de l'évaluation externe de CERAV Afrique offre l'opportunité d'ouvrir un nouveau cycle de vie du centre pour toutes les actions plus déterminantes en faveur de la mise en œuvre de la Convention 2005 en Afrique.

24.11 Ainsi, je voudrais remercier tous les États qui participent au fonctionnement de la structure et inviter les autres États à s'engager pour davantage de synergie et d'efficacité. Monsieur le Président, avant de clore mon propos, je voudrais renouveler la reconnaissance de mon pays à l'UNESCO pour tout l'accompagnement dont il a bénéficié et réaffirmer devant notre auguste Assemblée son attachement indéfectible aux nobles valeurs et principes fondateurs de l'UNESCO et sa foi en sa capacité à répondre de manière efficace malgré tout, aux attentes croissantes de l'ensemble de ses membres et de l'humanité toute entière. Je vous remercie.

25. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Daniel Nivagar, Minister of Science and Technology, Higher and Technical Education of Mozambique. You have the floor Excellency.

26.1 **M. Nivagar (Mozambique) :**

Son Excellence Santiago Mourão, Président de la Conférence générale, Son Excellence Agapito Mba Mokuy, Président du Conseil exécutif, Son Excellence Audrey Azoulay, Directrice générale, distingués Chefs de délégation, mesdames, messieurs. Tout d'abord, permettez-nous de vous féliciter, très cher Ambassadeur Santiago, pour votre élection à la Présidence des travaux de cette Conférence générale et j'exprime le soutien de ma Délégation pour que votre mission soit couronnée de succès. Nous félicitons, nos félicitations vont aussi à la Directrice générale qui, malgré les défis posés par la pandémie de la COVID-19, a dirigé le destin de notre Organisation avec détermination et excellence. Je salue également le Président du Conseil exécutif pour les excellents résultats obtenus au cours des deux dernières années.

26.2 Excellences, cette session a lieu à un moment particulièrement difficile pour notre pays et pour le monde en raison de l'impact dévastateur de la pandémie de la COVID-19 sur le tissu économique et social. Dans ce contexte, le Gouvernement mozambicain, avec la contribution active de toutes les forces vives de la société, a tout mis en œuvre pour atténuer les effets négatifs de la pandémie, en particulier dans le secteur de l'éducation, visant à assurer les performances scolaires nécessaires et une plus grande inclusion dans l'accès à l'éducation. À cet égard, permettez-moi d'exprimer notre appréciation pour la contribution inestimable de nos partenaires de coopération bilatérale et multilatérale, y compris l'UNESCO.

26.3 Dans le cadre de la lutte contre le coronavirus, le Mozambique souscrit aux efforts des Nations unies et d'autres accords internationaux non-gouvernementaux visant à universaliser et démocratiser l'accès aux vaccins à travers le monde, en particulier dans les pays en développement, avec de multiples défis et ressources de plus en plus rares.

26.4 Dans le contexte de l'Agenda 2030 des Nations unies pour les objectifs de développement durable, cette session a lieu un moment où l'UNESCO a redimensionné son propre Programme de transformation stratégique pour s'adapter aux défis mondiaux actuels. En plus de la situation causée par la pandémie de la COVID-19, les défis pour le Mozambique sont toujours centrés sur le changement climatique, la perte de biodiversité, les discriminations et inégalités sociales, en particulier concernant les enfants et les femmes. En ce sens, nous partageons la vision de l'entreprise Azoulay quant à la

nécessité de consolider le multilatéralisme pour faire face avec efficacité aux défis susmentionnés et donner du sens à l'idée de « village global » et de responsabilité partagée.

26.5 Notre pays se félicite de la stratégie opérationnelle de l'UNESCO pour la priorité Afrique 2014-2021 qui vise à apporter des réponses africaines aux transformations affectant les économies et les sociétés africaines, ainsi que le maintien pour l'UNESCO des priorités « Afrique », « jeunesse », et « égalité des genres » et le repositionnement de l'Organisation en tant que leader de l'objectif de développement durable (ODD 4).

26.6 Dans ce contexte, nous réitérons la nécessité d'établir des indicateurs mesurables afin de faciliter l'évolution et le suivi du degré de réussite des actions et entreprises et de tirer des enseignements pour l'avenir de cette importante initiative. Le Mozambique considère que le défi de la COVID-19 est une opportunité de rendre le monde plus connecté et solidaire, et de réduire la fracture numérique dans le monde. En ce sens, l'UNESCO a une vocation particulière pour intervenir avec succès.

26.7 Mesdames et Messieurs, nous réitérons notre gratitude pour le soutien inestimable que l'UNESCO a apporté à notre pays au cours des 46 dernières années. En effet, nous sommes engagés, avec le soutien de l'UNESCO, à approuver, mettre en œuvre, des politiques et des réformes dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la culture, de la science, de la technologie et du sport, en mettant l'accent sur les points suivants :

26.8 La mise en œuvre du Plan stratégique pour l'éducation 2020-2029, et en particulier dans le renforcement du système éducatif axé sur l'éducation pour le développement durable, l'amélioration de l'équité et de la qualité, et mettant l'accent sur l'engagement pour le développement des capacités institutionnelles et matérielles dans l'enseignement primaire et secondaire, et l'alphabétisation dans l'éducation des adultes et de formation des enseignants.

26.9 L'organisation, ce mois, ici en Mozambique, du Forum sur la gouvernance de l'internet, et l'organisation en 2022, d'une Conférence internationale sur l'intelligence artificielle. Le processus de mise en œuvre du Comité national d'éthique du Mozambique en sa qualité de membre du Comité intergouvernemental de bioéthique et l'engagement de notre pays sur cette question importante. Le Mozambique a tenu, dans le cadre du Programme « Homme et biosphère MAB », des réunions des réserves de biosphère d'Afrique australe et a contribué à des formations des membres du Comité national du MAB. Nous continuerons à travailler dans ces domaines avec l'UNESCO pour inclure davantage de zones de biosphère en tenant compte de l'énorme potentiel et de l'engagement national pour assurer un monde plus vert et plus responsable.

26.10 Le Mozambique a aussi reçu le soutien de l'UNESCO pour l'examen et la diffusion des politiques et de la législation sur les industries culturelles et créatives, l'audiovisuel et le cinéma, ainsi que la Convention de l'UNESCO sur la promotion et la protection de la diversité des expressions culturelles. Dans le domaine du sport, dans le cadre du Plan pour le développement de la femme dans le sport, le Gouvernement encourage une implication plus active de l'UNESCO dans la promotion et l'implication des filles et des femmes dans le sport comme moyen de réduire la marginalisation des femmes et des filles dans le sport en augmentant leur participation à la prise de décision et la gestion du sport.

26.11 Monsieur le Président, Mesdames et Messieurs. Pour terminer, j'exprime notre attachement aux nobles idéaux du multilatéralisme. Il réaffirme que le Mozambique continuera à travailler ensemble pour la construction d'un monde de plus en plus stable, pacifique, et de justice sociale. Je rappelle que la contribution de l'UNESCO et de ces partenariats est et sera toujours d'une grande utilité pour construire une société où l'éducation avec la science et la culture sont au service de nos citoyens. Merci beaucoup pour votre aimable attention.

27. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Syakalima Douglas, Minister of Education of Zambia. You have the floor sir.

28.1 **Mr Douglas (Zambia):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, honourable ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, greetings. Mr President, let me start by conveying Zambia's sincere condolences following the loss of the lives of eminent personalities, members of the UNESCO family and loved ones due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Let me now take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr President, on your election to lead the General Conference for the next two years. Further, I would like to commend the Director-General for her efforts towards a stronger and more visible UNESCO despite the challenges and wish her every success as she continues with her mandate.

28.2 This session of the General Conference comes at a unique juncture. We are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the important Organization, which is the intellectual arm of the United Nations. Mr President, Zambia recorded its first COVID-19 case on 18 March 2020, and the months following that period saw disruption of learning for more than 4.2 million learners in a country with a population of 18 million people, and schools, colleges and universities were closed. Some learners did not come back to school after schools were reopened. Being out of school put learners, especially girls, at risk of teenage pregnancies, sexual abuse, child marriage and other dangers. These negative impacts have been significantly higher for children from poor countries, from poor households. Despite life coming back to relative normalcy and the economy opening up, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted negatively in many aspects of life. It has led to a slowdown in the economy, causing a reduction in revenues to the treasury and resulting in serious budget execution challenges.

28.3 Mr President, I wish to seize this opportunity to recall that while some parts of the world have received sufficient vaccines, this is far from being the reality in other regions, especially Africa. In this regard, there is a need to ensure equity in vaccine distribution. Zambia will need more help in terms of vaccine provision to keep these learners and teachers safe. Mr President, as a way of mitigating the impact of COVID-19, the Government developed a COVID-19 response and recovery plan. The recovery plan, aimed at bridging the learning gaps due to time lost and ensured compliance to the COVID-19 preventive guidelines for reopening of all institutions across the country. Thanks to the financial and material

support from UNESCO, UNICEF and other stakeholders, my Government was able to navigate a number of the challenges that came with the pandemic. The recovery plan facilitated a heavy investment by Government in alternative modes of education provision to recapitalize the education and broadcasting services that is delivering content to learners through radio, phones and television so as to ensure continuity of learning when any pandemic strikes. However, aware that there are disadvantaged and vulnerable children who may not be able to enjoy distance learning programmes provided by schools or who live in remote communities with no electricity and who are not able to listen to the education programmes on television, radio or phone, the Government has facilitated the production of distance learning content and programmes, strengthening existing capacities and expertise both in public and private schools. In addition, teachers were equipped with required skills for providing distance education, remote support, monitoring and assessment, and were also provided with psycho-social support.

28.4 Mr President, His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, attaches great importance to education in line with his effort to widen access to education. Cognizant of the economic burden that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on parents, the new Government has abolished tuition and examination fees in government schools. In addition, to ensure provision of quality education, the Government will recruit and deploy an unprecedented 30,000 teachers in 2022.

28.5 Mr President, our learners remain at risk of negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes, which can cause disruptions in educational attainment, career progression and life goals. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to thank the governments of Switzerland, Sweden, France, Norway and Ireland for supporting the successful implementation of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools. This programme is being rolled out to tertiary institutions to ensure that young people in these institutions will realize positive education and gender equality outcomes through sustained reduction in new HIV infections, unintended pregnancy and gender-based violence. In terms of science, technology and innovation as a driver to economic development, we have established a new Ministry of Technology and Science to address the challenges facing the country in STI, and also place technology and science at the centre of our economic transformation agenda. Our Government is collaborating with UNESCO in strengthening the development and implementation of existing interventions. Zambia was part of the advisory group, the technical committee of experts for the Africa Group of the UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science. Furthermore, UNESCO is supporting Zambia to establish a national ethics committee that will play the role of providing oversight and guidance on different types of human, animal and environmental research. My country has embraced the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme and has submitted two applications for consideration. My Government has continued educating youth and sportspersons on the dangers of doping and corruption in sport. With support from UNESCO, we have established a national anti-doping organization. It is envisaged that sports associations will set up ethics and integrity committees to ensure transparency according to ethical governance. Arising from strong stakeholders in tangible and intangible cultural heritage, Zambia has continued inventorying traditional dances, songs and ceremonies with a view to preserving its culture. We take this opportunity to seek support from you esteemed delegates in our quest for a seat on the World Heritage Committee for the period 2021-2025.

28.7 Mr President, as I conclude, this General Conference has very important matters on its agenda. This includes the Draft Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 and the Draft Programme and Budget for 2021-2025 and the Draft Recommendation on Open Science. My country would like to thank the Director-General and the Secretariat for coming up with these documents. Zambia looks forward to a focused discussion on these and many other key items, I thank you.

29. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Mamadou Talla, Minister of National Education of Senegal. You have the floor Excellency.

30.1 **M. Talla (Sénégal) :**

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Mesdames, Messieurs les ministres et chefs de Délégation, mesdames, messieurs. Monsieur le Président, je voudrais, à l'entame de mon propos, vous adresser mes vives félicitations et vous assurer du plein soutien du Sénégal. Je saisi cette occasion pour me féliciter des résultats probants que votre prédécesseur, ainsi que Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif ont arbitrés pendant leur mandat.

30.2 Monsieur le Président, cette 41^e session de la Conférence générale coïncide avec le 75^e anniversaire de l'UNESCO. Elle se tient aussi à un moment particulier, marqué par l'impact de la pandémie COVID-19. Ce contexte est difficile pour nos pays, nous rappelle encore la pertinence des missions assignées à notre Institution et la nécessité de les renforcer. En effet, l'UNESCO, par ses nombreuses initiatives, demeure un instrument privilégié du multilatéralisme, à l'avant-garde de toutes les missions du système des Nations unies. Pendant cette période éprouvante que nous n'avons pas fini de traverser, vous avez été aux côtés des États membres comme le nôtre pour aider à faire face.

30.3 Ainsi, afin d'apporter des solutions énergiques aux multiples défis causés par la crise sanitaire, le Sénégal, en rapport avec ses partenaires, dont l'UNESCO, a pris des initiatives innovantes pour atténuer les effets néfastes de la crise, renforcer sa résilience et assurer la continuité pédagogique dans les institutions scolaires et universitaires. Il me plaît de souligner ici que l'atteinte des objectifs du développement durable a toujours constitué un enjeu majeur de la politique du Sénégal sous l'impulsion de Son Excellence Monsieur Macky Salli, Président de la République. Dans le domaine de l'éducation, en particulier avec le Relais 4, il a fait montre d'un volontarisme salubre en réitérant son engagement à maintenir le niveau de financement du secteur de l'éducation au-delà du seuil des 20 %. Cette volonté se traduit au quotidien par la mise en œuvre d'un programme d'amélioration substantielle de la qualité dans le système éducatif.

30.4 Deux chantiers majeurs ont fortement contribué à ce processus constant de renforcement du système éducatif de mon pays. Pour le premier, il s'est agi d'exploiter les potentialités du numérique avec l'initiative « Apprendre à la maison »,

visant à trouver une solution à la fermeture des écoles par la mise en place d'un projet pour le développement de télé-enseignement PROMET, afin de formaliser davantage la stratégie et mieux assurer le renouveau de l'école sénégalaise.

30.5 Le second chantier a porté sur le renforcement de l'inclusion et l'amélioration de l'équité par une meilleure prise en compte de la dimension « genre », l'utilisation des langues nationales dans les apprentissages, le déploiement des pôles d'éducation scientifique appelé LINEQ (Lycées d'intégration nationale pour l'équité et la qualité) et enfin, récemment, la mise en place des classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles.

30.6 Ces initiatives ont permis, entre autres, de renforcer l'inclusion et la qualité de l'école et d'enclencher une dynamique continue de performance et de réussite dans tout le système éducatif. Toutefois, malgré les avancées notées, des efforts restent encore à faire pour nous assurer de la réalisation d'une éducation de qualité pour tous d'ici 2030.

30.7 C'est alors le moment de consolider le partenariat qui lie l'UNESCO à ses États membres en s'inspirant des recommandations du Rapport « Repenser nos futures ensemble : un nouveau contrat social pour l'éducation ». C'est le présent en abordant la culture. Je voudrais revenir sur l'importance du travail de l'UNESCO dans les situations d'urgence. La préservation de notre patrimoine durement affecté lors de la pandémie, les effets néfastes du changement climatique, la lutte contre le trafic illégal de biens culturels sont autant de défis à relever pour sauvegarder notre héritage commun.

30.8 À ce propos, le Sénégal a mis en place un dispositif juridique spécifique pour juguler le fléau de trafic illégal des biens culturels. Par ailleurs, après avoir ratifié la Convention de 2001 sur la protection du patrimoine culturel subaquatique, le Sénégal vient de réaliser un premier inventaire des vestiges immergés au large de Gorée et de Dakar. L'inventaire sera poursuivi tout au long de la façade atlantique jusqu'à l'île historique de Karabane, au sud du Sénégal.

30.9 Pour le secteur de la communication et de l'information, ma Délégation se réjouit des axes programmatiques du Projet de stratégie à moyen terme pour 2022-2029 41/50. Notre politique d'ouverture et de libéralisation, et la mise en place d'un fonds d'appui et de développement de la Presse nous a permis d'avoir des centaines d'organes d'information.

30.10 Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, en mars 2022, Dakar abritera le neuvième Forum mondial de l'eau. Le Sénégal vous invite tous en terre africaine de la Teranga pour cet événement mondial qui portera sur le thème « La sécurité de l'eau pour la paix et le développement durable ». Je profite de l'occasion pour saluer la contribution essentielle de l'UNESCO dans la préparation de ces rencontres. Le Sénégal appuie également les initiatives de l'Organisation relatives à l'éthique des sciences, à la science ouverte, à l'intelligence artificielle, au leadership des femmes, à la jeunesse et aux sports. Je vous remercie de votre aimable attention.

31. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Ms Maria Victoria Angulo González, Minister of Education of Colombia. You have the floor Excellency.

32.1 **Sra. Angulo González (Colombia):**

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, señora Directora General, distinguidos representantes, queridos colegas: para Colombia, país que promovió la Agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en el marco de Naciones Unidas, la integralidad de la dimensión económica, cultural, social, ambiental tiene una gran relevancia. Por ello, y en la conmemoración de los 75 años de la UNESCO, al tiempo de felicitar al Embajador del Brasil por la presidencia que hoy asume, así como a la Directora General por su reelección, reiteramos el compromiso de Colombia, un compromiso por el multilateralismo, por el cumplimiento de la Agenda 2030 y por un trabajo regional y global, por la educación, la cultura, la ciencia y la información.

32.2 Estimados delegados, desde el inicio del gobierno del Presidente Iván Duque, la educación en Colombia ha sido un eje fundamental para avanzar en la búsqueda y la consolidación de la equidad y del desarrollo sostenible. Por eso, en este periodo de gobierno, entre el 2018 y 2022, el sector educativo ha incrementado su presupuesto en un 20%. Nos hemos enfocado en trabajar por promover el concepto y hacer realidad trayectorias educativas inclusivas y en ello debemos seguir trabajando desde la primera infancia hasta la educación superior, con pertinencia, con calidad. Y quiero aquí resaltar un importante avance en la gratuidad, gratuidad de los niños y jóvenes en el acceso, pero particularmente la gratuidad en la educación superior, considerada como una de las mayores apuestas y mayores conquistas de los jóvenes en las últimas décadas en nuestro país. Hemos escuchado a los jóvenes, hemos trabajado por y para los jóvenes y hoy hay más de 650 000 jóvenes que pueden acceder de forma gratuita a la educación superior. Sumado a ello, nos hemos comprometido con la ruralidad más y mejor tiempo escolar, ambientes escolares, dignificación de los maestros y de los directivos como eje de la transformación y, sobre todo, un foco en aprendizajes, más en esta coyuntura de pandemia.

32.3 Colombia es un país geográficamente y culturalmente diverso y por ello para nosotros es tan valioso gestar ambientes educativos y ambientes culturales que propicien, sobre todo, una sana convivencia y un desarrollo armónico. En ese sentido, el desafío no es menor y lo sumamos al retorno al 100 % de los estudiantes de la presencialidad con ocasión a esta pandemia y todos los desafíos que tenemos por reencontrarnos en la escuela, una escuela resiliente, una escuela donde trabajemos por reducir la deserción en la búsqueda de una construcción de una sociedad más justa y teniendo en cuenta lo que aquí hemos convertido los Futuros de la Educación, un referente que comparte UNESCO con todos los países miembros.

32.4 Destacamos también la presencia que tenemos en el Grupo de Alto Nivel como mecanismo global de cooperación, representando a nuestros amigos, colegas, países de América Latina y el Caribe. Un espacio en el que buscaremos el diálogo, las distintas voces, la construcción colectiva y lograr una posición consolidada como región acorde a nuestras prioridades y a las realidades de nuestros sistemas educativos. Estamos convencidos que este mecanismo no solamente impulsará la participación de los países, sino de agencias internacionales de la sociedad civil. Y sobre todo, quiero resaltar aquí tres valores: solidaridad, confianza y esperanza. Estos deben ser los valores básicos de este pacto colectivo por la educación.

32.5 Queridos colegas, la cultura también es otra prioridad para Colombia y prioridad de desarrollo sostenible. Por eso estamos muy comprometidos con el desarrollo de las industrias culturales, creativas y en general, del arte. El arte como forma de cohesión social, de promoción de la tolerancia, de la inclusión, de la gobernanza. Para ello, se ha impulsado con recursos el apoyo a los artistas, a los investigadores, a los gestores culturales, con un crecimiento muy importante del presupuesto en el año 2021 y 2022.

32.6 A su vez, nos articulamos con la UNESCO también en este eje, junto con Bangladesh y los Emiratos Árabes Unidos hemos presentado ante el Consejo Ejecutivo la iniciativa “Aprovechar el Año Internacional de la Economía Creativa para el Desarrollo Sostenible mediante una acción unificada”. Esto se suma a compromisos que hemos adquirido también previamente en las tres versiones del gran foro Arte, Cultura, Creatividad y Tecnología. Y esperamos seguir mostrando estos avances en el MONDIACULT, con el cual enviamos un mensaje de apoyo y de presencia a México en este importante encuentro. Y allí seguir deliberando sobre un tema tan importante como la salvaguardia del patrimonio inmaterial y la protección del patrimonio mundial.

32.7 Y en ese sentido, señor Presidente, colegas todos, Colombia cuenta con una extensa experiencia que quiero aquí destacar en la gestión integral de su patrimonio material, inmaterial y natural, y por esa experiencia queremos compartir nuestra candidatura al Comité de Patrimonio Mundial.

32.8 Estimados colegas, reconocemos también las potencialidades de la inteligencia artificial y lo que ella alberga, y en ese sentido, Colombia ha participado de manera muy activa en la negociación del proyecto de recomendación sobre la ética de la inteligencia artificial e igualmente muy convencidos de la importancia, hoy contamos como país con un Marco Ético para la Inteligencia Artificial y también hemos lanzado una misión de expertos en este ámbito del conocimiento. Colombia, nuevamente, como en educación y en cultura, se compromete con la UNESCO en su labor para la implementación de las recomendaciones en esta materia por el beneficio de todos.

32.9 Y finalizo en atención a la coyuntura actual, señor Presidente, extendiendo una invitación para que reflexionemos acerca de la importancia del fortalecimiento de la democracia, la democracia para el logro de la misión y el mandato de la UNESCO. Lo anterior, considerando que una institucionalidad robusta es aquella que permite, que garantiza el ejercicio de la libre expresión de una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad que promueva aprendizajes para todos. Precisamente es a partir del ejercicio de la democracia que la cultura y las ciencias despliegan todo su potencial para convertirse en fuente de conocimiento, crecimiento y desarrollo social. Muchas gracias, Presidente.

33. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Juan Manuel Brunetti Marcos, Minister of Education and Sciences of Paraguay. You have the floor Excellency.

34.1 **Sr. Brunetti Marcos (Paraguay):**

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señor Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo, señora Directora General de la UNESCO, excelencias, señores delegados: es un honor dirigirme a Uds. en representación de la Delegación de la República del Paraguay, en el marco de la 41ª Conferencia General de la UNESCO. Agradecemos este espacio de debate que posibilita a los Estados compartir nuestra visión estratégica sobre el rol que la UNESCO podría aportar en el contexto actual, así como los desafíos y oportunidades futuras que nosotros identificamos.

34.2 Sin dudas, estamos en un momento histórico que nos desafía no solamente a dar continuidad a los planes que hemos acordado en otras instancias, sino además a seguir pensando juntos en alternativas para la educación en contexto de pandemia y a planificar estrategias para la pospandemia. En este escenario inédito, definido por la pandemia, es justo reconocer el esfuerzo del sector educativo en nuestros docentes, quienes han asumido el desafío de garantizar el derecho a la educación en contextos tan diversos. Considero importante destacar la importancia de la cooperación entre nuestros países, que han permitido enriquecer las diversas respuestas que hemos ensayado en nuestro sistema educativo. La pandemia recrudesció algunas dificultades relacionadas a la exclusión educativa. Por eso, se considera relevante potenciar estrategias que permitan identificar perfiles de niños y adolescentes que se encuentran en situación de exclusión escolar y niños y adolescentes en riesgo de exclusión.

34.3 El Paraguay se encuentra en este momento inmerso en un proceso de transformación educativa, el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia lidera esta tarea desarrollando espacios de reflexión y debate en todo el territorio nacional, en la búsqueda de la construcción de una visión compartida orientada a una educación de calidad para todos. Actualmente estamos desarrollando foros departamentales que reúnen a diversos sectores con el objetivo de proponer líneas estratégicas para una hoja de ruta al 2030 y buscando priorizar la realidad de cada zona del país, teniendo en cuenta sus particularidades y los recursos disponibles. Este proceso convoca a generar un horizonte común hacia la construcción de una política de Estado para la educación en el Paraguay.

34.4 Finalmente, deseo mencionar algunas estrategias implementadas en el Paraguay, así como las proyectadas de la gestión de la política educativa para asegurar el derecho de la educación en este tiempo. Considerando la interrupción de las clases presenciales, hemos definido aprendizajes priorizados para cada grado, así como las estrategias metodológicas y los criterios de evaluación adaptados al contexto en el cual se desarrollan las clases.

34.5 Para el 2022, proyectamos centrar nuestros esfuerzos en asegurar las competencias definidas para cada ciclo y nivel educativo. Esto, a partir de una priorización curricular que considere al ciclo comunidad, realizando ajustes a las capacidades para cada ciclo y cohorte. También de manera conjunta con el Ministerio de Salud Pública y Bienestar Social, hemos elaborado un protocolo y guía operativa para el retorno seguro las instituciones educativas. La educación a distancia implicó una serie de esfuerzos, considerando que aún persiste un alto porcentaje de hogares sin conexión a Internet ni acceso a dispositivos electrónicos en el Paraguay.

34.6 A pesar de ello, hemos trabajado en estos dos últimos años en la creación de una plataforma de Recursos Digitales. Su uso está disponible para docentes, estudiantes y sus familias. La misma cuenta con planes diarios para docentes, cuadernillos de trabajo para estudiantes y clase de los denominados docentes nacionales, para dar soporte a este proceso de educación a distancia.

34.7 Para acompañar a las zonas más vulnerables y con menor disponibilidad de tecnología apropiada, este año realizamos la entrega de materiales impresos en las áreas de matemática y castellano para todos los estudiantes, del primero al noveno grado de la educación escolar básica. Para los estudiantes del nivel medio, se han puesto a disposición los textos de las bibliotecas escolares.

34.8 El año próximo, realizaremos la entrega de materiales impresos a todos los estudiantes de educación básica y educación media dentro de los kits de útiles escolares que se distribuyen al inicio de cada año lectivo. Iniciamos también la entrega de equipos tecnológicos a las instituciones educativas. La meta es llegar para el 2022 con 87% de nuestros estudiantes matriculados en instituciones educativas que ya estén conectadas y con equipamiento tecnológico.

34.9 Además, estaremos garantizando la entrega de equipos tecnológicos al 100 % de los docentes de los grupos vulnerables. Así también durante este año hemos dispuesto la entrega en comodato de los equipos tecnológicos disponibles en la instituciones educativas a fin de generar mejores condiciones para el desarrollo de sus actividades. Muchas gracias.

35. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Ms Gabriela Servilia Jiménez Ramírez, Minister of Science and Technology of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. You have the floor Excellency.

36.1 **Sra. Jiménez Ramírez** (República Bolivariana de Venezuela):

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señora Directora General de la UNESCO, señores ministros, delegados permanentes, señoras y señores: son fundamentales las contribuciones de la UNESCO al mundo, ya que promueve la democratización de la educación, la ciencia y la comunicación, al tiempo que protege la diversidad en aras de alcanzar el progreso y la justicia para todos los pueblos. Aprovecho esta ocasión para reconocer el valioso trabajo de la Directora General, Venezuela la felicita en su reelección.

36.2 La pandemia de la COVID-19 ha ensanchado las inequidades sociales en el mundo, ha aumentado la pobreza, ha afectado el desempeño. En este contexto, es importante redoblar los esfuerzos para que los más vulnerables puedan disfrutar de los objetivos de la Agenda 2030.

36.3 Venezuela hace un llamado a las autoridades de la UNESCO para que se pronuncien ante las medidas coercitivas unilaterales que atentan contra los derechos humanos en 30 países. Señores, pese a esta acción terrorista de bloqueo impuesto por el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, Venezuela mantiene los programas culturales, científicos y educativos. Hemos alcanzado el 70% de la vacunación de nuestro pueblo.

36.4 En materia educativa, queremos compartir con ustedes el programa “una gota de amor para mi escuela”, que en el marco del trabajo participativo que ha permitido que 8,7 millones de niños se incorporen a las aulas de clase.

36.5 Venezuela ha hecho un esfuerzo importante para mantener integrada a la juventud, a la sociedad. Ha alcanzado el mejor desempeño deportivo histórico en las Olimpiadas y en los Juegos Paralímpicos Tokio 2020.

36.6 Venezuela reafirma su compromiso con el Instituto IESALC para la cooperación técnica y la formación de futuras generaciones. Señor Presidente, en los próximos días haremos un aporte financiero y la firma de acuerdos que permitan la permanencia en la ciudad de Caracas de esta institución.

36.7 Mi país está comprometido con la preservación del patrimonio mundial, la cultura y la divulgación de las diversas manifestaciones. Recientemente la Asamblea Nacional aprobó la Ley de Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial, la cual fue consultada con los actores y protagonistas del hecho cultural como un ejercicio de la práctica democrática que caracteriza la Revolución bolivariana. Venezuela aguarda con optimismo en la próxima evaluación del expediente al culto a San Juan Bautista, una herencia de nuestros pueblos afrodescendientes.

36.8 Respalamos los esfuerzos destinados a fortalecer el proyecto de la “Ruta del Esclavo”. Es necesario reconocer los genocidas procesos y el colonialismo que ha llevado a la esclavitud a múltiples comunidades. Venezuela observa con muchísima preocupación cómo resurgen fenómenos perversos en la humanidad, tales como el racismo, la xenofobia y la discriminación. La UNESCO es un espacio propicio para promover la justicia, la paz, la igualdad y la solidaridad, enaltecer la dignidad humana, como lo dice su propia Constitución, sin distinción de etnia, sexo, idioma o religión.

36.9 El Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela apoya la estrategia operacional de la UNESCO para la prioridad África. Esta debe fortalecerse en sus cuatro pilares en concordancia con la posición común de la Unión Africana.

36.10 Nos complace informar, señor Presidente, la creación del Polo Científico Tecnológico en Venezuela, una instancia de articulación y cooperación para promover los avances científicos con las instancias privadas y públicas. Asimismo, el 5º Congreso Venezolano de Ciencia y Tecnología a efectuarse en este mes de noviembre.

36.11 También queremos destacar que para el año 2018 Venezuela había alcanzado la paridad de género en la ciencia. La Revolución bolivariana es definitivamente feminista. La mujer es protagonista de la gestión pública. El 55% de la nómina universitaria hoy en Venezuela son mujeres. En este sentido, el Gobierno de la República Bolivariana reconoce y apoya la iniciativa presentada por el Gabón para celebrar el Día Internacional de la Mujer en el Multilateralismo.

36.12 Respalamos igualmente, señor Presidente, la recomendación sobre ciencia abierta. En tiempos de revolución, el Gobierno Bolivariano ha asegurado garantías institucionales políticas para democratizar los beneficios de la ciencia, la tecnología y la innovación, desde la ecología de los saberes y del conocimiento a favor del bienestar colectivo. Una

manifestación de esto, es la alianza científico-campesina, un espacio de creación, transferencia de tecnologías y promoción de la producción soberana de alimentos, así también como el estímulo al desarrollo de software libre en estándares abiertos.

36.13 Venezuela reconoce, señor Presidente, los esfuerzos llevados a cabo por la Secretaría para elaborar una recomendación sobre la ética en la inteligencia artificial. No hay ética sin conciencia. Este es un campo de conocimiento que tendrá profundas implicaciones en la humanidad, en un entorno donde las decisiones cruciales se adoptan a través de algoritmos informáticos que simulan el raciocinio humano. Estas prácticas no deben ser discriminatorias y deben ser utilizadas estrictamente para fines pacíficos.

36.14 Señor Presidente, el Gobierno de la República Bolivariana reafirma su compromiso con los valores y los principios de la UNESCO, continuará defendiendo los principios de la solidaridad, la diversidad cultural, la soberanía de todas las naciones, educación y ciencia para construir la paz. Muchísimas gracias, señor Presidente.

37. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Honourable Emmalin Pierre, Minister of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information of Grenada. You have the floor Excellency.

38.1 **Ms Pierre (Grenada):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Mr President, I am pleased to congratulate you on your election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference, and I assure you that Grenada is committed to working with you. I wish you every success during your presidency. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Ms Audrey Azoulay for her re-election as Director-General and commend her for the progress achieved by the Organization during the last biennium despite the difficult circumstances faced due to COVID-19.

38.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc across the world. However, as small island developing States, we are affected even more because of the vulnerabilities, such as the impacts of climate change and small economies. Being one of our main sectors, education has been deeply impacted by school closures and limited access to learning opportunities. We recognize that this crisis requires collective action by all stakeholders to develop long-term strategies to address the needs of education and continue our journey in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Grenada continues to push forward with the integration of technology and education. The Government has provided tablets and computers to students and teachers in primary and secondary schools. Work continues in training teachers and parents, the development of content to support online learning and teaching and upgrade of Internet connectivity in every school. Our Government is working aggressively to support vulnerable families with Internet connections to support students who are learning at home.

38.3 The social and economic security of our citizens is dependent on our collective action. We therefore call on UNESCO as the lead organization for education to strengthen its support to Member States in the area of education. We continue to support the work of the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), of which Grenada has the honour of chairing the governing board. We recognize the importance of higher education and lifelong learning in our region and are pleased to have been the first country to ratify the new Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

38.4 Mr President, I would like to convey Grenada's sympathy to all victims across the world and in our Caribbean region who have suffered from natural disasters. We saw recently in our neighbouring islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Haiti and the Bahamas, the devastating effects of natural hazards. We see, once again, the vulnerability of small island developing States (SIDS) and how UNESCO's action and international solidarity are necessary in support of SIDS, especially taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic. We express our satisfaction for the creation of the SIDS section. And while reiterating our commitment to the two global priorities, Africa and gender equality, we believe that SIDS must be given further priority and we look forward to the setting up of an operational strategy. To guide UNESCO's action and increased support to SIDS, we call for the strengthening of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and adequate human and financial resources to allow it to fulfil its vital role in ocean governance, early warning systems, tsunami preparedness and the coordination of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) tasked to it by the United Nations General Assembly.

38.5 Grenada appreciates the efforts made to have an open and efficient consultation process for the preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy (41 C/4) and Programme and Budget (41 C/5). We look forward to seeing issues of high importance strengthened in the framework of the implementation, such as access to science and innovation, ethical principles related to climate change, youth programme, the fight against doping in sports, the diversity of cultural expressions and the preservation and promotion of natural, tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

38.6 The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of communication and information mandated by this Organization. Access to information, the use of technology to meet, teach and learn freedom of expression and the fight against misinformation and hate speech, building inclusive knowledge societies and the need to strengthen the Communication and Information (CI) Sector including its two intergovernmental programmes, the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the Information for All Programme (IFAP).

38.7 Mr President, we welcome the Draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the Draft Recommendation on Open Science and support their adoption at this session of the General Conference. Grenada also looks forward to the setting up of concrete measures to reach a more balanced and equitable geographical representation in the Secretariat in full respect of the rules and regulations of the Organization.

38.8 Finally, Mr President, by presenting its candidature this year for election to the Executive Board, Grenada aspires to continue working with all Member States of UNESCO to strengthen the Organization's role in the attainment of peace and sustainable development. We count on your full support. I thank you.

39. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Atageldi Shamyradov, Minister of Culture of Turkmenistan. You have the floor Excellency.

40.1 **Г-н Шамуратов (Туркменистан):**

Уважаемый г-н Председатель Генеральной конференции, уважаемый г-н Председатель Исполнительного совета, уважаемая г-жа Генеральный директор, уважаемые представители делегаций, дамы и господа, позвольте нам присоединиться к теплым поздравлениям в адрес г-на Сантьяго Морао по случаю его избрания на ответственный пост Председателя 41-й сессии Генеральной конференции ЮНЕСКО. Также выражаем глубокую признательность Генеральному директору ЮНЕСКО Одрэ Азуле за плодотворную деятельность, проводимую ЮНЕСКО во всем мире под ее чутким руководством.

40.2 В текущем 2021 г. ЮНЕСКО отмечает свое 75-летие. В течение этого небольшого по историческим меркам периода это специализированное учреждение ООН принимало самое активное участие в восстановлении и совершенствовании национальных систем образования, науки и культуры. ЮНЕСКО всеми силами защищает культурное наследие человечества и оказывает поддержку в реставрации исторических памятников во всем мире. Под эгидой этой Организации активно развивается международное научное сотрудничество. Сегодня объединительная и созидательная деятельность этой структуры нужна человечеству как никогда. Туркменистан как активное государство – член Организации высоко ценит заслуги ЮНЕСКО и продолжит сотрудничать с этим международным учреждением.

40.3 Туркменистан ведет активную деятельность по включению в международный реестр ЮНЕСКО различных объектов культурного и природного наследия. Правительство Туркменистана постоянно работает над обеспечением комплексной охраны памятников всемирного наследия на всей территории страны в полном соответствии с конвенциями и решениями Комитета всемирного наследия. Благодаря поддержке государств-членов шесть крупных историко-культурных объектов Туркменистана – заповедники Древний Мерв и Куля-Ургенч, Парфянские крепости Ниса, эпос «Героглы», туркменское национальное искусство пения и танца «Куштдепди», а также традиционное ковроткачество Туркменистана были включены в список всемирного наследия и репрезентативный список нематериального культурного наследия человечества ЮНЕСКО.

40.4 Дамы и господа, текущий 2021 г. проходит в нашей стране под девизом «Туркменистан – родина мира и доверия». В этом году, вошедшем в летопись страны как исторически значимый, туркменский народ под мудрым руководством уважаемого Президента Туркменистана Гурбангулы Бердымухамедова торжественно отметил 30-летие священной независимости.

40.5 Этот год также стал одним из плодотворных в истории сотрудничества между Туркменистаном и ЮНЕСКО. Правительство Туркменистана и ЮНЕСКО подписали меморандум о сотрудничестве на 2021-2023 гг. и план совместных действий на трехлетний период. В этом же году Туркменистан ратифицировал две важные конвенции ЮНЕСКО по культуре и образованию. В ходе 31-го заседания ассамблеи Межправительственной океанографической комиссии ЮНЕСКО Туркменистан был избран членом исполнительного совета данного органа на 2021-2023 гг. В текущем году благодаря поддержке в нашей стране стали успешно осуществляться международные программы ЮНЕСКО, такие как УНИТВИН, «Человек и биосфера» и «Память мира».

40.6 Туркменистан намерен и далее активно сотрудничать с ЮНЕСКО и готов поддерживать международные усилия по обеспечению всеобщего доступа к образованию, развитию культуры, разработке инноваций и новых технологий и использованию достижений научного прогресса для блага граждан Туркменистана и всего человечества. Благодарю за внимание!

41. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Tian Xuejun, Vice Minister of Education of China. You have the floor Excellency.

42.1 **田先生 (中国):**

主席先生、总干事女士、各位阁下、女士们、先生们：首先，我向新当选本届大会主席的巴西大使阁下表示热烈祝贺。相信在你的带领下，必将高效地完成大会议程。

42.2 今年是教科文组织《组织法》生效 75 周年，也是中国恢复在本组织合法席位 50 周年。五十年来，中国坚定支持教科文组织在职能领域为世界和平与发展发挥建设性作用，世界也见证了十四亿中国人民所取得的辉煌成就。在中国共产党成立一百周年之际，我们消除了绝对贫困，全面建成小康社会。

42.3 主席先生、各位同事，中国高度肯定阿祖莱总干事领导的战略变革，新的中期战略和新的计划与预算体现了战略变革成果。当前，疫情仍在全球肆虐，人类社会已被深刻改变，世界进入新的动荡变革期，各种挑战复杂交织。为此，习近平主席在联大第七十六届会议提出六点全球发展倡议，强调发展是实现人民幸福的关键，呼吁共同推动全球发展迈向平衡、协调、包容的新阶段。时代赋予本组织促合作、促发展、促和平的神圣使命，中方希望本组织更团结、更民主、更有力。中方支持一切有利于本组织健康发展的倡议。

42.4 教育是变革未来的重要力量。中方高度关注教育的未来报告，鼓励发展中国家优先发展教育，走教育强国之路。中方坚定支持非洲优先，将继续支持非洲教育发展。中方坚定支持性别平等，将继续资助女童和妇女教育奖，落实促进女童和妇女教育特使彭丽媛教授提出的女童和妇女数字教育和健康教育建议。科技革命改变着人类的生产生活，中方欢迎开

放科学建议书和人工智能伦理建议书，呼吁加强国际科技合作，帮助发展中国家提升创新能力，实现跨越式发展。中方主张人与自然和谐共生，赞赏本组织为应对气候变化采取的行动，支持人与生物圈、地质公园和海洋学计划，期待海委会进一步发挥作用，加强小岛屿发展中国家能力建设。维护文化多样性、促进文明交流互鉴，是本组织最具影响力的国际行动。第44届世界遗产大会在中国举办，并通过《福州宣言》。作为会议主席，我对大家的支持表示衷心感谢。中方将履行承诺，积极支持非洲遗产保护能力建设和世界遗产教育，继续支持本组织发掘丝绸之路等项目的历史价值，赞成在1970年《公约》框架内，推动非法流失文物返还工作。中方认为，新闻表达自由应建立在负责任的媒体的基础上，要共同防止偏见与仇恨言论破坏世界团结与和平。

42.5 主席先生、各位同事，新的中期战略即将实施，我们坚信发展是解决一切问题的总钥匙。必须坚持发展优先，着力解决发展不平衡、不充分问题，这样才能切实保障人权，实现社会公平与和谐。中方建议，一是坚持改革创新，要深化战略变革，坚持问题导向、行动导向和效果导向，创新工作机制，在工作人员任用上体现多元文化和专业能力，不断提升本组织的履职效能，确保优先战略落到实处，优先群体得到更多实质支持。二是坚持会员国主导。政府间组织的性质是本组织最大优势和履行职能的根本保障，要始终维护会员国的主体地位，发挥会员国的主导作用，通过各国全委会的统筹协调，构建更有力的伙伴关系网。三是坚持真正的多边主义，不搞意识形态划线，要秉持共商、共建、共享原则，弘扬和平发展、公平正义、民主自由的全人类共同价值。对重大问题，诸如《组织法》的修订，要通过充分对话协商达成共识。希望并相信本组织将以新面貌迎接新挑战，为构建人类命运共同体、创造人类美好未来作出新的贡献。

43. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Jean-Paul Carteron, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Delegate of Solomon Islands to UNESCO. You have the floor Excellency.

44.1 M. Carteron (Îles Solomon) :

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Représentant de Madame la Directrice générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, le XXI^e siècle est le siècle de tous les dangers pour les grandes puissances comme pour les petits États qui souffrent de menaces multiples et de l'injustice d'une mondialisation effrénée. La pandémie nous immerge dans un monde entièrement nouveau, nourri d'incertitudes. Tout, c'est une évidence, doit être réinventé. Le rôle de l'UNESCO doit aussi être réévalué et repensé, car le fossé se creuse dangereusement entre ce que nous faisons ou essayons de faire, l'esprit de notre mandat et ce que le monde attend de nous. Quant à la paix ; la paix, c'est notre mission.

44.2 Ce nouveau monde, ce sont d'abord les grandes démocraties qui s'interrogent sur leurs modes de fonctionnement, leurs difficultés à relever les nouveaux défis de la résilience, leurs incapacités progressives à produire les êtres exceptionnels dont nous avons tant besoin pour éclairer les voies de notre avenir. Ce sont les relations entre États qui se détériorent, le risque devenu permanent de nouveaux conflits partout. Courtoisie et retenue désertent les échanges entre leaders, de même que le respect des valeurs et des spécificités de chacun.

44.3 Il est une évidence depuis Babel, l'ensemble des pays de notre planète forment une mosaïque irréductible. Aucune nation n'a l'intention de déménager. Nous sommes donc condamnés à vivre les uns avec les autres. Nous sommes condamnés à parler, nous entendons et trouver les moyens de la paix par le langage de la paix. Nous sommes condamnés à réinventer et adapter en permanence une diplomatie de tolérance, d'intelligence, de compromis, de respect des valeurs de chacun, une diplomatie empreinte d'humanisme et d'un principe incontournable : l'acceptation de l'autre. Nous ne pouvons pas être les militants dogmatiques de certitudes qui ne sont pas celles des autres.

44.4 Il est gravé au fronton de cette maison que c'est dans l'esprit des hommes que naissent les guerres. C'est donc dans l'esprit des hommes que l'UNESCO, plus que jamais, doit travailler au cœur du multilatéralisme à élever les défenses de la paix. Mais pour cela, nous devons réinventer ce multilatéralisme, car aujourd'hui, il est en déclin, affaibli, critiqué de toutes parts et souvent impuissant, en décalage avec les problèmes du monde. Nous devons repenser notre mission, notre manière de travailler et l'action même de notre Organisation en revisitant son fonctionnement, ne recherchant désormais que l'action et l'efficacité opérationnelle. Le temps est révolu des discussions entre soi dans le confort douillet de ce beau palais.

44.5 Nous devons avoir constamment à l'esprit les difficiles réalités de notre monde et aspirer à l'action immédiate. Agissons ! Appelons le soutien de personnalités flamboyantes et d'influence qui n'ont que trop déserté cette maison. Trouvons des hommes et des femmes à même de porter avec force et crédibilité notre vrai message de paix par l'éducation et la culture. Cela donnera véritablement un sens à ce que nous sommes. On doit trouver l'UNESCO là où la paix recule, on doit trouver l'UNESCO là où la dignité des personnes est menacée, là où les bases de l'élévation spirituelle de l'être humain sont combattues et foulées aux pieds.

44.6 Le temps est révolu de ces grandes conférences internationales, où l'on se rend à grands frais pour témoigner de son autosatisfaction et se congratuler les uns les autres. Travaillons plutôt à la mise en œuvre des vrais moyens de préserver la paix du monde et le bonheur des peuples. Allons au cœur même de ces États qui se radicalisent là où l'on retire les cahiers et les crayons des mains des petites filles pour que celles-ci ne puissent apprendre à lire ou à écrire.

44.7 Nos conférences générales mobilisent au niveau de l'Organisation et de ses membres tant de moyens financiers et humains, alors qu'une grande partie du programme est consacrée à une succession de contributions nationales qui, en raison d'un enchaînement interminable, sont bien loin de mobiliser l'attention qu'elles mériteraient. Faisons de cette Conférence générale qui réunit tant d'esprits et de compétences un vrai think tank opérationnel. Travaillons sur le concret, concertons-nous, créons des forums spontanés d'échanges, de partages d'expériences, de réflexions et de discussions.

44.8 Prenons enfin avantage de cette opportunité exceptionnelle que représente, Mesdames et Messieurs, le fait d'être tous ici, ensemble, venus du monde entier. Faisons vivre cette salle avec de vrais débats. Créons de l'intérêt. Faisons en sorte que plus personne n'ait envie de prendre son téléphone dans la main pendant nos séances. Car l'élection à laquelle

nous venons de procéder n'est pas un dessaisissement de nos responsabilités. La définition de l'action et de la politique de l'UNESCO, c'est notre responsabilité et elle demeure. Nous sommes concernés et responsables en permanence.

44.9 Des moyens nouveaux doivent nous permettre, tout au long de l'année, d'évaluer l'action du Secrétariat, d'échanger avec ses responsables, de poser des questions, d'apprécier la valeur de ces initiatives, et enfin de communiquer ce que nous pensons pouvoir être le moyen d'améliorer et de concrétiser notre travail et l'efficacité de notre action.

44.10 L'UNESCO est une grande maison. Notre mission est une mission fantastique aujourd'hui. Si nous savons travailler, si nous savons faire ce qu'il faut, ce sera l'Organisation des Nations unies au sein de la famille des Nations unies qui aujourd'hui, sera la plus importante, la plus efficace, la plus porteuse. Il s'agit de paix. La guerre est à nos portes, la guerre est partout, les menaces sont partout. Il faut absolument que nous travaillions ensemble, que nous échangions et que nous construisions. Merci, monsieur le Président.

45. **The President:**

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Peter Reuss, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Germany to UNESCO. You have the floor Excellency.

46.1 **Mr Reuss (Germany):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, I do not want to miss the opportunity to congratulate you Ambassador Santiago Irazabal Mourão for your election as President of the General Conference, and to Madame Azoulay for her re-election as Director-General. Best wishes to both of you and good luck.

46.2 We live in a critical time for humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic is still raging, and it is of utmost importance to upscale global vaccination efforts. At the same time, the pandemic risks to distract us from the truly biggest disaster of our time – global warming. These are critical times for the multilateral system too. The entire United Nations system needs to respond and to adapt – in Glasgow, New York, Geneva and Paris. UNESCO is in a very good position within this global framework. With the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) to be adopted, including new convincing action on climate change and biodiversity loss, strong and credible commitment to human rights, and a reaffirmed engagement for its global priorities, Africa and women and gender, with a confirmed Director-General, UNESCO is ideally placed to take on an even more important role in the coming years.

46.3 Germany will continue to live up to its responsibility in the multilateral system. One important element is our upcoming presidency of the G7 in 2022. At UNESCO, you can count on Germany. This will remain true with the new Federal Government. In the past years, the already strong German commitment to multilateralism has been continuously and considerably reinforced. Germany has contributed to the establishment of new United Nations entities, including in the UN city of Bonn, and has supported the strengthening of existing mechanisms and entities. German support for UNESCO, both through government and parliament, has been substantially strengthened over the past years: Germany has increased its extrabudgetary contributions to UNESCO, including to many of the funds of the conventions. Germany continues to provide strong support to the Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg and the International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC) in Bonn, as well as to the International Bureau of Education (IBE) in Geneva. Through our National Commission, Germany is also very strongly engaged in the global networks of UNESCO: As in 2020, we have again supported African UNESCO designated sites in 2021 with emergency relief.

46.4 This session of the General Conference has many important decisions to make. Key points are the adoption of the new Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the new Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5). The two recommendations on the ethics of artificial intelligence and on open science underscore UNESCO's role as a leader in shaping our future. In particular, Germany expresses its sincere hope that membership in UNESCO will soon be universal again.

46.5 We are currently holding a very successful global education meeting and tomorrow we celebrate UNESCO's 75th anniversary. In the elections next week, Germany will stand for election to the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Council, in which we have played a very active role for the excellence process and in our international cooperation. We are also candidates for the Council of the International Bureau of Education (IBE). UNESCO's bodies have done a lot of work to make this important institute fit for future challenges. We support these efforts with a substantial voluntary contribution as well as by sending renowned experts to Geneva, preparing for long-term support for IBE. Both candidatures are especially important for us, and we have withdrawn other candidatures to focus on our engagement.

46.6 Germany supports UNESCO's successful leadership in SDG 4 and thanks the Organization for the successful reform of the coordination mechanism. The new mechanism, the High-Level Steering Committee, builds upon existing structures and includes all relevant actors. It will promote communication, foster mutual accountability and ensure that education gets the required attention and funding.

46.7 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) continues to be a priority of the German Government. The big challenges of our time, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change remind us of the crucial importance of a strong focus on sustainability. I thank all ministers and all delegations that participated in the 3rd World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in mid-May, which took place online from Berlin. The World Conference has been a full success; its outcome, the Berlin Declaration, is a landmark document. This is why, together with Japan, we have presented a draft resolution to follow up on the General Conference's last decision on the launch of the UNESCO-ESD decade, to reaffirm our strong commitment to education for sustainability and to make sure that this crucial topic remains on our agenda.

46.8 The world needs more multilateralism. It needs more partners, including from civil society, to engage in multilateralism. Together, we can shape the post-pandemic world to become a better place in terms of human rights and

global sustainability. Let us strengthen our engagement, and let us strengthen UNESCO to make this come true. It goes without saying that we associate ourselves with the statement of the European Union. Thank you very much indeed.

47. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency, Ms Nicola Reid, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of New Zealand. You have the floor Excellency.

48.1 Ms Reid (New Zealand):

Te whare etu nei, tena koe. We greet this house. *Te papa i waho nei, tena koe.* We greet this land. *Te mana whenua o tenei rohe, tena koutou.* We greet the people here. *Te hunga mate ki te hunga mate, haere.* We think of those that have gone before us. *Te hunga ora ki a tatou te hunga ora.* We give thanks for those of us here today. *Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.* Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, I greet you in Te reo Māori, the language of the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

48.2 Seventy-five years after UNESCO's establishment, the importance of sharing knowledge and understanding through multilateralism has never been more vital. It seems that even when global events threaten to disconnect and divide us, a shared instinct to connect with one another still prevails. We often describe New Zealand as being remote, but connected. The COVID-19 pandemic has made both parts of this statement truer than ever. In some ways, we now feel that remoteness more keenly, with the vast ocean surrounding our islands having taken on an even greater significance while our borders are closed. Despite this physical distancing, however, the pandemic has demonstrated more starkly than ever just how closely connected we are. UNESCO plays a crucial role in fighting the impacts of the pandemic, ensuring that we stay connected, and progress in our international commitments, including the SDGs. UNESCO's work to build peace, contribute to the eradication of poverty and support intercultural dialogue must continue.

48.3 Mr President, the founders of UNESCO imagined the Organization as a laboratory of ideas, one through which the world shared innovation and knowledge and built peace. Now, as we prepare to celebrate UNESCO's 75th anniversary, we recognize that there are many more ways to see and understand the world than once was acknowledged. The integration of indigenous knowledge into our work ensures that a diversity of thought guides and informs UNESCO activities and programmes. The world is rich with ways of understanding. New Zealand encourages UNESCO to leverage the collective expertise of indigenous knowledge across the globe, which will enhance the quality and sustainability of its work to achieve better outcomes for generations to come.

48.3 New Zealander is proud to be a Pacific nation. The people of Aotearoa New Zealand share a special cultural and historical relationship with the people of the Pacific. We are pleased to support the candidacy of the Cook Islands for the election to the UNESCO Executive Board, which would add a further perspective to UNESCO's most important decision-making table. The ocean is central to the lives, livelihoods and the people of the Pacific. New Zealand strongly supports the vision of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, to identify new solutions to address the decline in ocean health. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, ocean science draws from many sources of knowledge and approaches, including the Pacific and Mātauranga Māori. Weaving these knowledge systems together with mainstream science has generated a distinctive approach to how we do research, requiring collective expertise to be involved at every stage. The IOC has a key role to play in supporting these new approaches, particularly in designing solutions to the challenges presented by climate change.

48.4 Stronger outcomes are achieved when we involve the expertise and partnerships offered by all stakeholders, whether from civil society, industry or industry groups. Inclusive multilateralism is one in which our common understandings are enriched by diverse perspectives. The Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online, which the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Arden, established with President Emmanuel Macron of France, is an example of what can be achieved when we work together in a multi-stakeholder capacity. We welcome UNESCO's ongoing involvement in this important initiative and appreciated the Director-General's thoughtful intervention at the Christchurch Call second anniversary summit in May.

48.5 We offer congratulations to Madam Director-General on her re-election and wish her every success. UNESCO prides itself as an Organization which encourages debate and values the diverse voices of all of its Member States. Through its network of National Commissions, UNESCO seeks out a multiplicity of views and actively engages civil society. The decision not to offer a virtual option to participate in this General Conference, while much of the world is still experiencing significant disruption due to the pandemic, seems to run contrary to UNESCO's core principles of inclusiveness and participation. New Zealand calls on UNESCO to keep these principles at the heart of its decisions.

48.6 Mr President, Aotearoa New Zealand continues to enthusiastically engage in UNESCO programmes, including the Creative Cities, geoparks and Chairs networks. These programmes are rich contexts for promoting the important values of UNESCO nationally and internationally. Importantly, they also provide powerful mechanisms for mutual learning and knowledge sharing across the globe as we face the significant challenges that lie ahead. The work of UNESCO and the principles that continue to guide it 75 years after its establishment are as important as ever. *No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.*

49. The President:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency, Mr Muhammad Amjad Aziz Qazi, Chargé d'Affaires of Pakistan to UNESCO. You have the floor Excellency.

50.1 Mr Qazi (Pakistan):

Bismillāh ir-rahmān ir-rahīm (In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate). Mr President, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to extend my sincere felicitations to His Excellency, Mr Santiago Mourão for assuming the important position of the President of the 41st session of the General Conference. I also sincerely thank and appreciate His Excellency Mr Cengizer, the outgoing president of the

40th session of the General Conference, for his able stewardship. I also take this opportunity to commend the Director-General for her leadership and continued efforts to realize the goals and objectives of UNESCO and to make it stronger and more efficient. I wish her success during her second term in office.

50.2 Mr President, as much as the ongoing pandemic wreaked havoc with millions of lives around the world, it has also unleashed new coping mechanisms that are going to stay with us for a long time. The world has witnessed an upsurge of connectivity, digital infrastructure, virtual learning and remote learning tools, which could be extremely useful in altering the world literacy map for the better if used properly. In Pakistan, more than 100 million people have access to Internet and mobile devices. We believe that digital access to learning resources can greatly reduce various barriers to education. During the pandemic, Pakistan launched the “Tele School Initiative” to broadcast free learning content to students in grades 1 to 12, as well as a first radio school to expand student outreach. To impart quality and equitable education, Pakistan has also devised a national education policy framework, focusing on key priorities. It included a uniform education system, enrolment of out-of-school children, teacher quality enhancement and technical and vocational training.

50.3 Mr President, Pakistan is home to rich cultural heritage and ancient civilizations. The cultural heritage of Pakistan is an asset which we would like to preserve for our posterity. The six UNESCO world heritage sites of Pakistan are living examples of our cultural diversity. Pakistan appreciates UNESCO for putting in place a comprehensive cultural heritage programme, and remains committed to preserving our world heritage sites in coordination with UNESCO and its advisory bodies.

50.4 Mr President, the world is at a crossroads. Nation states are faced with two contrasting choices. On the bright side is multilateralism, dialogue, peaceful co-existence, tolerance, upholding of fundamental rights, respecting each other’s values, sharing of knowledge and celebrating diversity of our cultures. On the dark side is jingoism, xenophobia, bigotry, racism, prejudice and discrimination. The side we choose today will determine our future tomorrow. I am afraid there are strong currents in today’s world that are pushing humanity towards the dark side. Yet we are fortunate enough that our forefathers were courageous and wise enough to have established 75 years ago a multilateral institution like UNESCO. It is our collective duty to strengthen it and to make it a role model for other institutions to follow.

50.5 I take this opportunity to urge the Director-General to take cooperation among the Member States in the fields of education, science and culture to a much higher level during her second term. I would also urge her to take concrete steps in preventing politicization of debates on these important subjects so that our energies are directed towards positives that join us together and not towards negatives that push us away. At the end, I would like to stress that Pakistan will always stand by UNESCO and its Member States for achieving the ideals upon which UNESCO was founded: to create a just, peaceful and inclusive world, a world which is a better and safer place for our future generations. I thank you all.

51. **The President:**

Thank you Ambassador for your statement. That was the last speaker on our list for this afternoon. Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to inform you that the delegation of Azerbaijan has asked for the right of reply to a statement made earlier. In accordance with Rule 70 of our Rules of Procedure, I will accord the right of reply for two minutes. You have the floor, Excellency.

52. **Azerbaijan:**

Thank you, Mr President, I would like to use our right of reply to the statement made today by the Foreign Minister of Armenia. This speech is another hypocritical attempt to divert the attention of the international community from the aggravated facts of cultural cleansing, carried out not only within the previously occupied territories of Azerbaijan, but also within Armenia itself. Our cultural heritage, including 65 mosques out of 67 situated in the liberated territories, were purposefully destroyed and razed to the ground by Armenia, to wipe out the evidence of historical presence of Azerbaijan in these territories. The historical names of Azerbaijani villages have been totally changed. Ancient toponyms have been replaced with Armenian names. Azerbaijan has liberated its territories during the 44-day Patriotic War, thus implementing the four United Nations Security Council resolutions, the resolutions which demanded immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories. Today for Azerbaijan, conflict is over and my country is focused on future revival of the liberated territories. The huge reconstruction and restoration works are carried out by the Government of Azerbaijan, with the participation of renowned international experts in the liberated territories in order to restore the true and historical image of the region. There is a constructive dialogue between Azerbaijan and UNESCO on the dispatching of an independent technical mission to the conflict-affected territories of Azerbaijan. With such an attempt to mislead the international community, Armenia demonstrates one more time that it is not interested in the accomplishment of the technical mission, rather than its politicization. Speaking about diversity and tolerance, it should be reminded that Armenia is the only mono-ethnic country in the region. While the international community strives for eliminating all forms of discrimination, as well as fighting against Nazism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and xenophobia, the Armenian Government glorifies and erects monuments for Nazi military generals in their capitals. Regretfully, instead of building peace in the minds of men and women, Armenia is misusing this highest podium by poisoning the noble spirit of this venerable House, which is totally unacceptable. Thank you.

53. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your statement. Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, Excellencies, we have had a very productive day today, and I wish to thank you all for your wisdom in speaking, and of course patience in listening. The Plenary will convene again tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. sharp. I remind the distinguished members of the Bureau that its second meeting will take place tomorrow, at 9 a.m. in Room X. I wish you a very pleasant evening. This meeting is now **adjourned**.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.