

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

Friday 12 November 2021 at 10.10 a.m.

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

Second report of the Bureau

1.1 The President:

Dear colleagues, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I declare open the seventh plenary meeting of the General Conference, which will be dedicated to the continuation of the general policy debate. Before we start with the national statements, I wish to inform you that the Bureau held its second meeting this morning. I am pleased to give you a very short report of this meeting.

1.2 In accordance with the directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations and in accordance with the Rules of Procedures of the General Conference the Bureau recommended that a number of non-governmental organizations bearing consultative status with UNESCO and having requested to take the floor during the general policy debate be granted to do so. It was further clarified that according to Rule 66 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference that they may address plenary meetings of the General Conference on matters within their competence, if authorized by the Bureau. The NGOs may make statements of three minutes. The chairpersons of those committees and commissions that have already begun their work reported to the Bureau on the results of their work. The committees and commissions are working very efficiently and according to their schedule. The President of the General Conference indicated that he will present at the next Bureau meeting a proposal for the organization of the work of the final meeting of the General Conference. May I take it that the General Conference agrees to take note of this report? *It is so **decided**.*

General policy debate (continued)

2.1 The President:

Excellencies, we are honoured by the presence of Her Excellency Ms Ana Brnabić Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, who will deliver her speech as the first speaker of this General Policy Debate this morning. I call on Her Excellency Ana Brnabić Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia. You have the floor, Excellency.

3.1 Ms Brnabić (Serbia):

Thank you very much, and good day to all of you. Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour and pleasure to lead Serbia's delegation at the 41st session of the General Conference. I would like to thank Director-General Audrey Azoulay for your efforts in organizing this Conference, and I have to say, very honestly, we owe you a great deal of gratitude for the engagement, dedication and leadership you have shown during these difficult times. Thank you.

3.2 I would like to congratulate also President Mourão on your election to this high office and thank your predecessor, Mr Cengizer, for his dedicated and highly successful contribution over the past two years. As an organization with a 75-year long history, UNESCO's role and activities are needed now more than ever. UNESCO's noble mission and unique expertise supported by the willingness and determination of all Member States to cooperate are crucial tools to ensure the next generations can thrive.

3.3 The Republic of Serbia remains committed to making continued efforts to achieve visible and sustainable results in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have attached special importance to the planning and implementation of activities aimed at achieving a goal four focused on ensuring equitable education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. We have established the National Academy for Public Administration well where public servants can learn new skills. We have started introducing IT training and digital literacy courses so citizens young and old alike can learn programming and coding and be better equipped for the jobs of the future and connectivity.

3.4 To reduce the gap in the labour market, we are opening a dozen of national training centres that will train the workforce for new and modern industrial jobs. And in order not to leave anyone behind we have placed special focus on investments into rural broadband, with the goal to have almost 100% of our territory covered by high-speed internet by 2025.

3.5 Serbia has been consistently committed to promoting science, and we are proud of the work of the centre for Water for Sustainable Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in Belgrade. We are also very much looking forward to the fact that Belgrade will host the World Conference on Basic Sciences and Sustainable Development in September next year. This is perhaps the largest scientific event supported by UNESCO, and we are eager to welcome you all to Serbia at that time. Furthermore, Serbia fully supports the adoption of the recommendation on open science, which identifies the shared values and principles of open science and concrete measures concerning open access and open data. We have established both an open data and open science online portals in Serbia, and we are introducing the e-Science concept. By the end of 2022 we will have a repository of all scientific production from Serbia with free access.

3.6 I am particularly pleased that after two years of work, the global Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence will be adopted. Two years ago, the Government of Serbia adopted the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence for the period 2020 to 2025 to enable utilization of artificial intelligence, to promote and drive economic growth and employment, and to create a better life for all citizens. Serbia strives to position itself as a leader in the development of AI through its implementation, and one of the key pillars is ethics.

3.7 We have introduced AI into elementary and high schools and founded seven new master courses in AI at different faculties across Serbia. The Government also established the AI Institute of Serbia earlier this year to ensure that ethics are

a core consideration as we develop and implement AI. In December, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce will be starting courses on AI and ethics in traditional industries. I am proud and I am honoured to lead a country that has become a regional leader in information technology and that is becoming a regional leader in artificial intelligence, all while respecting the guidelines and principles of AI ethics.

3.8 Ladies and gentlemen, Serbia finds culture particularly important. Cultural heritage contributes to the identity of a nation, and special attention should be given to finding appropriate and efficient methods to protect it from all forms of violence and extremism. Unfortunately, I have to emphasize that the severe example of Serbia's cultural, historical and spiritual heritage in Kosovo and Metohija is proof of how important the role of UNESCO is in protecting and preserving heritage. By inscribing them on the list of World Heritage in Danger, three gems of Serbian medieval cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija are being preserved: the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery, Gračanica Monastery and the Church of the Virgin of Ljeviša. However, hundreds of sites and monuments are still endangered. Serbian heritage in Kosovo and Metohija is of immeasurable importance not only for the national identity of Serbia, but also as a part of the treasure of European and world heritage.

3.9 I would like to underline the consistent adherence of the Republic of Serbia to the core principles of UNESCO, grounded in the United Nations Charter and UNESCO's Constitution, to dialogue and consensus rather than unilateralism. For this very reason, we continually advocate for de-politicizing UNESCO. It is the responsibility of all Member States to preserve the principle of consensus and constructive and open dialogue on all issues under the UNESCO mandate. Sharing and recognizing UNESCO's global vision and leadership, Serbia stands as a reliable partner, strongly committed to the UNESCO mandate and its values. I thank you very much.

4. **The President:**

I thank Her Excellency for your speech. Thank you very much. Now I will call His Excellency Mr Mark Brown, Prime Minister of Cook Islands.

5.1 **Mr Brown** (Cook Islands):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I bid you a warm *kia orana* from the Cook Islands. It is certainly heart-warming to address you virtually today, especially when I know that it would have been much more enjoyable to meet in person with fellow delegates and UNESCO staff amongst the halls and great rooms of Fontenoy. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate UNESCO on its 75th anniversary. It is a remarkable achievement to have accomplished such growth and influence since 1945. Since joining UNESCO in 1989, the Cook Islands has adopted and promoted many significant programmes. We remain committed to the core values of multilateral diplomacy, democratic governance, inclusiveness, and diversity.

5.2 The Cook Islands is increasingly recognized as a strong and effective advocate for the Pacific region and the small island developing States, better known as SIDS, a priority group in UNESCO's strategy. We acknowledge UNESCO's efforts in supporting the SIDS agenda, through the establishment of a section dedicated to our islands.

5.3 As a small island developing State ourselves, our economy is still extremely vulnerable given our narrow economic base which relies on tourism and our exposure to natural disasters exacerbated by the ever-present impacts of climate change. Indeed, nothing has emphasized this fragility more than the disastrous economic and social impacts which followed the global outbreak of COVID-19. And although over 95% of our eligible Cook Islands population has been vaccinated, we now face a challenging road to economic recovery and will be relying more than ever on our international institutions to speed our recovery.

5.4 Despite these challenges, my country has committed to ensuring UNESCO's presence in the Cook Islands and regionally, remains active. That said, I was concerned to learn that virtual participation at this year's General Conference has been severely limited. At a time when countries have been forced to adapt quickly and utilize technology and when even our most isolated islands in the Pacific have been able to connect via interactive virtual platforms to ensure business continuity, that UNESCO could not do the same for such a long standing and prestigious General Conference, is disappointing. The very principles that launched UNESCO 75 years ago are being put at risk.

5.5 There is no greater value than supporting the development of our people, and while spread over 15 small islands and atolls and across 2 million square kilometres of ocean, it is our people who are at the centre of our development. We know that people are also at the centre of UNESCO's mandate. The desire of UNESCO to respond to the needs of the most disadvantaged and excluded is critically important, especially during times of great crisis and challenge.

5.6 We are significantly involved in UNESCO's work on education for sustainable development (ESD). Ensuring our children and their families have the requisite skills and knowledge needed to make decisions on issues that will impact the environment they and future generations will inherit, is vital to us. Our "Marae Moana", marine protected area, has provided the Cook Islands with valuable first-hand experience and expertise on integrated policy in oceans governance, and in this context we believe we can add value to the programmes covered under UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

5.7 Our youth programmes are also well positioned for cross-sectoral approaches. Building a stronger resilience in our youth has become even more important in the current global environment and particularly during times of significant disruption to the structures that normally provide our young people with a safe place for development. The Cook Islands are part of the Asia-Pacific family, yet the Pacific are also 17 countries with one field office to meet all of our unique and collective needs. We recognize the financial constraints under which the Organization is working but request that such constraints do not impact on the ability of the Apia Office to better and effectively support our respective countries.

5.8 Representation of the Pacific region has been regrettably missing from UNESCO's governance structure. So, to this end, the Cook Islands is humbled to have the unanimous support of all Pacific Islands countries and territories in our candidacy for the Executive Board of UNESCO. Today, we approach the Board as a Pacific and as a small island developing State, representative of many voices, and with a commitment of adding a unique and valuable perspective to the work of the Executive Board. The Cook Islands stands ready to work with all Member States of UNESCO to ensure our world will provide a safe, nurturing and peaceful place for generations to come. Thank you and *kia manuia*.

Ms Baassiri (Lebanon) takes the Chair

6. The President:

I thank His Excellency Brown and I call on His Excellency Professor George Magoha, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education of Kenya. The floor is yours.

7.1 Mr Magoha (Kenya):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Congratulations, Mr President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Conference. Kenya wishes you well and pledges full support for a successful tenure. Kenya commends the Director-General and the Secretariat for strong support to Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic and looks forward to working closely with the Director-General Ms Audrey Azoulay, during her second term.

7.2 The 75th anniversary of UNESCO marks a new dawn for UNESCO's Priority Africa, as conceptualized and presented in the Draft Programme and Budget which Kenya fully supports. Expectations are high that the new operational strategy for Priority Africa and its flagship programmes will unlock UNESCO's full potential to support African Member States to achieve African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Agenda 2030.

7.3 Mr Chairperson, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on education, if not well mitigated, can have long-term implications, especially for the most vulnerable. We take this early opportunity to recognize the collaborative action between all stakeholders in mitigating the effects of the pandemic on education. Kenya welcomes assistance to improve policies that support teachers who work on front on frontlines, ensuring quality education, while reorganizing the instrumental role that they play in determining learning outcomes. Kenya underpins innovation and coordination to protect and promote education and to accelerate progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 in this regard.

7.4 In this regard, the Kenyatta Declaration, launched during the Global Education Summit: Financing Global Partnership for Education 2021-2025, calls for countries to protect education budgets at the pre-COVID levels, minimum 20% of annual total public expenditure. Where this is not possible, Member States are encouraged to increase their domestic financing of education towards the global benchmark of 20% of annual budgetary allocations. We welcome the proposed Priority Africa flagship programmes and the emphasis on technologies, as well as reinforcement of TVET systems in Africa. A strong focus on TVET tertiary education will equip our youthful populations with the relevant skills and expand educational opportunities through capacity, development and technology transfers.

7.5 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Kenya appreciates UNESCO's role to strengthen international scientific cooperation, open science and address climate crisis, including through development of solutions for the water secure world through UNESCO's network for centres and chairs. Safe drinking water remains a priority for Kenya, and we seek to strengthen partnerships through UNESCO. We look forward to twinning with regions as we pursue additional biosphere reserves, including establishment of transboundary biosphere reserves.

7.6 Mr Chairperson, cognizant that the ocean plays a critical role in the realization of sustainable development, Kenya welcomes the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. We express our wish to strengthen cooperation with the IOC and Member States in expanding capacity development, as well as accelerating transfer of marine technology, training and education in order to effectively harness the blue economy. Kenya welcomes the introduction of the Priority Africa flagship programme that has a very strong focus on ethics of artificial intelligence and expressed our wish to pursue cooperation with UNESCO and partners towards the organization of a regional conference on ethics and artificial intelligence.

7.7 Kenya also values UNESCO's Priority Gender Equality, as well as the strategic focus placed on youth as a priority group of UNESCO. We must therefore place all efforts in creating meaningful engagement. Kenya has committed to the growth and promotion of clean sports. We are currently reviewing our national sports policy with the aim of ensuring that we develop and grow sports talents from the grassroots level. Kenya is therefore keen to actively participate in UNESCO's "Fit for Life" initiative as an accelerator to COVID-19 recovery and youth well-being.

7.8 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we appreciate the relentless support by UNESCO as a solo United Nations agency with a mandate for the protection of cultural property, notably through mechanisms such as the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP) and the work of the culture conventions. Kenya encourages UNESCO to continue promoting international cooperation with a view to achieving the restitution of such cultural property.

7.9 Similarly, we underscore the need to strengthen collaborative efforts, research and innovative solutions for the conservation of heritage sites in tandem with the vital need for the socioeconomic development in the regions where the sites are located. We therefore have hope for the new Priority Africa flagship programme on culture and UNESCO to lead the process on capacity development for policies that enable the preservation of world heritage in tandem with the infrastructure development projects so as to enable communities to develop from both. I thank you.

8. The President:

Thank you Excellency Professor Magoha. We will now hear a pre-recorded video message from His Excellency the Honourable Rodolphe Samuel, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport of Sint Maarten.

9.1 **Mr Samuel** (Sint Maarten):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, greetings from the friendly island of Sint Maarten. Mr President, the government of Sint Maarten congratulates you, upon your election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference and I wish you every success during your presidency. It is such an honour and distinct pleasure for me to address the General Conference virtually for UNESCO's 75th anniversary.

9.2 Mr President, as minister responsible for education, I support the upgrading of teachers' digital skills, knowledge and the utilization of distance, blended or hybrid teaching and learning. Thus, I would like to commend UNESCO's global and regional response to COVID-19, which helped countries to mitigate the disruption to schools and learning caused by the pandemic. UNESCO's regional capacity building initiative to upgrade 10,000 Caribbean teachers in 20 small island developing States (SIDS) helped to strengthen teacher capacity to implement quality distance and blended learning programmes.

9.3 I am pleased to report that teachers on Sint Maarten, who participated in these online trainings, acquired the necessary digital skills to enhance learning for students within the blended and virtual classroom context. The continuation of such training by UNESCO is welcomed as they support countries in their process of providing quality education for all.

9.4 I am also delighted to share news of a recently confirmed partnership with our Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, the University of Sint Maarten, and the University of the Virgin Islands, to provide professional development opportunities for educators and aspiring educators. To ensure continued learning for all students during school closure in the early phases of the pandemic, the acquisition and provision of digital devices to students in need was a priority for my ministry. Through the "Inspiring our Students with Technology in Education Project (iSTEP)", students and teachers of public education schools received devices to facilitate learning continuity. The private sector, social clubs, and individual donors were also encouraged to sponsor devices and data for students.

9.5 Mr President, it is now four years since Sint Maarten was devastated by a category 5 hurricane, and as a small island developing State, promoting mitigation strategies and providing adequate support for building the resilience of the effects of climate change is vital. Sint Maarten applauds UNESCO for the installation of a unit that is dedicated to the necessities of SIDS, and supports the SIDS' group call for an advocacy plan and a resource mobilization strategy for SIDS within UNESCO. We, like other SIDS countries, look forward to SIDS being recognized as a global priority.

9.6 In the area of culture, Sint Maarten intends on co-ratifying the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage as a country within the Dutch Kingdom. We continue to expand on our national intangible cultural heritage inventory and promote our rich cultural heritage via our awareness campaign "I Remember Intangible Cultural Heritage" (IRICH).

9.7 Mr President, Sint Maarten supports and embraces anti-doping practices. With the approval of our application by the Fund for the Elimination of Doping in Sport, a no doping/no drugs anti-doping awareness campaign along with education and training programmes on anti-doping, will be executed through the department of sport, the National Sports Institute, and Sint Maarten's sports and Olympic federation.

9.8 In closing, this year, Sint Maarten celebrated its 10th anniversary as an Associate Member of UNESCO. It is our goal to continue to build on successes and develop new initiatives in the area of education, culture, science and communication and information, in our continued efforts to uphold the ideals and mandate of UNESCO, Sint Maarten reconfirms its commitment to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will continue to safeguard and invest in our cultural, documentary, and digital heritage, and focus on the provision of quality education in our schools and initiating professional development opportunities for our educators and aspiring teachers. I thank you.

10. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. Now I invite Her Excellency Dr Vesna Bratić Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Montenegro to the floor.

11.1 **Ms Bratić** (Montenegro):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to address you on the occasion of the 41st session of the General Conference, which this year is taking place in a restricted hybrid format due to the unprecedented global health crisis that we are going through. Allow me to extend on behalf of Montenegro and on my personal behalf the heartfelt congratulations to Madam Audrey Azoulay for her re-election to post of the Director-General. My sincere congratulations go also to the President of the 41st of the General Conference, the Permanent Delegate of Brazil, Ambassador Santiago Irazabal Mourão.

11.2 Your Excellencies, please be assured of the readiness of Montenegro to contribute with all available capacities to the realization of your priorities for the benefit of the Organization. I would like also to congratulate the UNESCO Secretariat, the Director-General and her team on their efforts, which, despite many challenges, enabled us to meet in person at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and send a strong message about the importance of unity and especially about the importance of science our most important ally in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. I am convinced that this experience will further motivate us to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, the key mechanisms for overcoming both this and any future global challenge.

11.3 Montenegro is fully committed to multilateralism and to making a full contribution to the enhancement of such processes. The areas falling within UNESCO's mandate represent the key values of humanity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, but also serve as a strong reminder of the importance of building societies of social justice based on inclusion

and respect for full diversity, and above all of the importance of developing societies that nurture a humane approach at the core of which is investment in science, education and culture. Let it not be just lip service.

11.4 The two years between the previous session and this session were marked by the devastating toll on human lives, but also by self-reflection, with all of us becoming aware of the power of nature and the need for reconciliation between people and our environment. We have continued to exploit natural resources without doing much to truly adhere to the Paris Agreement and make a full contribution to its implementation. These days, we are getting messages from COP26 and witnessing dramatic scenarios that scientists have been warning us about if we fail to reduce CO² emissions and devise policies for reaching carbon neutrality.

11.5 Guided by these principles and being strongly committed to sustainable development, Montenegro is focused on preserving biodiversity and protecting its natural resources, such as Durmitor National Park, which has been a UNESCO world heritage site for 41 years now, and the Tara River Basin, a UNESCO biosphere reserve.

11.6 The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the biggest disruption to education in history. School closures have had a dramatic impact on children's social and emotional health, with children living in socially vulnerable situations being particularly affected. With little time to adapt to new circumstances the pandemic has left many students, teachers and families struggling with the challenges of remote learning, leading to educational inequalities and exposing the digital divide.

11.7 Leadership in education is now strongly needed in order to mitigate the COVID-19 learning loss while ensuring that no child is left behind. In addition to education, cultural life has also been battered by the pandemic. Many artists and cultural workers struggle to make ends meet, with some of them being forced to seek alternative forms of employment, which is a terrible pity. COVID-19 has reminded us of the need to strengthen the status of artists and cultural workers and ensure the resilience of creative and cultural industries. Yet the pandemic has also changed the way we experience and interact with culture. Among other things, it has accelerated the digitization of culture, bringing cultural heritage closer to citizens. Thanks to digital technologies, the public has been able to access cultural material by visiting virtual museums, galleries and libraries.

11.8 In its 75 years of existence UNESCO has shown that the principles on which the work of this Organization is based are exactly what is necessary for the world to solve the problems that knows no borders and to which any country can be exposed regardless of its socioeconomic development. While UNESCO is marking the Organization's 75th anniversary this year, next year, Montenegro is marking 15 years of its membership in UNESCO.

11.9 UNESCO membership is one of the strategic priorities of our foreign policy, and the priorities arising from it are reflected on the national level, both in terms of activities in the UNESCO National Commission, national and local institutions, and in terms of activities of local communities and civil society. The world heritage sites in Montenegro, a total of four, of which two are individual and two are multinational ones, continue to be the focus of interest for the UNESCO National Commission, and our priority is to make extensions and make new nominations in accordance with the agreement of all stakeholders.

11.10 Once again, on behalf of Montenegro, I take this opportunity to thank UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre for their support to Montenegro in the previous years, with the aim of significantly improving the preservation of the natural, cultural and historical areas of culture as stated in the decision of the World Heritage Committee. We are especially proud of the cooperation we have with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia regarding our common cultural property of Stecci medieval tombstone graveyards, as well as with Croatia and Italy regarding the Venetian fortification from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as cultural goods belonging to several countries.

11.11 Montenegro supports the reform of the Organization initiated by the Director-General, which is why it strongly supports her new term of office in order to implement the initiated reforms so that UNESCO continues to be a key partner to countries in the areas of education, science and culture, but also in all other areas which are within the scope of work of the Organization.

11.12 In addition, Montenegro expresses its sincere gratitude to the Regional Bureau of Science and Culture in Venice and its internal office in Sarajevo, which have been a decades-long, strong partner and exceptional support to projects and programmes implemented in these areas in Montenegro and which are the basis of regional cooperation in all UNESCO areas.

11.13 Finally, let me congratulate all countries which will be elected to UNESCO's Executive Board, convinced that their work will further enhance the implementation of UNESCO standards on the promotion of human rights and values, suppression of social inequalities, promotion of freedom and expression of many other activities set on implementing a comprehensive reform agenda in a situation of economic crisis caused by the pandemic. I also congratulate those to be appointed into the governing structure of the expert bodies and conventions, while reassuring you that Montenegro will remain strongly committed to developing the best relations and cooperation with UNESCO in the coming period. I thank you all.

12. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. And now I invite Honourable Itah Kandjii-Murangi, Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation of Namibia. Excellency, the floor is yours.

13.1 **Ms Kandjii-Murangi (Namibia):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Your Excellency, Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourão, Namibia congratulates you on your election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference and gives you the assurance of Namibia's support. My country further congratulates you, Ms Audrey Azoulay, on your re-election as the Director-General for the next four years.

13.2 Today marks 75 years of UNESCO's demonstrable global significance as the torch-bearer of knowledge in the United Nations system in all its fields of competence. Namibia applauds UNESCO's resilience revealed through the uninterrupted continuation of its governance and programme implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. We commend the Director-General, Madam Azoulay, and the entire UNESCO Secretariat for their dedication and relentless services.

13.3 At the core of the 41st session of the General Conference is the adoption of the important strategic documents that define UNESCO's trajectory for the next eight years namely the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029, as well as the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025. UNESCO has a wealth of experience and multilateral support to successfully implement the identified priority areas and to effectively address emerging challenges.

13.4 The renewed impetus on positioning Global Priority Africa is most welcome as well as the ensuing draft operational strategy on Global Priority Africa with its five flagship programmes. Namibia appreciates the collaboration and support offered by UNESCO towards the successful hosting of the 2021 World Press Freedom Conference, which led to the adoption of the Windhoek +30 Declaration. Through the Windhoek +30 Declaration Namibia renews her commitment to freedom of expression, press freedom and will ensure that reliable information remains a public good. Furthermore, Namibia commends UNESCO for the support in the hosting of the Africa ICT Ministers' Forum.

13.5 Mr President, strategic development imperatives for Namibia are the following: technical vocational education and training (TVET), science, technology and innovation (STI), and water management. In this regard, Namibia launched the TVET policy in order to transform TVET to become a vehicle for inclusive sustained economic growth and youth employment. With regard to water management, Namibia calls for UNESCO support on transboundary water cooperation and management under the Intergovernmental Hydrology Programme. Namibia has revised the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy that aims at strengthening dynamic and strong strategic partnerships for inclusive technological and sustainable development, a process that has benefited immensely from UNESCO's technical assistance.

13.6 Namibia has prioritized the promotion of STEM-related fields at tertiary level, particularly for the girl-child. In this regard, collaboration with UNESCO remains critical. My country values the development of indigenous knowledge systems and in this regard, Namibia will launch the national policy on indigenous knowledge systems in 2022. The focus is on recognizing the role of indigenous knowledge systems in transforming society into a knowledge-based economy.

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

13.8 Namibia supports the adoption of the normative instrument on open science and applauds UNESCO for sharing scientific knowledge and cooperation through the draft recommendation on science and scientific researchers. In cognizance of the rapidly changing digital technologies and their impact on the development of society, Namibia recognizes the importance of artificial intelligence and commends UNESCO for the development of a comprehensive global standard setting instrument to provide artificial intelligence with a strong ethical base that will not only protect but also promote human rights and human dignity.

13.9 To position Namibia for the future of learning and teaching, our president, His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, established Namibia's Fourth Industrial Revolution Task Force on 1 July 2021 to conduct a country assessment on the readiness of Namibia for the fourth industrial revolution. This body of experts is expected to connect, compare, learn from and link our country strengths in the areas of innovation and technology to the world's best. Namibia remains committed to driving TVET, STI and AI through self-benefiting funds, and in this regard, we call on UNESCO to provide technical support.

13.10 To conclude, I wish to announce that Namibia, in collaboration with UNESCO, will host the UNESCO southern African subregional conference on AI in Windhoek in 2022. I therefore extend an invitation to all Member States to attend, and I thank you for your kind attention.

14. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. And now I call on Dr François Xavier Ngarambe, Ambassador, Permanent Delegation of Rwanda. Excellency, the floor is yours.

15.1 **Mr Ngarambe (Rwanda):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I am delighted to address the participants of the 41st session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. I do recognize the presence of every participant with much consideration of the role you play in promotion of education, science, and culture worldwide.

15.2 Mr President, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference. I would also to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director-General, Madam Audrey Azoulay for her re-election for a second mandate and I wish to express my appreciation for the remarkable work done with her technical team in preparing the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5). Madam Director-General, we very much value your great leadership of the Organization during the last four years and wish you success for the upcoming mandate.

15.3 Mr President, distinguished delegates, in Rwanda we believe that inclusive and equitable quality education to all, women and men, boys and girls, in rural or urban areas, rich or poor and without forgetting learners with disabilities is fundamental not only to realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also to reaching our country's human capital development.

15.4 Rwanda has registered progress in terms of increasing access at all levels of education and has initiated several policy priorities towards quality of education. These include revamping pre-service teacher training, continuous professional development, teachers' career path, ensuring increased access to pre-primary education, strengthening primary education,

efficient implementation of the competence-based curriculum (CBC); and increasing the use of ICTs in teaching and learning through scaling up SMART classrooms and ICT devices to teachers.

15.5 The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has negatively impacted the education sector. Diverse efforts were taken in response to the pandemic, including development and implementation of the COVID-19 response plan in the education sector, safe school reopening, introduction of television and radio learning and strengthening e-learning platforms during the school closure.

15.6 Learners' safety remains Rwanda's preoccupation and making the learning environment attractive and comfortable cannot be overemphasized. In a period of less than a year, the Government of Rwanda constructed 22,000 new classrooms to reduce overcrowding and the need to travel long distances for students. We also constructed 2,600 kitchens and appliances to scale up the school feeding programme to all students. We also installed over 1,000 group handwashing facilities in schools and 87 new TVET wings and schools to expand access to TVET. Rwanda has also made tremendous improvement in ICT in education as a strategic lever for reaching quality education and transforming the futures of education towards Rwanda's Vision 2050. The Government of Rwanda, through the Ministry of Education and its implementing agencies, has provided the needed technical skills to teachers.

15.7 Mr President, distinguished delegates, regarding the environmental sector, Rwanda has put in place several strategies for sustainable management and protection of the immediate ecosystem in support of the tourism sector. One of the best practices adopted by the Government of Rwanda is the ban on plastic bags.

15.8 Mr President, distinguished delegates, Rwanda welcomes the recent decision to create an open-ended working group to deepen and expand the reflection on the issues of accession of sites of memory to the World Heritage List. Rwanda pledged its contribution to this reflection, informed by our own history and the lessons learned from the unspeakable 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, for which UNESCO dedicated a specific outreach education programme.

15.9 Mr President, distinguished delegates, the Government of Rwanda highly welcomes more partners to work in the education sector, including United Nations agencies, multilateral and bilateral organizations, international NGOs, national NGOs and private companies to learn from best practices and effective global education cooperation.

15.10 To conclude, distinguished delegates, I would like to remind you kindly that Rwanda has submitted its candidacy for UNESCO's World Heritage Committee for the period 2021-2025 during the election to be held during the 23rd session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention. Rwanda is willing, committed, ready and capable to making a significant contribution to the Committee's work in the highest interest of the entire Organization. I thank you very much for your attention.

16. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. And now we will hear a pre-recorded video message from His Excellency the Honourable Shawn Edward, Minister for Education, Sustainable Development Innovation, Science Technology and Vocational Training of Saint Lucia.

17.1 **Mr Edward (Saint Lucia):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Mr President, permit me to join previous delegations in congratulating you on the appointment of your presidency of the 41st session of the General Conference. Saint Lucia wishes you every success during your tenure and we pledge our unwavering support for your work and the Organization during your term in office. Mr President, Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General, once said "education is quite simply peace building by another name. It is the most effective form of defence spending there is." And yet, today, what we are witnessing is a world which, to a great extent, is the product of education systems that have proved incapable of building peaceful societies. A UNESCO publication notes that more than 20 years after the Delors Report was published, "there is still limited evidence of the impact it had on actual learning and subsequent behavioural changes."

17.2 Mr President, as the lead agency on education, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the policies, strategies and actions which will be proposed for the future of education are more efficient and more impactful. We must ensure that the development and implementation of programmes are science driven and evidence based. Moreover, the reform of education systems must benefit from a robust scientific and evidence-based assessment to inform policy-making at all levels. Saint Lucia requested this assessment during the Executive Board one year ago and wish to congratulate the Director-General for ensuring that this was achieved. The assessment has been completed, and we believe that it should complement and inform the report on the futures of education.

17.3 Mr President, over the past four years, the Director-General has successfully launched several projects, including the report on the futures of education and the development of two new international instruments on open science and the ethics of artificial intelligence. We believe that now is the time to implement what has been elaborated.

17.4 Mr President, I wish to express my country's immense satisfaction with recent decisions taken by UNESCO in support of small island developing States. Saint Lucia welcomes the Organization's renewed commitment to the SIDS agenda manifested for recent decisions taken in favour of the allocation of additional resources and a dedicated unit to work exclusively on pushing forward with the SIDS agenda.

17.5 We remain resolute in our advocacy for SIDS to be made UNESCO global priority alongside Africa and gender equality. We are convinced that this is the only way to address this major priority and ensure that it receives the requisite financial and human resources necessary to achieve meaningful results and allow for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is especially critical within the context of climate change, which continues to impact our small states more than most with devastating consequences on our small economies and which represent an existential threat to our small nations.

17.6 The specificity of the challenges faced by small island States has long been recognized and the need for responses which look beyond GDP per capita performance criteria to recognise and understand the environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities facing small island States is even more pertinent today. We therefore look forward to the support of all Member States in promoting SIDS as a global priority and contributing to making this a reality.

17.7 Mr President, within the field of culture, we continue to support the Organization's work in the implementation of culture conventions and urge increased support for implementation of the various statutory instruments within the region, particularly within the smaller eastern Caribbean States. Mr President, I would like to express my country's appreciation to UNESCO for the assistance provided for a number of initiatives during this current biennium.

17.8 Saint Lucia, welcomes the Organization's support addressing the issue of male academic underperformance within our country, an issue which remains a major challenge for many Caribbean Member States. We were also pleased for the support in the field of special education, science, education and robotics, language policy development and teacher training. These actions will invariably have a direct impact on the national development agenda, but they also serve to reinforce the importance of the Organization and its actions in favour of development within Member States.

17.9 We believe that UNESCO must demonstrate concrete results in order to foster a greater appreciation and understanding of the necessity and power of UNESCO. Saint Lucia believes that the next quadrennial should focus on implementation and strong presence on the ground. For UNESCO's work to be meaningful, we need to see results and direct impact within Member States. We wish, therefore to end by reiterating the need for UNESCO to continue to support and increase the implementation of concrete actions on the ground with direct impact on the development agendas of Member States. Thank you.

18. **The President:**

Thank you Minister. And now I invite Her Excellency Ms Josepha Madigan Minister of State for Education of Ireland. Minister, you have the floor.

19.1 **Mme Madigan (Irlande) :**

Monsieur le Président, Madame la Directrice générale, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres et Délégués, permettez-moi de commencer par vous féliciter Madame la Directrice générale, pour votre réélection. L'Irlande se réjouit de poursuivre notre coopération pour faire avancer nos priorités et nos objectifs communs. L'Irlande a toujours été un fervent partisan du multilatéralisme. En tant que petite nation, nous pensons que notre voix est amplifiée par notre active participation aux Organisations multilatérales. En cette 75^e année de l'UNESCO, la pandémie de COVID-19 et la crise climatique n'ont fait que souligner que nous avons plus que jamais besoin d'une coopération multilatérale pour aborder et surmonter ces défis communs. Nos générations futures en dépendent.

(L'orateur poursuit en anglais)

19.2 Mr President, we have all witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic has set back progress on reaching the Sustainable Development Goal 4 target by generating the largest disruption to global education ever. From the very start of the crisis UNESCO took action to monitor, document and highlight the impact of the pandemic and public health measures on education. Let us congratulate UNESCO for its unwavering resilience and determination to ensure a continuity of learning for all children and youth.

19.3 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is widely acknowledged as a key enabler for achievement of UNESCO's Agenda 2030, and Ireland is currently developing its second national ESD strategy in line with the UNESCO framework. Ireland believes that quality education is essential to individual wellbeing, social cohesion and sustainable development. Ireland has always been committed to the promotion of quality education as a fundamental human right for all, both at home and abroad. The Irish education system is underpinned by a policy of inclusion where all children, including migrant travellers and Roma children and children with disabilities, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity, have the same access to quality education and have the right to be treated with dignity and respect internationally.

19.4 Internationally, our development cooperation programmes focus on strengthening national education systems to deliver equitable, inclusive and quality education for all, especially those in need of additional support. This means including children living in extreme poverty and rural areas, children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children and those in conflict and post-conflict situations, indigenous people and children living in vulnerable situations.

19.5 Gender equality is a priority for Ireland in and through education. Ireland has championed adolescent girls education, launching a call to action for adolescent girls education in 2020. We have worked with UNESCO and other stakeholders in promoting girls education as the catalyst to achieving gender equality. Equipping children and youth with twenty-first century skills and digital literacy is essential to enable them to avail of opportunities and contribute to solving the world's most pressing problems. Ireland and UNESCO both support Africa Code Week, Africa's biggest digital skills programme, which creates opportunities for young Africans to learn coding for free and for teachers to be trained on digital learning curricula

19.6 Dear friends, with a vibrant and unique cultural and natural heritage, Ireland recognizes the central role of UNESCO in promoting, protecting and sustaining the world's cultural and natural heritage. Ireland is proud to be a party to many UNESCO cultural conventions and to works with UNESCO and other States Parties in prioritizing and contributing to enhanced international cooperation and sustainable development. In particular, Ireland is a strong contributor to the work of UNESCO in respect of intangible cultural heritage. To date, Ireland has succeeded in having three of our living heritage practices recognized under UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: Uilleann, piping, hurling and Irish harping.

19.7 In an ever-increasingly globalized world, the recognition of these practices has served to shine a light in Ireland on the important work of UNESCO in advocating for the safeguarding of the world's living heritage. With a strong tradition of placing culture and creativity at the centre of communities Ireland is also an active participant in the UNESCO Creative Cities

network. Since 2010, Ireland has been awarded to Creative Cities titles: Dublin, UNESCO City of Literature and Galway UNESCO City of Film. The two creative cities work closely with their former cities and countries around the world to advance cooperation, shared learning and public participation in creativity and culture life for all members of society to foster sustainable development.

19.8 Mr President, two years ago, UNESCO embarked on a process to elaborate the first global standard setting instrument on the ethics of artificial intelligence. Ireland welcomes that an ethical and human rights-based approach to artificial intelligence is increasingly supported by multilateral standard-setting organizations. UNESCO and Ireland will continue to monitor and participate in discussion on artificial intelligence governance in these multinational fora. The importance of the mission and mandate of UNESCO is recognized by all of us around the world and Ireland will continue to work to advance these common goals and priorities.

19.9 Ireland has two reasons to celebrate this year particularly. Indeed, 2021 does not only mark UNESCO's 75th anniversary, but it also marks our 60th anniversary as a proud UNESCO Member State, and we look forward to many years of cooperation in building a more just and sustainable world. *Je vous remercie.*

20. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. Our next speaker is His Excellency Dr Amon Murwir, Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development of Zimbabwe.

21.1 **Mr Murwir (Zimbabwe):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, let me begin Zimbabwe statement by congratulating Mr President on his election as president of the 41st session of the General Conference. We also wish to congratulate Madam Audrey Azoulay on her appointment as Director-General for a second term. Zimbabwe supports you. Exactly two years ago, we assembled here to adopt the Draft Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 with the objective to accelerate towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030.

21.2 However, we were faced by a pandemic. This posed a threat to the gains we made in education of our youth, girls and women. Madam Director-General, we salute you and all your staff for your efforts and timely interventions, particularly in the onset of the pandemic, which saw UNESCO playing a central role in mobilizing global partners in doing its best to manage a potential generational catastrophe. The pandemic exposed inequalities in our education systems. It also further increased the visibility of the digital divide and gender inequalities, making it imperative and urgent to address them.

21.3 Ladies and gentlemen, the challenges we are facing now need global cooperation and global action. Clearly, this is a new chapter, and we have to face it head on. My delegation takes great interest in the report on the futures of education, which was launched during the 41st session of the General Conference. As the title of the report suggests "Re-imagining our Futures Together: a new social contract for education", we now need to be more imaginative and invest in our futures. My delegation is pleased that despite the pandemic, UNESCO was able to come up with the two important recommendations on the ethics of artificial intelligence and on open science, which are very relevant to us as we are charting a new course which is dependent on scientific and technological applications.

21.4 Mr President, in line with the aspirations of our national development strategy, which aims to transform Zimbabwe into a middle-income economy by 2030, the Government of Zimbabwe has recognized the merit of embracing science, innovation and technology anchored on our heritage-based Education 5.0 programme to drive all development in the country. Heritage-based Education 5.0 is an initiative and philosophy that spans teaching, research, innovation and industrialization in service of our communities. In this regard we are putting greater emphasis on science technology and innovation to drive our national education and development agenda as we aspire to modernize and industrialize Zimbabwe by 2030. On its part, the Government has facilitated the development of innovation hubs and industrial parks at all State universities. We firmly believe that education must have a purpose and a benefit.

21.5 Mr President, Madam Director-General, as we adopt the wide use of technologies and artificial intelligence, we should, however, bear in mind that we need to capacitate teachers so that this works. In the spirit of multilateralism and international cooperation, the Government of Zimbabwe is ready and open for partnerships at bilateral, multilateral, North-South, South-South and other levels that will contribute to the positive transformation of education, science, culture and communication and information sectors in the country, in Africa and the world.

21.6 Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, going forward we can no longer continue to do business as usual. In this respect the Government of Zimbabwe, will increase its support to the multisectoral regional office in Harare to ensure increased cooperation for the benefit of the region. With regards to Global Priority Africa, my delegation appreciates the support that UNESCO continues to accord to the region and to Africa, and we hope this will give us the Africa we want.

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

22. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. Now I invite His Excellency Mr Abraão Aníbal Barbosa Vicente, Minister of Culture and Creative Industries of Cabo Verde. The floor is yours.

23.1 **M. Barbosa** (Cabo Verde):

(address delivered in Portuguese; text from French interpretation):

Mesdames et messieurs, je voudrais tout d'abord saluer la République fédérale du Brésil et les féliciter pour l'élection de leurs diplomates, l'Ambassadeur Santiago Morales à la tête de la 41^e session de la Conférence générale de l'UNESCO. C'est un honneur et un privilège pour tous les pays lusophones et le mien. Vous pouvez compter sur notre plein soutien. Nous félicitons également Mme Audrey Azoulay pour sa réélection pour un second mandat à la tête de l'Organisation. Le Cap-Vert partage ces valeurs et nous voyons dans son énergie et son dévouement la capacité de renouveler le programme thématique que nous avons devant nous et qui aura un impact sur l'avenir du monde.

23.2 Excellences, beaucoup de choses se sont produites depuis que le Cap-Vert a participé à la dernière Conférence générale. Nous avons pu enregistrer notre musique au patrimoine immatériel et notre pays s'en réjouit. Pendant cette période de bouleversements économiques, nous ferons tout notre possible pour préserver son authenticité. Sur nos îles Fogo et Mayas, ces îles ont été classifiées en tant que réserves de biosphère par l'UNESCO et nous ferons tout notre possible pour les protéger et pour que ces îles restent un témoignage unique de valeur inestimable pour l'humanité.

23.3 Le Cap-Vert est un petit État insulaire en développement et par conséquent, nous voudrions rendre hommage aux priorités que Mme la Directrice générale a établies. L'éducation des jeunes filles, l'éducation aux technologies numériques, le renforcement de notre patrimoine culturel. Nous faisons partie d'une feuille de route qui a été établie pendant son premier mandat.

23.4 Nous sommes également conscients du fait que la Priorité Afrique et Égalité des genres sont les points focaux de toutes les activités réalisées par l'UNESCO et c'est quelque chose qui doit le rester. D'ailleurs, il faut le renforcer et l'approfondir. Nous devrions mettre les êtres humains au cœur de toutes nos initiatives, avec des systèmes éducatifs qui utilisent les technologies et qui en reconnaissent l'utilité, tout en respectant les droits humains, les droits des femmes et des filles. Nous devons également encourager l'accès aux connaissances, en partageant les technologies avancées, les nouvelles découvertes scientifiques.

23.5 Excellences, le premier enseignement que nous pouvons tirer de cette pandémie, c'est que toute notre politique doit se faire au bénéfice de nos peuples. Les artistes, les créateurs ont été particulièrement touchés par cette pandémie et la fragilité des activités créatrices est devenue apparente lorsque des millions se sont retrouvés sans moyen de subsistance, sans sécurité sociale, sans aucune forme de protection de la part de l'État et sans la possibilité de gagner leur vie.

23.6 Beaucoup d'États n'avaient aucun filet de sécurité. C'est quelque chose que nous devrions élaborer, nous devons faire tout notre possible pour que les travailleurs culturels puissent avoir les filets de sécurité appropriés. C'est particulièrement le cas sur le continent africain, pour les artistes africains. Souvent, ils n'ont pas l'occasion de voyager à travers le monde et de pouvoir exposer leurs travaux, ils n'obtiennent pas les visas pour voyager, ils n'ont pas accès aux marchés culturels.

23.7 J'encouragerai donc la Directrice générale à allouer au moins 1 % de son budget pour l'investir dans le Secteur culturel. La culture est un investissement qui nous offre la garantie d'un retour sur investissement. Il en va de même pour les musées. Les musées pour nous représentent des plates-formes d'apprentissage, d'enseignement qui permettent de d'abattre les murs entre les apprenants et les enseignants, et ces sociétés permettraient d'être la force motrice du développement à tous les niveaux. Nous contribuerons au développement des sociétés en Afrique et c'est très important, selon moi, car cela permet de mettre au cœur le lien entre l'être humain et la compréhension avec autrui.

23.8 Nous voudrions faire part de notre soutien à ce nouveau programme pour promouvoir les musées. Pour conclure, nous faisons tout notre possible pour renforcer nos systèmes d'enseignement. Avec seulement 46 ans d'indépendance, nous avons mis les individus au cœur de nos politiques. Améliorer nos systèmes éducatifs est une priorité constante. Nous avons inclus les nouvelles technologies à tous les niveaux, nous avons garanti une formation pour les enseignants.

23.9 Le Cap-Vert est déterminé à atteindre tous les objectifs de développement durable dans le cadre du Programme à l'horizon 2030. Nous mettrons les jeunes au cœur de toutes nos politiques. Une fois de plus, Mme la Directrice générale, nous vous souhaitons plein succès pour votre mandat et nous vous appuierons dans vos travaux.

24. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. May I invite Her Excellency Dr Phoeurng Sackona, Minister of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia to take the floor.

25.1 **Mme Sackona** (Cambodge) :

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil Exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Excellences, mesdames, messieurs et chers collègues, il m'est agréable avant toute chose d'exprimer nos meilleurs vœux de succès et nos chaleureuses félicitations à l'occasion du 75^e anniversaire de l'UNESCO et 41^e session de la Conférence générale. La présence de Sa Majesté le Roi du Cambodge à cet événement important de l'UNESCO témoigne au mieux de l'attachement indéfectible du peuple cambodgien à notre irremplaçable Organisation.

25.2 Malgré l'impact de la pandémie de la COVID-19, le Cambodge a tenu ferme et la vaccination de sa population a dépassé le taux de 80 %, un des taux les plus élevés parmi les pays de l'Asie de l'Est et du Pacifique. Le Ministère de l'Éducation, de la Jeunesse et des Sports du Cambodge a accéléré la mise en œuvre de l'Agenda éducation en vue de faire avancer l'ODD 4 et l'éducation inclusive avec trois piliers d'intervention : l'amélioration de la qualité de l'éducation, l'amélioration de la capacité des enseignants et le renforcement de l'éducation informelle à travers l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie. Le Cambodge a également mis en œuvre « Factory Literacy Program » (FLP) qui depuis son lancement, a touché des milliers de travailleurs à travers 12 provinces dans plusieurs usines partenaires avec un taux d'achèvement de 72 % parmi les apprenants. Je tiens, à ce propos, à remercier vivement l'UNESCO en présence de sa Directrice générale, et à signaler l'excellent travail fait par le Bureau de l'UNESCO à Phnom Penh.

25.3 Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, j'en viens maintenant aux activités dans le domaine de la culture et objets culturels. Nous sommes conscients de l'importance nationale et internationale du site d'Angkor, capitale historique de l'Empire khmer et fleuron du patrimoine de l'humanité et de la part de responsabilité du Cambodge dans le patrimoine universel avec ce site prestigieux. Le Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge réaffirme plus que jamais sa détermination à assurer la préservation, la conservation et la valorisation des richesses monumentales, artistiques et archéologiques que recèle ce site en continuant à renforcer les structures des autorités nationales APSARA, même depuis la crise du COVID-19, en accroissant les moyens techniques et financiers ainsi que les ressources humaines en vue d'une conservation encore plus durable et d'une gestion plus efficace des sites du patrimoine mondial : Angkor, Preah Vihear et Sambor Prei Kuk.

25.4 Les activités dans le domaine de la culture du Cambodge se concentrent sur trois domaines clés : le patrimoine matériel et immatériel, les industries créatives dans le domaine de la culture et les musées d'objets culturels. Par ailleurs, toujours avec l'aide de l'UNESCO, nous sommes fiers de la coopération, de l'assistance et des orientations que nous prodiguons depuis environ 30 ans le Comité international de coordination pour Angkor (CIC-Angkor) qui constitue un précieux apport et un appui décisif. Je souhaite exprimer à ce propos les sentiments de gratitude du Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge envers le Comité de l'UNESCO et ses deux Co-Présidents, la France et le Japon, ainsi que tous nos amis de la communauté internationale. Le Ministère de la Culture et des Beaux-Arts du Cambodge redouble ses efforts pour mettre en œuvre le retour et la restitution des biens culturels en cas de trafic illicite, dont l'appropriation illégale. À ce sujet depuis l'année 2001, plusieurs sculptures khmères ont été rendues avec grand succès par différents musées et collectionneurs privés du monde entier.

25.5 Pour conclure, je voudrais vous informer des actions que notre gouvernement a menées dans le domaine de la communication qui est axée sur le développement des médias, la liberté d'expression, l'éthique de l'information et la numérisation du patrimoine documentaire. Ainsi, le projet de préservation et de numérisation des archives du musée de génocide Toul Sleng (MGTS) a été mené à bonne fin en rendant ses archives accessibles à tous les publics. Ce musée de génocide a reçu le prix UNESCO/Jikji Mémoire du monde 2020 en tant que Centre d'excellence pour l'éducation à la paix et l'éducation de la citoyenneté mondiale (ECM).

25.6 Monsieur le Président, Madame la Directrice générale, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, la pandémie de la COVID-19 a impacté les quatre coins du monde. Cette issue à cette situation nous a permis de réviser notre façon de vivre et de nous développer de façon durable. Avec l'accélération des taux de vaccination dans le monde et les progrès de la recherche, le Cambodge se tient prêt à revivre dans un nouveau monde qui favoriserait durablement l'accès à l'éducation avec une conversation et un partage plus profond de notre culture. Je vous remercie pour votre attention. Merci beaucoup.

26. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. I now invite Her Excellency Ms Nomin Chinbat, Minister of Culture of Mongolia to take the floor.

27.1 **Ms Chinbat (Mongolia):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured to be here with you today to bring you the good wishes of the Mongolian people. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate UNESCO for its 75th anniversary. Mr President, Mongolia congratulates you for your election as the President of the 41st session of the General Conference and wishes you every success. Over the last 75 years UNESCO has strengthened the peace and advanced sustainable development through its transformational support of education, culture, natural and social sciences and information communication.

27.2 Today, as the world faces unprecedented uncertainty and disruption UNESCO's mandate is more relevant and urgent than ever before. However, the deadline to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals is fast approaching. We remain most hopeful that new Medium-Term Strategy can elevate our collective efforts to attain the goals of Agenda 2030. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Mongolian Government has adopted the long-term development policy called Vision 2050, which aims to implement the Sustainable Development Goals swiftly and efficiently.

27.3 Mr President, Mongolia expresses its sincere gratitude to the United Nations and its agencies, particularly UNESCO, for implementing the joint project on strengthening the national capacity to suppress transmission and maintain essential services in the COVID-19 pandemic in Mongolia. This project played a pivotal role in addressing the education crisis caused by the pandemic by developing interactive learning content to supplement the television-based lessons for children.

27.4 I am pleased to note that in cooperation with our expertise, UNESCO developed the country background report on the education sector, conducted an education policy review and has made a valuable contribution to development of the package of law now being discussed by the Mongolian Parliament. These new laws are designed to comprehensively reform Mongolia's education sector. We are also grateful to the UNESCO Beijing Office for providing valuable support in completing the ICT policy review, the ICT Education Master Plan and Sustainable Development Goals for the mid-term progress report, all of which continue to play a critical role in Mongolia's ongoing education effort. Mongolia highly appreciates the International Commission's report on the new social contract for education launched two days ago.

27.5 Excellencies and distinguished delegates, Mongolia views the video culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, which is evident in our long-term development policy Vision 2050. The cultural and creative industries are an increasingly significant part of our economy and society, where our nomadic heritage with increasingly urbanized realities driving a new era of creative expression in all sectors of creative industry and even looking into emerging fields such as immersive experience. Our mission is to nurture the whole creative ecosystem where talent from all backgrounds can access employment based on their creative expression. Therefore, in line with the United Nations International Year for Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, Mongolia has announced this November a month of culture and creative creativity, highlighting the future opportunity to connect our deep history with the creative culture.

27.6 Our plan is to harness the sustainable resources and to build a dynamic, inclusive and ethical creative economy. For example, the Mongolian Parliament has recently passed a new law such on promoting a film industry. These initiatives

will preserve and protect our culture, ignite growth in the creative industry, and will complement the implementation of UNESCO's cultural conventions.

27.7 The Government of Mongolia is making great efforts to facilitate the legal environment for the protection of cultural heritage and combat the illicit trade of cultural property. In this regard, on behalf of the Government of Mongolia, I would like to express my gratitude to UNESCO's Cluster Office in Beijing for its continued support in the cultural heritage sector of Mongolia, especially the fight against the trafficking of cultural property.

27.8 Mr President, our natural and cultural heritages are increasingly threatened due to the variety of causes. Climate change particularly poses a significant risk to our world heritage properties across the globe. As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, Mongolia has accumulated a wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise to make world heritage properties more resilient to its adverse effects. In this regard, the movement initiated by the President of Mongolia to plant a billion trees by 2030 serves as an excellent example of Mongolian resourcefulness. Therefore, with a vision to create more a sustainable future where all natural, cultural and mixed sites and their outstanding universal value are preserved and protected, Mongolia is presenting its candidacy to the World Heritage Committee election for the first time and seeks the valuable support of the Member States of the Convention.

27.9 Mongolia is committed to reducing inequality with the framework of Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme to ensure that no one is left behind, especially our children. Mongolia also stresses the importance of development of the comprehensive global ethics standard for artificial intelligence. Recognizing the enormous potential our youth holds and championing positive development in our community, we applaud UNESCO support in elevating youth's voices to the decision-making level.

27.10 Mr President, the pandemic has revealed that we must stand united to overcome its dire consequences and to rebuild our economies and societies in a way that truly reflects our core values. Reaching the most vulnerable groups, including the persons with disability and tackling the issues exacerbated by the pandemic, has been at the core of our policies during this difficult time. A good example of our shared commitment to these policies was the multistakeholder conference we organized which called for comprehensive action towards promoting gender equality and combating gender-based violence. Additionally, Mongolia has mobilized all stakeholders to fulfil our obligations under international conventions against doping in sport, and the work to adapt the National Anti-Doping Code and establishing a National Council is well under way.

27.11 In the natural science sector, Mongolia is fully supportive of open policies, including open science education, which will make scientific knowledge and databases more accessible for developing countries. In the scope of the Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme, Mongolia designated two new biosphere reserves in the last two years. We believe these new biosphere reserves will play a significant role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. With the support of UNESCO, we look forward to developing a new science and technology masterplan, which will play a crucial role in the development of science and technology in Mongolia.

27.12 In the communication and information sector we wish to thank you UNESCO for supporting the development of community media in Mongolia. Community media is crucial to ensure media pluralism and freedom of expression whether transmitted digitally or traditionally. During this unprecedented time of pandemic, UNESCO significantly promotes media and information literacy in Mongolia, revealing that combating the infodemic is as crucial as combating the pandemic itself.

27.13 Excellencies and distinguished delegates, I wish to reiterate Mongolia's undivided commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and express our utmost gratitude to UNESCO, UNESCO's Beijing and Bangkok Offices, category 2 centres, associated school networks and all other valuable partners for their continuous support and cooperation. Thank you very much.

28. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. I now have the honour to call on His Excellency Ignazio Cassis, Vice President of the Swiss Confederation of Switzerland. Excellency the floor is yours.

29.1 **M. Cassis (Suisse) :**

Madame la Présidente de la séance, Madame la Directrice générale, mesdames et messieurs les distingués Ministres, Excellences, l'intelligence, ce n'est pas ce que l'on sait, mais ce que l'on fait quand on ne sait pas. Ce constat de Jean Piaget, émérite psychologue suisse, co-fondateur du Bureau international de l'éducation au cœur de la Genève internationale il y a presque 100 ans, est certainement des plus actuels. C'est bien de cette intelligence, c'est bien de cette intelligence tournée vers l'action dont nous avons besoin aujourd'hui. Et comment cette intelligence peut-elle s'articuler avec la solidarité intellectuelle et morale inscrite dans l'Acte constitutif de l'UNESCO, il y a plus de 75 ans ? Bien entendu, chaque pays dispose de ses propres intérêts et spécificités. Mais notre avenir commun est forcément interdépendant. Il ne peut que passer par une quête globale de la paix et du développement durable. Le mandat de l'UNESCO incarne cette ambition. Il nous incite à réfléchir ensemble à ce que nous voulons, à ce que nous pouvons être et à agir conjointement. C'est pourquoi la Suisse s'engage auprès de l'UNESCO pour l'ODD 4 – l'éducation. La continuité de l'éducation dans une approche holistique est capitale pour l'autonomie des individus.

29.2 L'UNESCO est également un précieux outil de diplomatie scientifique. La coopération des chercheurs, le partage du savoir, mais surtout l'anticipation des défis que la confluence des sciences pose à l'humanité sont une condition pour la paix. L'UNESCO est aussi garante de pluralisme tellement cher à mon pays, la Suisse. La protection des patrimoines et de la diversité culturelle constitue la source de l'identité propre de chaque être humain. En rassemblant toutes ces missions, l'UNESCO renforce les principes de démocratie et de justice, ce qui garantit la sécurité et l'indépendance des personnes qui produisent l'information.

29.3 Madame la Directrice générale, je saisis l'occasion de vous féliciter pour votre brillante réélection, une réélection qui intervient à un moment charnière puisque nous nous retrouvons dans les contours du projet de nouvelle stratégie 2022-2029, une nouvelle stratégie de l'UNESCO à laquelle la Suisse se félicite d'avoir contribué. Et je me réjouis également de notre participation à sa mise en œuvre.

29.4 Voici les cinq éléments centraux aux yeux de la Suisse : premièrement, l'UNESCO doit encore renforcer ses partenariats systémiques avec la famille des Nations Unies et les autres acteurs en générant davantage de synergies. Ceci dans l'esprit de l'Agenda 2030 et du « common agenda » du Secrétaire général de l'ONU, Antonio Guterres ; deuxièmement, la solidarité morale qu'appelle l'Acte constitutif de l'UNESCO nous ramène aux principes fondamentaux de la Déclaration des droits de l'homme qui fêtera bientôt ses 75 ans, mais qui garde toute son actualité. Je souligne ici, par exemple, le travail qui a abouti à la Recommandation sur l'éthique de l'intelligence artificielle dont la Suisse soutiendra l'adoption. La dématérialisation numérique ne doit pas conduire à celle de la pensée humaine ; troisièmement, la Suisse souhaite assurer plus de transparence et de prévisibilité dans le dialogue politique et plaide donc pour une évolution des méthodes de travail par l'instauration de modalités informelles ; quatrièmement, la Suisse appelle à poursuivre la modernisation de notre organisation pour sa viabilité et son agilité. La bonne gouvernance reste au cœur de notre engagement ; cinquièmement, le rôle des commissions nationales doit être pris en meilleure considération pour davantage d'inclusion et d'efficacité.

29.5 Mesdames et messieurs, œuvrons pour que notre intelligence soit collective, respectueuse et véritablement créative plutôt qu'elle s'épuise dans des débats parfois stériles et peu compréhensibles. Je suis persuadé que ces efforts aboutiront à davantage d'impact de notre UNESCO. Merci de votre attention.

Mr Mourão takes the Chair

30. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency. I now have the honour to call on His Excellency Dr David Sengeh, Minister of Basic Education of Sierra Leone. Excellency the floor is yours.

31.1 **Mr Sengeh (Sierra Leone):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. Let me start by thanking you in this call for hosting this highly engaging 41st session of the General Conference in these unprecedented times. We now more than ever need all Member States to recommit to education, as it is the only thing that can help us respond to these challenges while preparing us for the future. Congratulations, Mr President and Madam Director-General, on your elections. At seventy-five years, UNESCO is wise and great, but we have no doubts in your leadership.

31.2 Sierra Leone is committed to UNESCO and its efforts to advocate for global education. We want to thank you for the inauguration of the high-level steering committee on which Sierra Leone happily and proudly serves and represents Africa. We pledge our commitment to the Paris Declaration: a global call for investing in the Futures of Education. To channel and power that future, we particularly support the draft resolution and for Major Programme I – Education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 has made no mistake in focusing on inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In Sierra Leone, all means all. For our experience during Ebola in 2014, we anticipated high teenage pregnancy from school closures and COVID-19. Many countries have now since recorded high teenage pregnancies. For us in Sierra Leone, we pre-empted this and launched the policy on radical inclusion, opening classroom doors to students who become pregnant while in school and provided support to parent learners. We also expanded adult education classrooms in every chiefdom across Sierra Leone.

31.3 Sierra Leone believes in benchmarks, evidence-based decision making and data. To drive this, we use what we call hybrid technologies. Delegates, paper is the oldest form of technology still used in our classrooms. Sierra Leone, through radical inclusion, provided learning materials to children in hard-to-reach and remote areas and to those who are from particularly poor backgrounds. All children can attend school in Sierra Leone, with tuition free from pre-primary through to secondary education. If you are a female student studying STEM, you are guaranteed 17 years of tuition-free education through higher and tertiary education. This is also true for learners with special needs. Sierra Leone wants to thank you, UNESCO for supporting us and expanding our STEM education and teacher training. All learners in Sierra Leone have their transition exams paid for. This is not easy and we have expanded our education budget to 22% percent this year in the middle of COVID-19.

31.4 During COVID-19, we introduced technologies for continuous learning, including radio teaching right across Sierra Leone. We introduced a set of mobile-based learning solutions and education services for anyone with a mobile phone. These free SMS and USSD solutions mean over two million citizens have interacted with our solutions to date. Two examples: to promote literacy we have a free SMS USSD dictionary available to every student and mobile user in Sierra Leone. And to check transition exam results, we also offer free services, which used to take parents up to six weeks and cost them upwards of \$10 to check every result. Now, any parent can use their mobile phone anywhere across Sierra Leone to know how their children do in national exams. Collaboration is important. And during this period, Sierra Leone has collaborated with several other countries on digitization and education policy developments, including Liberia, Malawi, Estonia and Togo.

31.5 We would like to conclude by using this moment to ask that Member States increase collaboration and cooperation so that we can accelerate towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goal for Education 2030 targets. The Sierra Leone delegation believes that UNESCO's two resolutions on the ethics of AI and open science are not just timely, but they are indeed the right thing to do at this time. COVID-19 may have destabilized the world in horrendous ways, but it has also destabilized the status quo. We must use this moment to open our eyes and refocus it on our shared global goals on an inclusive and equitable quality education for all. All means all. Thank you very much.

32. The President:

Thank you very much your Excellency for your statement. Now I call His Excellency Professor Associate Phout Simmalavong, Minister of Education and Sports of Lao People's Democratic Republic. We are going to watch a pre-recorded video.

33.1 Mr Simmalavong (Lao People's Democratic Republic):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the delegation of Lao People's Democratic Republic and my own behalf, I congratulate Mr Santiago Irazabal Mourão for being elected as the president of the 41st session of the General Conference, and congratulations to UNESCO for successfully hosting this Conference.

33.2 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years has affected the socioeconomic and cultural development of countries around the world. For the education sector, prolonged school closures have also affected children and youth learning, and some students may never return to school again. Last September, the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic completed the opening of the new school year for 202-2022, along with the development of the guidelines for school safety measures. At the same time, the Ministry of Education and Sports has updated our curriculum and teaching methods, enabling both to face-to-face and distance learning.

33.3 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, although we are affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19, our commitment towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 is still upheld. Over the past two years, Lao People's Democratic Republic has implemented a number of projects that are supported by UNESCO to incorporate the education for sustainable development approach into the country's education development policy by 2030.

33.4 We have partnered with the Korea National Commission for UNESCO to improve the quality of skills of communities and partnered with the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, citizenship education, curriculum development and integration and the Capacity Development for Education Programme (CapED). The Ministry of Recreation and Sports has been supported by UNESCO to develop teachers policies, establish ICT standards and train teachers to improve the capacity on ICT uses.

33.5 In the field of social culture in order to promote better, more sustainable protection of natural and cultural heritage, Lao People's Democratic Republic has been supported by the World Heritage Fund to build the capacity of actors involved in managing the world heritage sites. However, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the implementation of the projects has been interrupted.

33.6 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, although our human resource development and heritage protection will face many challenges Lao People's Democratic Republic put all efforts into cooperating with UNESCO and Member States to continue implementing programmes and projects, finally, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 4 from now until 2030.

33.7 On behalf of the government of Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all governments and international organizations that have been providing assistance to Lao People's Democratic Republic. Finally, I wish this 41st session of the General Conference great success. Thank you very much.

34. The President:

Thank you Excellency for your statement. Now I call His Excellency Professor Laurent Serge Etoundi Ngoa, Minister of Basic Education of Cameroon. You have the floor your Excellency.

35.1 M. Ngoa (Cameroun) :

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, distingués Délégués, mesdames et messieurs, je voudrais de prime abord joindre ma voix à celles des autres intervenants pour féliciter Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif et Madame la Directrice générale pour leur brillante reconduction et désignation. Permettez-moi de présenter ici la voix du Cameroun dans ce qu'elle considère comme une réflexion à la situation actuelle et aux recommandations et orientations qui nous ont été données à la 20^e Conférence. Le Cameroun, en effet, comme tous les autres pays, a subi de plein fouet les effets néfastes de la pandémie qui a davantage révélé notre communauté de destin dans un monde inexorablement globalisé. Fort heureusement, aux côtés du Cameroun, l'UNESCO a su tenir son rang, apprivoisant l'autre versant de la crise comme une opportunité. En effet, les choses ne seront plus jamais comme avant avec la persistance de cette pandémie. Pandémie qui semble ainsi avoir installé le monde dans une époque charnière, instituant un basculement salvateur et irréversible au numérique, grâce auquel le village global a continué de fonctionner à travers de nouvelles modalités de commerce, c'est à dire d'échanges et de socialisation démontrant une résilience certaine à la crise.

35.2 Aussi sur le plan éducatif, alors que de nombreux élèves et étudiants étaient menacés de déscolarisation, véritable péril d'une société en devenir, l'UNESCO a entrepris de construire avec le Cameroun une plate-forme collaborative. Puisque l'école ne peut pas attendre, des solutions d'apprentissage et d'enseignement à distance ont été ainsi expérimentées avec bonheur. Elles ont permis d'enrichir l'offre existante et l'école au Cameroun. C'est gré à mon école en ligne d'avoir permis d'éviter une année à problèmes. Des solutions innovantes d'apprentissage, sous l'impulsion de l'UNESCO et d'un ensemble de partenaires, continuent de voir le jour, préfigurant l'école de demain et l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie pour ne laisser personne à côté avec des projets comme « Imaginecole ». De même, au niveau du supérieur, seul le numérique a permis la continuité académique pendant toute la période de confinement qui, je le dis, au Cameroun, n'a duré que quatre mois. L'enjeu du numérique reste cependant entier en ceci qu'il peut accentuer la fracture sociale, les nouveaux analphabètes ou, pire encore, nier ce que le monde a de plus cher, à savoir la valeur de l'humain. Si l'on est certain que le numérique formatera la société de demain et inaugurerà la civilisation nouvelle, cette nouvelle frontière de l'humanité mérite qu'on lui adjoigne un supplément d'âme. Aussi, le Cameroun se réjouit-il de la posture avant-gardiste de notre Organisation qui, au cours de cette session, soumettra au vote un instrument normatif sur la régulation de l'éthique et de l'intelligence

artificielle pour qu'elle soit au service des peuples de la planète dans le respect de la dignité et des droits humains. Par ailleurs, l'éducation au développement durable apparaît dans ce rapport comme le bras séculier d'une civilisation plus humaine, articulée sur les cinq piliers du développement durable que je cite : peuple, planète, paix, partenariat et prospérité.

35.3 Concernant maintenant la recherche scientifique, nous pouvons dire que cette recherche scientifique ou encore la science ouverte donne la mobilisation de la science, celle des savoirs locaux et appelle à l'innovation, encouragée dans cette option par l'UNESCO, qui ont permis ainsi au premier plan de circonscrire au plan sanitaire la redoutable pandémie. La coexistence pacifique des protocoles médicaux, du vaccin, de la pharmacopée traditionnelle dont les fleurons éprouvés dans notre pays, ont été officiellement autorisés comme complément au traitement de la COVID-19, a apporté donc une réponse que l'on souhaite pérenne. Je voudrais ainsi dire que la pharmacopée traditionnelle au Cameroun a soigné avec succès les formes légères de la pandémie, car les formes les plus lourdes doivent avoir un traitement tout à fait particulier. Pour que tout cela soit réalité, il faut dire qu'un facteur important de lutte contre la COVID-19 a été aussi l'accès à l'information juste et vraie en mettant à contribution au Cameroun les radios communautaires dans les zones d'accès difficiles qui ont été de véritables relais et des adjuvants à la solitude du confinement et à la promotion et la protection et la préservation culturelle ou artistique.

35.4 Pour ce qui est des préoccupations environnementales, par ailleurs, objet des assises de la COP-26, le Cameroun a le privilège d'avoir sur son territoire une biodiversité riche dont les enjeux de préservation ont tenu en haleine le gouvernement, avec comme résultat la levée de la suspension qui pesait sur la réserve de la biosphère du Dja comme patrimoine de l'humanité. C'est la raison pour laquelle on l'appelle au Cameroun l'Afrique en miniature. D'autres sites, vestiges et substrats historiques, culturels ou coloniaux frappent aux portes du patrimoine matériel et immatériel de l'UNESCO, tels que les festivals Nguon, Ngondo ou le port négrier de Bimbia qui pourrait participer au projet de la route des esclaves.

35.5 Pays de football et de sport en général, le Cameroun prête une oreille attentive à toutes les politiques publiques en faveur de la pratique inclusive du sport sain, en ratifiant en 2006, l'instrument relatif à la Convention internationale de l'UNESCO contre le dopage dans le sport et en se soumettant au protocole ADLogic et au Code mondial antidopage. Par la mise en place d'une plate-forme nationale de conformité, le Cameroun a résolument pris fait et cause pour un sport sain, pour des compétitions équitables. D'ailleurs, la Coupe d'Afrique des Nations, qui se tiendra en janvier prochain sur la terre des « Lions indomptables » ne brisera pas ces codes.

35.6 La préservation de la paix nationale et internationale si chère à notre Chef d'État, le Président de la République, Son Excellence Paul Biya, ne sera garantie que si l'on répond à l'épineuse question de la pauvreté multidimensionnelle. Le Programme MOST des transformations sociales apparaît donc à ce titre comme un moule idoine pour que la science sociale, exacte et ouverte, féconde des politiques publiques pour des transformations structurelles, inclusives, efficaces et amélioratives. Lors du dernier Forum MOST des Ministres de l'Afrique centrale, dédié à la recherche de solutions en sciences sociales pour adresser la résurgence de ce fléau aggravé par la COVID-19 a invité à la conduite d'une étude soutenue par l'UNESCO comme préalable au programme régional de lutte contre le visage nouveau de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion. Pour le Cameroun, cette étude contribuera à réaliser le projet d'émergence nationale porté par la stratégie de développement : la SNDD 2030, les objectifs du développement durable ODD et la vision 2063 de l'Union Africaine.

35.7 Notre souhait est que la priorité Afrique de l'Organisation, dans le creuset idéal qu'offre l'UNESCO, lieu par excellence des rencontres des cultures et de la coopération pour la paix des peuples, continue d'adresser les problématiques prégnantes comme celle de l'autonomisation de la femme et de la jeune fille doublement marginalisée, de la pandémie et celle de l'emploi des jeunes particulièrement sinistré par la COVID-19. En vous remerciant de votre aimable attention, je souhaite à tous une joyeuse célébration du 75^e anniversaire de l'UNESCO. Je vous remercie.

36. **The President:**

Merci votre Excellence pour ces paroles. I call now Her Excellency Honourable Mamookho Gladys Phiri, Minister of Education and Training of Lesotho. You have the floor Excellency.

37.1 **Ms Phiri (Lesotho):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is both a pleasure and honour for me to have this rare opportunity of delivering an address to the international community at the 41st session of the General Conference. His Majesty King Letsie III, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho wishes all participants in this important forum, warm regards and best wishes. Mr President, it would be remiss of me not to begin by congratulating the president of the 41st session of the General Conference and the Director-General for their appointments into this position.

37.2 We wish to express our understanding and appreciation that the 41st session of the General Conference takes place in the aftermath of one of the deadliest pandemics in the history of mankind. The scourge's impact was felt globally in varying ways and degrees across all sections of society. The pandemic hit hard in the fabric of our societies. All this makes it a worthy exercise that as the United Nations family celebrates its 75th anniversary, which was also made by the COVID-19 crisis, we should also reflect on how we how we fared in UNESCO's main mission in the Member States, encapsulated in the five fields of competencies. It is against this backdrop that I wish to share with you how we fared in the Mountain Kingdom in relation to UNESCO's 40th session of the General Conference expectations.

37.3 Similarly, I wish to express my appreciation of all throughout this Organization made in the biennium, despite the glaring difficulties and challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We in the Kingdom of Lesotho wish to thank the Organization heartily for both the financial and technical support it has rendered us in the various projects, some of which are still under way as we speak. We therefore implore the Organization to continue with this good work.

37.4 Lesotho has made major strides in the fields of education and science, working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Ministry of Education and Training is currently in the process of finalizing the review

of the 2009 Curriculum Assessment Policy, with the aim of aligning it with the demands of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The final draft is expected to be completed by the end of 2021. The review was executed with the intent to harmonize our policies with the Sustainable Development Goals and other international protocols.

37.5 Mr President, we acknowledge that COVID-19 did have a remarkable impact in the execution of our mandate in diverse sectors. However, optimism preservation and reliance played an integral role in steering our ship forward despite numerous COVID-19 challenges we successfully attempted to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning in schools through capacity building in the use of online teaching and development of online teaching and learning materials for teachers and learners.

37.6 In the field of science, though handicapped by inadequate infrastructure such as laboratories in our schools, we are conscious of the huge potential digital resources play to promote the STEM subject. As such, we are forced to jeopardize the partnership, compromising relevant government departments, non-government organizations and private sector to pursue the advancement of digital literacy. For instance, since 2016, we have sustained our participation in the Africa Code Week competition, which in our view is one of Africa's largest initiatives in tech literacy for youth. Since 2016, when we first participated in this programme, we have been annually increasing the number of youths in it.

37.7 In 2019, we started what we termed the Girl Tech Conference as an annual event, which is aimed at increasing the number of girls involved in technological innovations at a young age. This event showcased the scientific and technological project which girls at secondary and high school levels initiated and developed. The 2021 event saw the United Nations Technology Bank and its managing director participating during the Girl Tech conference in April during the celebration of the Girls International ICT Day. In this event, four countries participated: Botswana, Kenya, Ghana and Lesotho.

37.8 In pursuit of the agenda of the creative economy within the education sector, the youth department has embarked on promoting climate action awareness in schools using three approaches: firstly, engaging students to write essays about technology and climate change that has been compiled and published as a book called "Love at first Click". More than 100 copies of this book have been printed for sale. The book can be also purchased online at Amazon in soft cover for international readership. Secondly, youth will lead in hosting their first "Kingdom in the Sky: Green Climate Action Awards" in the fields of technology, film, fashion and fine arts to promote innovation and address unemployment among the youth. More than 200 youth are participating in the campaign for climate action in seven districts and 10 schools, led by four out-of-school youth groups. Lastly, Act for Climate Change, also led by youth, has started school-based orchards in partnership with six schools. This initiative is intended to spread to other schools in the country, especially hard-to-reach and rural youth in Lesotho and across the continent.

37.9 Before I conclude, it would be a great injustice for the Kingdom of Lesotho and its people to fail to express their appreciation to the German Commission for UNESCO, for its continued technical support through the volunteer programme that has been running for several years. The programme's continuity is highly appreciated. In the same manner, we are forever thankful for the Korean National Commission through the Bridge Programme which has left us with the legacy of three community learning centres in the country in which we are implementing early childhood care and development, adult literacy and vocational skills programmes. Further collaboration and assistance in projects of this nature in the future will be highly appreciated.

37.10 Mr President, in conclusion, on behalf of the people, the Government and Kingdom of Lesotho, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for all the financial technical assistance this Organization has been rendering to our country. It is our greatest wish and understanding that the sustenance of the partnership built within the UNESCO fraternity will go a long way in realizing the goals the body aspires to achieve. I thank you.

38. The President:

Thank you very much your Excellency for your statement. I call now His Excellency Mr Mai Phan Dung, Secretary General of Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO. You have the floor, Sir.

39.1 M. Dung (Viet Nam) :

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, mesdames et messieurs les Chefs des Délégations, Mesdames et Messieurs, qu'il me soit permis tout d'abord d'adresser mes félicitations à Monsieur Santiago Irazabal Mourão pour son élection aux fonctions de Président de la 41^e session de la Conférence générale. Mes félicitations également à Madame Audrey Azoulay pour sa réélection au poste de Directrice générale de l'UNESCO. Le Viet Nam partage avec les membres de l'UNESCO la joie de célébrer le 75^e anniversaire de l'UNESCO, dont le rôle et la place dans la structure de gouvernance mondiale ont été confirmés à travers ce long parcours. Au cours de ces 75 dernières années, l'UNESCO peut en effet être fière d'avoir contribué remarquablement et de sa propre manière à la paix et au développement durable dans le monde, en préservant les bonnes valeurs du passé, en accompagnant le développement du présent et en façonnant les visions pour l'avenir. L'UNESCO a contribué à ce que les valeurs culturelles de l'humanité soient préservées et que leur héritage soit assuré. L'UNESCO a également laissé sa forte empreinte sur l'éradication de l'analphabétisme, sur la construction de la société apprenante et de la société de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, sur l'amélioration de la qualité de l'éducation à tous les niveaux. En étant présente dans le parcours de développement de chaque enfant sur la planète, dans l'esprit de ne laisser personne pour compte. L'UNESCO a également fait des efforts pour que le savoir, la science et la technologie soient partagés, diffusés et contribuent donc à l'essor des Nations.

39.2 Mesdames et messieurs, le monde aujourd'hui est encore confronté à de nombreux défis liés aux domaines de compétence de l'UNESCO, tels que les conflits d'origine culturelle, religieuse ou ethnique, les écarts technologiques, le changement climatique, etc. Ces problèmes mondiaux deviennent de plus en plus complexes et produisent des impacts directs sur chaque citoyen, nécessitant une réponse au niveau mondial et une coopération internationale. L'UNESCO devrait continuer à affirmer son rôle central dans les efforts multilatéraux visant à résoudre ces problèmes. Le Viet Nam tient à souligner donc un certain nombre d'orientations pour les futures activités de coopération – UNESCO, comme suit : sur le

plan scientifique, il est important que l'UNESCO accompagne et soutienne davantage les États membres dans la mise en œuvre des ODD en mettant l'accent sur la promotion, la science de la technologie et de l'innovation, sur le renforcement des capacités d'adaptation au changement climatique, sur la transformation vers une économie verte afin de protéger l'environnement, la biodiversité, les écosystèmes, les valeurs culturelles et géologiques.

39.3 Le Viet Nam soutient surtout les recommandations sur la science ouverte qui aident les pays à renforcer leurs capacités et leurs infrastructures, à l'aide d'une plate-forme scientifique ouverte notamment dans les domaines de l'environnement, de la coopération maritime, les valeurs culturelles et géologiques. En ce qui concerne l'éducation, nous soutenons le rapport de l'UNESCO sur le futur de l'éducation, jetant les bases pour la construction d'une philosophie éducative, la modernisation de l'éducation, l'accès égal à une éducation de haute qualité.

39.4 Dans le domaine de la culture, l'UNESCO devrait continuer à promouvoir la culture de la paix, la diversité culturelle, à assurer la sécurité culturelle, à préserver l'identité et la diversité des cultures par la conservation et la mise en valeur des patrimoines naturel, culturel, immatériel et documentaire.

39.5 Mesdames et messieurs, le Viet Nam se réjouit d'une excellente relation avec l'UNESCO. Cette relation peut se résumer en trois mots : en terrain, substantielle et efficace grâce à une coopération multisectorielle et ciblée. Cette coopération a été récemment portée à un niveau supérieur par la signature du protocole d'accord sur la coopération pour la période 2021-2025 à l'occasion de la visite au Siège de l'UNESCO du Premier Ministre vietnamien, le 5 novembre.

39.6 Mesdames et messieurs, le Viet Nam plaide pour le renforcement du rôle du multilatéralisme. Nous soutenons les objectifs, les missions, le rôle et les activités de l'Organisation afin de contribuer au maintien de la paix et de la sécurité internationale, de promouvoir la coopération pour le développement durable. En tant que membre non permanent du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies pour le mandat 2020-2021, le Viet Nam a souligné l'initiative de consolider la coopération entre l'ONU et les organisations multilatérales, telles que l'OIM et l'Asian. Dans la prévention et la résolution des conflits dans le monde, nous sommes disposés à partager cette expérience avec l'UNESCO et à servir de passerelle pour renforcer davantage la coopération entre l'UNESCO et l'Asian. Désireux de contribuer davantage, de manière plus substantielle et efficace aux travaux de l'UNESCO, le Viet Nam s'est porté candidat au poste de membre du Conseil exécutif pour le mandat 2021-2025. Nous souhaitons bénéficier du soutien précieux des États membres à notre candidature. Je vous remercie.

40. **The President:**

Merci. Thank you your Excellency for the statement. Now I will call Her Excellency Ms Magdalena Marcinkowska, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Poland to UNESCO. She will introduce a video message by the Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, His Excellency Mr Piotr Wawrzyk. You have the floor, Ambassador.

41.1 **Ms Maccvinkowska (Poland):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the State Party of Poland I would like to congratulate His Excellency Santiago Irazabal Mourão for his appointment as the Chairperson of the 41st session of the General Conference and Madam Audrey Azoulay for her re-election as Director-General to UNESCO. *Bonne chance, bon courage.* The national statement will be delivered by Mr Piotr Wawrzyk Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. Thank you.

42.1 **Mr Wawrzyk (Poland):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I congratulate Mr President on your appointment and wish you every success. I also express our appreciation for the outstanding work of UNESCO Director-General Madam Azoulay. Ladies and gentlemen, the core mission of UNESCO is to prevent war, through culture science and education cooperation. We have created numerous normative acts, standard setting documents, programmes and initiatives to foster cultural heritage and promote cultural diversity. We have worked hard to advance the concept of mutually beneficial cooperation in culture, science and education. UNESCO facilitates communication between peoples and assists in human solidarity. We have kept pace with dynamic changes of the world.

42.2 Today UNESCO's ultimate goal is to do everything possible to protect timeless values of mankind's unique cultural heritage, create opportunities for sustainable development of culture organizations, for scientific and educational advancement, while ensuring protection of basic human rights and dignity.

42.3 Ladies and gentlemen, COVID-19 has aggravated inequalities and created new challenges. UNESCO has had to adapt to the new realities and to respond to the situation. Insuring vaccine distribution, access to health care, the right to quality education, mobilization and scientific cooperation or protecting threats to cultural heritage reminds us how important is our work here at UNESCO.

42.4 The Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5) interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach should guide UNESCO in facing these new global challenges. Despite the international community's resolve, we continue to see the devaluation of fundamental human rights across the world. Poland welcomes UNESCO's decision to continue monitoring the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine, a task which stems from the core mandate of the Organization. Special attention has to be paid to the fundamental freedom of expression, safety of journalists and the right to information. We call upon the Belarusian authorities to immediately release all journalists and media workers imprisoned on political grounds, including Andrzej Poczo , Katsiaryna Andreyeva and Darya Chultsova.

42.5 Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and adaptation to climate change are indispensable to the role of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and leading the Ocean's Decade is invaluable. Poland is an active participant in these efforts. In February 2022 in Sopot, Poland the Institute of Oceanography will be hosting a conference in collaboration with UNESCO. New opportunities for learners, for the general public and for scientific, formal and nonformal

education are provided by the initiatives of the International Days of Gender Diversity and Biosphere Reserves, which Poland fully supports. We are very proud by the recent inclusion of Świętokrzyskie Geopark on the UNESCO Global Geopark list.

42.6 Ladies and gentlemen, the protection of cultural heritage must be carried out according to the fundamental principles of objectivity, equality and transparency. We welcome the successful conclusion of the review of the Memory of the World programme, resulting in its full operationality. We declare our commitment to this programme of great importance for documentary heritage. Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude, let me paraphrase the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem: “science explains the world, but only culture can reconcile it”. Thank you.

43. **The President:**

Thank you very much your Excellency for your speech. Now I call His Excellency Simai Mohammed Said, Minister of Education and Vocational Training, United Republic of Tanzania. We are going to have a pre-recorded video. You have the floor Excellency.

44.1 **Mr Said (United Republic of Tanzania):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Mr President, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you for the confidence that many of us have vested in you to preside over the 41st session of the General Conference. The United Republic of Tanzania, under the leadership of His Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, attaches great importance to multilateral diplomacy and its work in the world. Being one of the facets of the United Nations, the United Republic of Tanzania fully supports the implementation of the UNESCO mandate.

44.2 Mr President, this General Conference is taking place at a time when the international community is reflecting the hampered efforts towards accelerating implementation of the global Agenda 2030. We are all aware of the setbacks in development caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. When reflecting on education as enabling sector in such a pandemic it is worth noting that most countries, especially the least developed ones, experienced increased inequality with regard to access to education, particularly between public and private schools due the digital gap. This has disrupted the pace which countries were making leading to accelerated implementation towards Sustainable Development Goal 4. However, the pandemic has served as a wake-up call to countries to strengthen collaboration and build resilient education systems that are accessible to all learners across all levels of education. During the period 2022-2023, the United Republic of Tanzania will continue to strive towards ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong opportunities for all by taking deliberate actions in line with both national and international commitments.

44.3 Mr President, the United Republic of Tanzania commends UNESCO for its support to enhance strengthened capacity of our national trainers and other educational practitioners on STEM education in a gender transformative manner for sustainable development. We realize that more effort is needed to ensure STEM education is accessed by the majority of intended stakeholders in order to achieve expected results. Also, the United Republic of Tanzania stands with the international community, in compensating our experts to apply science for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem and biodiversity conservation.

44.4 Mr President, the United Republic of Tanzania supports UNESCO on the Recommendation of the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in order to ensure responsible and transparent development of these technologies. The recommendation guides technologies to be accountable, inclusive, diverse and respectful of privacy. It also ensures that the entire artificial intelligence cycle is trustworthy and that data sets do not perpetuate discrimination, exclusion, biases, inequalities and gender gaps.

44.5 In extending our appreciation to UNESCO initiatives and endeavours and underpinning social and human science, we also support UNESCO's determination in promoting the creation of dedicated spaces for innovative interaction among youth. We believe that engaging youth provides an enabling environment that will equip them with skills and competencies to go through four major interconnected life transitions, namely continue to learn, starting to work, exercising citizenship and developing a healthy lifestyle. The United Republic of Tanzania welcomes UNESCO efforts since she started to take initiatives for empowering youth and reinforcing the capacities to respond to contemporary challenges and opportunities.

44.6 Mr President, the 1970 and 2001 Conventions provide international frameworks for preventing and combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property and the pillage of underwater cultural heritage. The United Republic of Tanzania supports such UNESCO instruments because we are also one of the countries which has lost cultural properties through illicit trafficking. Like many other African countries, the United Republic of Tanzania has most of its young population employed in the creative sector. Implementation of UNESCO plans through the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in synergy with the 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist provides a robust framework of cooperation to develop policies and measures in support of the diversity of cultural expressions and sustainability of dynamic and inclusive cultural creative sectors, which is all commended.

44.7 Mr President, we commend UNESCO for its support to reinforce the communication and information sectors. Through such UNESCO support, the United Republic of Tanzania, to some extent, has strengthened capacities and raised awareness to enhance norms and policies related to freedom of expression, press freedom, safety of journalists, including women journalists and the right to access information online and offline.

44.8 Mr President, in concluding, the United Republic of Tanzania will continue to collaborate with the international community in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic as it obstructs our efforts to accelerate implementation of the global Agenda 2030. It is against this backdrop that the United Republic of Tanzania has decided to present its candidature of the Executive Board for the period of 2021-2025 and would like the support of the Member States. Thank you for your attention.
Asante Sana. Merci beaucoup.

45. **The President:**

Thank you Excellency for this statement. I call now Ms Alicia Herbert, Director for Education, Gender and Equality for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. You have the floor, Madam.

46.1 **Ms Herbert** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland):

Thank you very much. Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted and honoured to be here today. As we celebrate 75 years of UNESCO, it is timely to recall the words spoken in London at the conference at the establishment of UNESCO and which now form the basis of the Constitution, the words that “wars begin in the minds of men.” Today, as we celebrate 75 years of bringing together the minds across the world in pursuit of peace, the United Kingdom is proud to have been a founding Member of this Organization and to continue to play an active role.

46.2 Madam Director-General, may I begin by congratulating you on your achievements to date and your election for a second term? The United Kingdom has welcomed your focus on reform and applauds the progress made, particularly when set against the backdrop of the global pandemic. But we believe that the work is not yet done. The United Kingdom encourages you to maintain this momentum, and we look forward to supporting further reforms during your second term. We note that UNESCO’s regular budget is set to increase by 2% for the next biennium. We need to ensure that the rationale for increasing budgets is transparent, results focused and follows efforts to find greater efficiencies. We expect that this additional funding will be used to support continued reform efforts aligned with the vision for United Nations 2.0 and progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4. As a committed defender of every child’s right to a quality education, the United Kingdom provides voluntary funding to the Global Education Monitoring Report and UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics.

46.3 We thank UNICEF for providing valuable data and policy advice during the United Kingdom’s G7 presidency this year, under which we secured a G7 endorsement of two brand new Sustainable Development Goals 4 milestone indicators and a political declaration on girls education. And yesterday evening, in partnership with Norway and Tunisia, we celebrated the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, which the United Kingdom intends to ratify. However, we remain concerned about the progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4, and it is critically off track. Over the next few years, it is crucial that UNESCO, supported by Member States, provides the leadership, practical coordination and support for prioritization necessary to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. To this end, we welcome the recent reforms of the high-level steering committee.

46.4 The United Kingdom commends UNESCO’s continued leadership on media freedom and the safety of journalists, the UK and Canada co-chair the Media Freedom Coalition of 49 countries and together helped establish the UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund. The United Kingdom continues to support the fund and we commend the success of the first tranche of projects which have helped over 700 journalists on the front line around the world.

46.5 In the field of science, the United Kingdom is pleased to continue to contribute to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme. We welcome the progress made on developing an international standard setting instrument on open science since the last general conference. And look forward to the adoption of the recommendation. The United Kingdom’s commitment to the preservation of world’s cultural heritage remains undimmed.

46.6 We were delighted to submit our first report on the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two protocols this year, and we will continue to work in partnership with countries around the world whose heritage is at risk, whether from conflict, from social or economic fragility, or from climate change. And indeed, together with the government of Italy we hosted an event at COP26 this week which demonstrated the scope for all countries to leverage their cultural heritage to address the challenges of climate change. Indeed, today marked the end of the COP26 negotiations in Glasgow, which have underlined the multidisciplinary nature of this global challenge. We welcome the steps that UNESCO has taken to embed such an intersectional approach in the new programme.

46.7 Before I finish, I would like to thank the United Kingdom National Commission for its support for both the United Kingdom Government and the wider UNESCO community. From the launch of their landmark report on the national value of UNESCO in 2020 to prepare the inscription of two new world heritage sites and the designation of two Creative Cities this year, the National Commission plays an important role both nationally and internationally.

46.8 In closing, I recommend to you all the new digital archive, which brings together the instruments our forbearers used to ratify the UNESCO Constitution. Launched by the United Kingdom and France together with UNESCO to mark the 75th anniversary this is an important historical record of our collective promise to work together to build peace in the minds of women and men. Thank you very much, Mr President.

47. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your statement. Now I call Her Excellency Ms Megan Anderson, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Australia to UNESCO. You have the floor, Ambassador.

48.1 **Ms Anderson** (Australia):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. First, I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, for leading this General Conference and at the same time, pay tribute to the previous president. In addition, I would like to congratulate Madam Director-General for her appointment. Australia reaffirms its commitment to supporting both of you and your leadership of the Organization.

48.2 Australia is proud of the strong role it played in the foundation of UNESCO. At that time as the world emerged from the horrors of a global war, Australia joined with others in the need to rebuild and to come together in a spirit of peace. We saw and continue to see the fundamental importance of education, of basing decisions on science and fighting fake news,

of building tolerance and understanding through respect, the sharing of culture and sharing of information to build openness and trust. Seventy-five years later, these same principles and needs drive our commitment to working with all of you through UNESCO to deliver results for the future.

48.3 In education, we remain firmly committed to the inclusive principles imbued in Sustainable Development Goal 4, including increasing access for girls. The implementation of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning higher learning will play an important role in the economic recovery from COVID-19 by enhancing mobility and into university cooperation. Australia has commenced ratification of this important convention. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of basing our decisions on science and the remarkable gains that can be made by sharing knowledge.

48.4 Australia commends UNESCO on its work on the draft recommendation on open science, which will benefit people around the world. For our part, we work with industry, civil society, academia and the global community to develop guidance and share best practice approaches to ensure science knowledge is open, inclusive and equitable. Australia is committed to ensuring that new and emerging technologies like AI are developed and used in a way that promotes and upholds human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is imperative that the draft recommendation on the ethics of AI remains grounded and implemented in line with international human rights law. This is a priority for Australia.

48.5 We continue our long-term commitment to promoting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. We are pleased to co-sponsor the Windhoek +30 Declaration Information as a public good on World Press Freedom Day this year. From its inception, Australia has actively participated in the programme on Man and the Biosphere, where we are seeking re-election to its International Coordinating Council. Australia brings a unique perspective to the role in biocultural conservation and heritage by engaging with our First Nations to achieve multiple sustainable benefits for all people and nature. We welcome the United Nations Decade on Indigenous Languages, launching next year through the Global Action Plan and in our role as temporary co-chair of the Steering Committee on International Decade of Indigenous Languages Global Task Force we're committed to sharing the knowledge and understanding of indigenous peoples languages.

48.6 As a Member State of UNESCO, we look to the past, but we must also look to the future at how we can continue to work together to shape a modern organization responsive to the challenges facing our planet and its people. We have used our four-year term on the World Heritage Committee to help preserve the world's collective heritage, including to help shape a world heritage climate policy. We stand ready to engage in its implementation and to help resolve difficult, outstanding questions for the future benefit of our collective heritage.

48.7 Australia is acutely aware of the unique challenges of small island developing States (SIDS), including our neighbouring Pacific Island countries. We welcome UNESCO's increased engagement with small island developing States and continue to seek a stronger SIDS voice in UNESCO activities and governing bodies. We welcome the nomination of our neighbour, the Cook Islands, to the UNESCO Executive Board.

48.8 After 75 years, UNESCO's important role in providing a space for countries to share their differences and work collectively for a common good remains as important as ever. Australia looks forward to working with UNESCO in support of an effective, open and transparent Organization accountable to all members. This will require strong leadership to implement United Nations reform, efficient and collective ways of working and budget rigour to empower UNESCO to deliver on its agreed mandate. We stand ready to work with you, Madam Director-General, UNESCO and all of its members to continue to build UNESCO firmly grounded in its past and ready for the challenges of the future. Thank you.

49. **The President:**

Thank you very much Ambassador for your statement. Now I call Her Excellency Ms de Kerdaniel, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to UNESCO. You have the floor, Madam.

50.1 **Ms Kerdaniel** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines):

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I have the honour to address this 41st of the General Conference on behalf of the Honourable Curtis King, Minister of Education and Reconciliation. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines congratulates you, Mr President, on your election. You can count on our full cooperation and we wish you every success. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines congratulates you, Madam Director General, on your re-election. We look forward to continuing working with you and your teams. We welcome the Åland Islands as an Associate Member of UNESCO.

50.2 In the current times the world needs more unity and solidarity. To this end, multilateralism and an effective international cooperation are more crucial than ever. Without cooperation, the world, despite all the difficulties and uncertainties, would not have been able to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic which affected our health, social, economic, educational, cultural, environmental, communication and information systems.

50.3 The pandemic is not only a health crisis; it is also a catalyst for rethinking the way we want to live in the future. Decision-makers have an opportunity to move away from the status quo and make positive changes for the benefit of humanity. Yet there is room for improvements at the short-, medium- and long-term by ensuring vaccines for all people, sharing science and knowledge, combating misinformation, thus increasing global and financial cooperation to reduce massive inequalities and vulnerabilities.

50.4 In this regard, we welcome UNESCO's work on the two recommendations on open science and on ethics in artificial intelligence. The timing of these normative instruments is ideal to alert the international community that scientific knowledge and experiences must be shared and to ensure that new technologies are used for positive transformation. Therefore, UNESCO must continue to play its role within the United Nations system to face the emerging challenges and to fully contribute to Agenda 2030 through its fields of competence which are more relevant than ever. We count on the implementation of the next Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025

(41 C/5) which we fully support with its two Global Priorities Africa and Gender Equality and SIDS as a priority group with particular attention to indigenous peoples.

50.5 The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of education systems and highlighted the need for new educational strategies. The rapid shift to virtual classrooms has saved many children around the world, but disadvantaged those living in poverty or in areas lacking technological infrastructure. In these times of technological revolution, equality in education must be closely monitored to ensure that no child is left behind. In addition, we further encourage the development of critical thinking in curricula, so that future citizens are properly prepared to sift fact from fiction and be able to interpret data. In this area, the role of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education in Geneva is essential.

50.6 Therefore, we witness UNESCO's rapid response to the pandemic by adapting solutions and supporting Member States to ensure, as much as possible, distance learning and policy advice. Yet there is a need to increase funding in education and develop effective strategies to ensure quality education in all its forms, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

50.7 Mr President, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also facing the recovery from the damages resulting from the eruption of La Soufrière volcano in April 2021, thanks to UNESCO emergency response and also to the region assistance. Here we also underline the critical situation in Haiti after the earthquake. This brings us to highlight the issue of climate change. We are so far from the implementation of the Paris Agreement. As the small island developing States are threatened to disappear and their peoples to be displaced, we urge all stakeholders to turn words and text into actions and to implement their commitments to reach tangible results.

50.8 In this regard, we commend the work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in its activities in ocean sciences, in mitigation and adaptation to climate change, multi-hazard disaster reduction, in tsunami early warning systems and tsunami ready programme. We believe that the human and financial resources of IOC should be reinforced to properly continue its activities.

50.9 Mr President, it was an honour for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to serve on the UNESCO Executive Board during the last four years. We worked on the creation of UNESCO SIDS unit and on many issues related to UNESCO's reforms, to the implementation of UNESCO's programmes such as those on diversity, media and information literacy, access to information, freedom of expression, media development, the fight against hate-speech and discrimination. We also contributed to the implementation of UNESCO's Conventions, mainly protection of heritage, promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions with the status of the artist and anti-doping in sports.

50.10 We commend UNESCO's work in launching innovative initiatives to maintain cultural industries which were damaged by the pandemic, as we believe that culture is an essential pillar for the evolution of the societies. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is candidate to the World Heritage Committee. If elected, we will continue to work closely with the States Parties to the Convention and to implement the Convention. As I close, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stands firm to uphold the ideas and values of UNESCO. And we wish you all and the UNESCO staff a wonderful celebration of the 75th anniversary. Thank you.

51. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your statement. I call now His Excellency Mr Paulos Bereket, Counsellor, Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Delegation of Eritrea. You have the floor, Sir.

52.1 **Mr Bereket (Eritrea):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. First and foremost, allow me to express Eritrea's appreciation of UNESCO's assistance and cooperation in various educational, cultural, and scientific projects. Similarly, I would like to congratulate Ms Audrey Azoulay for her commitment in promoting UNESCO's noble principles and values.

52.2 UNESCO's mandate and ideals as well as the need for global cooperation have become more relevant and significant today, since we are confronting an increase in major challenges, such as COVID-19, global warming, intolerance and above all destruction of irreplaceable human heritage and masterpieces.

52.3 Eritrea has a rich and diverse cultural heritage in general and intangible cultural heritage in particular. Each of the nine ethno-linguistic groups has its own language, traditions and living expressions. The State of Eritrea ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010. Since then, several programmes and projects have been conducted as part of Eritrea's implementation of the Convention.

52.4 Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List during the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee, which was held in Krakow, Poland in July 2017. Eritrea continues its dedication towards ensuring the registration of other Eritrean sites such as Qohaito Cultural Landscape and Adulis. Eritrea prepared the State of Conservation Report for Asmara World Heritage property and submitted the Report to the World Heritage Centre on 15 January 2021. The State Party, Eritrea initiated a local development plan for Asmara in April 2021. The project will undertake survey activities to assess the present socioeconomic condition of the World Heritage property and will enhance the local economic development plan.

52.5 Mr President, ladies and gentlemen. Eritrea's national education policy stipulates compulsory basic education, the use of mother tongue for instruction at elementary level, and the expansion of secondary and tertiary education opportunities. Education is universal and free at all levels, including a successful scheme for nomad children. The government has incorporated UNESCO's educational plans in defining its strategies on adult education, TVET, higher education and literacy.

52.6 With regards to science, Eritrea's strategic objectives aim at strengthening technology and innovation, enhancing capacity building for research and education, promoting international cooperation for the protection of sustainable management of natural science. Accordingly, Eritrea held awareness raising workshops on the protection of the environment.

52.7 Mr President, before closing, I would like to call for strong solidarity among all UNESCO Member States to confront the extremely challenging task ahead of us. I am confident that the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO will conclude its work successfully. Thank you for your attention.

53. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your statement. Now I call His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness of Holy See. Eminence, you have the floor.

54.1 **M. Parolin (Saint-Siège) :**

Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Excellences, mesdames et messieurs, je désire réaffirmer en ce lieu l'estime du Pape François pour cette Organisation qui depuis bien 75 ans, ne cesse d'œuvrer et de promouvoir une culture de la rencontre entre les peuples avec la conviction que seule la paix permet d'envisager un futur plus prospère pour tous. La pandémie de COVID-19 a interrompu l'instruction pour plus d'un milliard d'enfants dans le monde. À ce propos, le plan de relance autant que les actions en faveur de l'Agenda 2030 devront accorder une attention particulière à l'éducation comme un facteur fondamental et un catalyseur du développement durable qui ne laisse personne de côté. En ce sens, les appels réitérés du Pape François en faveur d'un Pacte éducatif global voudraient être un signe concret de la disponibilité du Saint-Siège pour raviver l'engagement pour et avec les jeunes générations en renouvelant la passion d'une éducation plus ouverte et plus inclusive. À cela s'ajoute l'œuvre inlassable de nombreuses institutions éducatives catholiques présentes dans le monde à travers lesquelles le Saint-Siège continuera d'exercer son rôle pour garantir à toutes et à tous un accès à une éducation de qualité qui soit pleinement respectueuse de la dignité de la personne humaine et de notre vocation commune à la fraternité. À l'appui de ces intentions, nous serons heureux de déposer dans les prochains jours l'instrument de ratification de la Convention mondiale sur la reconnaissance des qualifications relatives à l'enseignement supérieur. Cela permettra au Saint-Siège de s'engager plus concrètement comme partenaire international en offrant aux états sa propre contribution pour améliorer la qualité de l'éducation.

54.2 L'UNESCO n'a pas manqué d'affirmer son engagement propre pour une approche de l'éducation et de l'apprentissage qui dépasse les dichotomies traditionnelles les entre les aspects cognitifs, émotionnels et éthiques. Il s'agira donc de s'efforcer en faveur d'une formation humaine de l'intelligence, siège de la connaissance du cœur, siège des valeurs et des choix moraux, et des mains, symbole de l'action. De fait, seule une écologie humaine intégrale, qui implique non seulement les questions environnementales, mais l'homme dans sa totalité, devient capable d'écouter le cri des pauvres et d'être le ferment d'une nouvelle société. Pour renforcer les interconnexions entre l'éducation et la sauvegarde de la maison commune, le Saint-Père a voulu inaugurer un Département d'études sur l'écologie et l'environnement au sein de l'Université Pontificale du Latran. Et, grâce à l'accord souscrit par le Pape François et par Madame Azoulay, au sein de ce nouveau parcours académique sera bientôt instituée une Chaire UNESCO sur l'avenir de l'éducation à la durabilité.

54.3 Affirmer une vision intégrale de la vie et du monde signifie admettre qu'il n'y a pas d'écologie sans une anthropologie adéquate. Tel est le défi qui s'impose aujourd'hui avec force devant l'évolution des capacités techniques. Pour le Saint-Siège, reste valable le principe que *tout ce qui est techniquement possible ou faisable n'est pas de ce fait éthiquement acceptable*. Pour pouvoir parler correctement d'une éthique de l'intelligence artificielle, il sera donc nécessaire que le développement de chaque algorithme s'inscrive toujours dans une vision « algoréthique » visant à comprendre, en dernière analyse, « ce qui signifie, dans ce contexte, l'intelligence, la conscience, l'émotivité, l'intentionnalité affective et l'autonomie de l'agir moral ».

54.4 L'Église n'attend pas de la science qu'elle suive seulement les principes éthiques. Elle l'encourage à rendre un service positif, que nous pouvons appeler la « charité du savoir ». Il y a là une belle possibilité de dialogue avec les principes sous-tendus à ladite *Science ouverte*. De fait, pour le Saint-Siège aussi il est nécessaire que « la recherche scientifique mette ses indications au service de tous, en recherchant toujours de nouvelles formes de collaboration, de partage des résultats et d'élaboration de réseaux ». De cette manière, on évitera que l'avenir ajoute de nouvelles inégalités basées sur la connaissance et augmente l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres. La science et la technologie nous ont aidés à repousser les limites de la connaissance de la nature, et en particulier de l'être humain. Mais elles ne suffisent pas par elles seules à donner toutes les réponses. Aujourd'hui nous réalisons toujours davantage combien il est nécessaire de puiser dans les trésors de la sagesse contenus dans les traditions religieuses, la littérature et les arts, qui touchent en profondeur au mystère de l'existence humaine.

54.5 À cet égard, je désire remercier l'UNESCO pour avoir inscrit à la biennale des anniversaires quelques figures de saints comme Thérèse de Lisieux et Nersès le Gracieux. Leurs témoignages nous laissent une trace de l'incalculable patrimoine chrétien qui a marqué la formation socioculturelle de l'humanité. Mais il est aussi une invitation à considérer la dimension transcendante de la vie pour cultiver ensemble le rêve d'un humanisme solidaire. Je vous remercie.

55. **The President:**

Merci votre Éminence pour ces paroles. Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues. His Eminence was the last speaker on our list for this morning. I wish to inform you that the delegation of Armenia has asked for the right of reply to a statement made earlier. In accordance with Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure I will accord the right of reply of two minutes. Your Excellency Representative of Armenia, you have the floor, Sir.

56.1 **L'Arménie :**

Monsieur le Président, Madame la Directrice générale, mesdames et messieurs les Ministres et Délégués permanents, chers collègues, dans son intervention, le Ministre des affaires étrangères de l'Azerbaïdjan a soulevé certaines questions relatives au conflit du Haut-Karabagh auxquelles le Ministre des affaires étrangère d'Arménie s'est référé. Mon

propos se concentrera essentiellement sur la mission technique indépendante d'experts de l'UNESCO qui comme chacun le sait n'a toujours pas pu se rendre dans la zone de ce conflit. Le représentant de l'Azerbaïdjan a affirmé que l'Arménie bloquait l'envoi de cette mission. Qu'il soit bien clair pour tous que l'Arménie a toujours soutenu l'initiative de la Directrice générale de l'UNESCO de dépêcher une mission d'experts dans cette région et s'est montrée résolument favorable à ce qu'elle puisse être effectuée dans les délais les plus rapides.

56.2 Nous avons ainsi souscrit à toutes les règles proposées par le Secrétariat de l'UNESCO pour la mise en œuvre de la mission : le cadre de la Convention pour la protection des biens culturels en cas de conflit armé de 1954 ; le principe de l'indépendance des experts et de leur libre accès aux biens culturels situés sur ces territoires ; et enfin une approche équilibrée pour la visite des sites des parties concernées. L'Arménie n'a aucune objection à ce que les sites proposés par l'Azerbaïdjan soient visités par les experts. Ce n'est pas malheureusement le cas de l'Azerbaïdjan pour ce qui concerne les sites proposés par l'Arménie. L'Azerbaïdjan serait bien disposée à accueillir cette mission à condition que les experts de l'UNESCO ne puissent pas visiter les biens culturels arméniens situés dans les territoires passés sous son contrôle. Elle craint en effet qu'il soit clairement établi la présence historique arménienne sur ses territoires. Elle redoute aussi que soient révélés les destructions et autres actes de vandalisme perpétrés encore récemment à l'encontre des biens culturels arméniens ou encore le détournement du patrimoine culturel arménien dont elle se rend coupable, avec pour objectif, d'effacer toute trace de cette présence. Et c'est bien là, la raison première du blocage de la mission et, l'Azerbaïdjan porte aujourd'hui l'entière responsabilité de la non-exécution de la mission indépendante d'experts de l'UNESCO. Au regard des menaces qui continuent à peser sur les biens culturels arméniens, il est profondément regrettable que l'UNESCO se voit dans l'impossibilité d'assurer sa mission de protection du patrimoine culturel dans cette région. Ce sont là, chers collègues, les observations que nous souhaitons vous livrer à propos d'une question qui nous concerne tous puisqu'il s'agit de la protection du patrimoine culturel de l'humanité. Je vous remercie

57. **The President:**

I thank the distinguished representative from Armenia. Ladies and gentlemen, my dear colleagues. We have thus come to the end of our meeting this morning. As you know, this afternoon in Room I, this room, will be the high-level segment of the General Conference, during which we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of UNESCO. The plenary session will therefore be suspended until Saturday morning. We are pleased to note that we have almost 30 Heads of State and governments attending from around the world – the most ever for a UNESCO General Conference. This means that there will be a very high level of security for the event. Anyone wishing to enter Room I in the afternoon will require a specific badge issued following registration on the online platform. I trust that all Member States have been able to do this. Any that have not, should do this via the online link sent to all Member States by email. Please also note that circulation in Hall Segur and on the 7th floor will be limited throughout the event. I look forward to seeing many of you here this afternoon. I wish you a pleasant lunch. *The meeting is adjourned.*

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.