

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

Wednesday 24 November 2021 at 4.05 p.m.

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

Report of the Joint Meeting of Commissions (41 C/76)

1. The President:

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, I declare open the 17th plenary meeting of the General Conference, the very last one of the 41st session of the General Conference. More than 3,700 delegates attended this session, which was organized in very particular and very challenging conditions. We have exchanged our views, shared our best national practices, and our vision for the future of UNESCO. We also have approved two very important normative instruments, precisely in the very spirit of our constitution that “peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity”. Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, we have accomplished a lot together, over the past sixteen days, and our work is almost done. However, there are very important items which we are yet to consider. Let us examine the report of the Joint Meeting of Commissions. The joint meeting was held this morning, under the able chairpersonship of His Excellency Mr Atsuyuki Oike, Chairperson of the APX Commission. He will present the report contained in document 41 C/76. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

2.1 Mr Atsuyuki Oike (Japan) (Chairperson of the APX Commission):

Thank you, Mr President. Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, Mr Deputy Director-General, distinguished delegates, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I had the honour of chairing the Joint Meeting of the six Commissions, which examined five items during two sessions held in the morning of 10th of November and today in the morning, 24 November. Our resolutions are contained with the Commission’s report distributed as document 41 C/76, which the Joint Commission recommended to the General Conference for adoption. In this oral report. I will share with you the salient points of our rich deliberations.

2.2 Our first meeting began with the announcement of the Chairpersons of the six commissions by the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili of Serbia. I reiterate our gratitude to Her Excellency Ambassador Rastovac Siamashvili for her precious support. The Joint Meeting of Commissions then examined item **3.1** on the consideration and adoption of the draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4). At the outset, I recalled that the draft 41 C/4 had been extensively debated by the Executive Board and its Preparatory Group, as well as several meetings of the drafting group. I further emphasized that the recommendations of the Executive Board contained in document 41 C/11 are the result of an important consensus achieved through this work.

2.3 The representative of the Director-General gave a brief introduction to the Medium-Term Strategy, after which 14 Member States to the floor to express, first, our appreciation to the Secretariat for its work; second, their support for the Medium-Term Strategy; third, their gratitude to other Member States for their contributions; and fourth, their commitment to see through the implementation of the strategy. Several Member States expressed their support for the continuation of the Organization’s global priorities Africa and Gender Equality. One Member State further underscored the importance of ensuring that implementation of Priority Africa should apply to Member States of the whole African continent, regardless of their electoral group. Some Member States also welcomed the human rights-based approach, underlining the elaboration of the 41 C/4, highlighting its importance in strengthening the Organization’s contribution to the fight against racism, the promotion of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. Hailing the Medium-Term Strategy as a basis for strengthened and inclusive multilateralism, Member states emphasized that the UNESCO’s mandate be respected and that more focus be given to the needs of Member States in the implementation of the strategy. Our members also reaffirmed their commitment to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and to other relevant international development agenda. The draft resolution on item **3.1** was adopted as amended.

2.4 We then examined item **4.3** on the adoption of the provisional budget ceiling. Having extensively discussed the preparation of the 41 C/5 in all possible settings within the past year and a half, we proceeded directly to the examination of the draft resolution. Without intending to stand in the way of consensus in the adoption of the draft resolution, six Member States took the floor to express their position on this matter. The distinguished delegates of Austria, Venezuela, Belgium, Hungary, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates pointed out that there had been an agreement on the baseline of assessed contributions two years ago, in which consensus was reached on the one-time addition of the amount of US \$11 million, which was transferred from a previous period. They emphasized that this was not reflected in the proposed regular programme budget ceiling in the draft 41 C/5. One Member State also stressed the importance of recalling the decisions taken in previous sessions of the General Conference as well as those of the Executive Board and the need to ensure an open consultation process at all stages. Another Member State further stated that, given the increase in assessed contributions, Member States will closely monitor the Secretariat’s expenditure efficiency and budget management. The Joint Meeting of Commissions then took into account the recommendation made by the Executive Board at its 211th session on the draft programme budget for 2022-2025 and further endorsed the integrated budget for 2022-2023 of \$1,444,757,820.00, which includes a regular program budget of \$534,647,000.00, funded by assessed contributions. The draft resolution on item **4.3** was adopted without amendments.

2.5 During our second and final meeting held this morning, and prior to the examination of the remaining items, we finalized the pending issue of the election of three new members of the Working Group on Contributions. Given that there were three vacant seats corresponding to electoral groups III, Va and Vb, the Commissions elected El Salvador, Ghana and Palestine, respectively. The Working Group on Contributions is now composed of Portugal, Lithuania, El Salvador, Bangladesh, Ghana and Palestine. I reiterate my gratitude to them for their contribution to this important task of the APX Commission, and I particularly thank Lithuania for their continued support as Chair of this Group during their tenure. During

the 42nd session of the General Conference, the APX Commission will elect three new members of the Working Group when Portugal, Lithuania and Bangladesh will have completed their four-year term.

2.6 We then proceeded to the examination of item **5.22** on the Draft Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029. I recalled that this very important strategic document, concerning one of our global priorities, is the result of two years of substantive work and consultations that led to a broad consensus on how to advance Priority Africa. I also recalled that this item was examined by the five programme commissions where substantive debates took place. A draft resolution on item **5.22** was adopted by acclamation without amendments. After the adoption of the resolution, 17 Member States took the floor to express their appreciation to the Secretariat and to all Member States, Kenya and Namibia in particular, for their hard work on the development of the Draft Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029. Commenting on the strategy as a historic achievement that brings into force the needs of Africa as defined by Africans, Member States highlighted their commitment to cooperate to ensure the success of the implementation of all five flagship programmes. They emphasized that implementation is as important as the crafting of the strategy. Despite the lengthy consultations, stumbling blocks and challenges that were met during the elaboration, this strategy now stands as a reflection of a new vision for Africa. The Chairpersons of the different Commissions also took the floor to express their appreciation for the work of the Member States and the Secretariat on the creation of this strategy.

2.7 Finally, we examined together item **4.1** on the consideration and adoption of the “Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5)” and item **4.2** on the “Adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2022-2023”. First, the Joint Meeting of Commissions endorsed the recommendations of the Executive Board on the document 41 C/5 contained in document 41 C/6 as a whole. Finally, the Joint Meeting of Commissions recommended that the General Conference adopt the proposed Appropriation Resolution for 2022-2023 as a whole without amendments. Following the adoption of the resolution, three Member States took the floor. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Hungary asked me to include their statements in the record and these will be found in the annex of my overall report. One Member State also highlighted the need for financial resources to be mobilized by furthering the relationship with more partners and donors and by improving the working methods and the effectiveness of UNESCO.

2.8 Mr President, as this is my last report to the plenary, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all our Member States for their active participation and for their constructive support throughout our deliberations. For their unflinching support and cooperation, I should like to thank the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of all the Commissions. Let me also express my thanks to the Director-General, the Deputy Director-General, the Assistant Director-General, the Directors of BSP, the Chief Financial Officer and the Legal Adviser, and particularly colleagues from the governing body, the Secretariat, who were available to provide the necessary clarifications and answers to our queries. I would also like to thank the interpreters, the translators, the conference room clerks and all the technicians for their support. Finally, I extend my gratitude to the Secretary of the Joint Commissions, Mr Salvatore Mineo and his team. This is actually the end of my oral report, but I would like to add a few sentences. While I have more or less completed my duty as the Chairperson of the FA Commission in the Executive Board and also the APX Commission in the General Conference, and therefore I am a free man now. I am glad that I am a free man now. But in any case, I will continue to be here next year, and I hope to be a responsible and constructive member of this House, including hopefully in the World Heritage Committee as well. Thank you very much.

3. **The President:**

Thank you very much for your report, Ambassador Oike. I have to commend you for all the work that you have done all this time and for the excellent way in which you have conducted all the negotiations. Now that you are a free man, we will use this capacity to spearhead the freedom here with us at UNESCO. Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, are there any comments on document 41 C/76? If there are no comments or suggestions, may I then assume that the General Conference takes note of the report of the Joint meeting of Commissions and adopts the draft resolutions contained in it, subject to the decisions that the Conference may take on budgetary issues when adopting the Appropriation Resolution for the next biennium? I see no comments. Thank you. *It is so decided.*

Item 4.2: Adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2022-2023

4. **The President:**

Dear colleagues, the last item remaining on our agenda is item **4.2** on the “Adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2022-2023”. The document pertaining to this item is 41 C/13. In his report, Ambassador Oike presented the Appropriation Resolution, which the six commissions, at their joint meeting, recommended for adoption, with amendments. These amendments are contained in document 41 C/13, which you have in front of you. Are there any comments on this resolution? I see none. May I take it that the General Conference takes note of the report of the Chairperson of the APX Commission and adopts the Appropriation Resolution for 2022-2023 contained in document 41 C/13 as amended by Commission in their Joint Meeting? I see no comments. Thank you. *It is so decided.*

Closure of the 41st session of the General Conference

5. **The President:**

Ladies and gentlemen, we have thus finished our formal agenda for this session of the General Conference. Allow me now to give the floor to the Director-General who wishes to say a few words as this session draws to a close.

6.1 **La Directrice générale :**

Merci Monsieur le Président. Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale. Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs.

(La Directrice générale poursuit en anglais)

6.2 As the President just said, we have now come to an end of this 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. I believe this session has shown how much confidence is placed today in our mandate, but also the expectations it gives rise to. It has been, I think, a very successful General Conference, highly ambitious, with a many-sided mandate, as was the case when our Organization was created 75 years ago, and its mandate remains just as urgent and relevant today. The confidence placed in us, and these expectations were reflected in the historic presence of nearly 38 Heads of State and Government and around 100 ministers throughout this General Conference. I would like to thank you, dear members of the General Conference, for this exemplary participation, which is a source of pride and gives us strength for the future. Strength, but also a sense of obligation. Between 1946 to 2021, the world has changed, and now UNESCO is changing with it. We should take pride in the fact that this General Conference has proved that UNESCO's mandate is able to adapt and address emerging key issues that are crucial to peace.

(The Director-General continues in French)

6.3 Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, cette tradition de l'UNESCO d'être à l'avant-garde de la communauté internationale, nous avons continué de l'honorer ensemble avec notre Recommandation sur l'éthique de l'intelligence artificielle dont l'adoption a couronné un travail de presque quatre années mené en étroite concertation avec vous tous. Avec encore notre Recommandation sur la science ouverte qui permettra de mieux partager les fruits de la recherche entre les continents, entre les disciplines, entre les générations. Avec notre publication aussi sur les futurs de l'éducation, sujet qui était au cœur de toutes vos interventions. Avec aussi l'adoption de cette Stratégie de moyen terme qui nous donne une feuille de route claire qui confirme l'ancrage de nos priorités pour l'Afrique et pour l'égalité des genres. Et nous avons aussi, et vous l'avez adopté à l'instant, un budget qui est sorti du gel qui l'avait paralysé pendant de nombreuses années. Nous en sommes sortis grâce à vos contributions obligatoires actualisées, mais aussi grâce aux contributions volontaires pour lesquelles vous vous êtes aussi mobilisés et qui permettent notamment de mettre en œuvre nos actions à la bonne échelle sur le terrain.

6.4 Je voudrais remercier ici les présidents et les présidentes des commissions et des comités qui sont peut-être maintenant libres, mais qui nous ont permis d'aboutir à tous ces consensus. Et je voudrais vous remercier à tous de votre participation. Je veux remercier aussi tous ceux qui ont travaillé à l'organisation de cette quinzaine foisonnante. Non seulement vous-même, mais aussi les équipes du Secrétariat et de la Conférence générale. Tous ceux que vous voyez, bien sûr, mais tous ceux que vous voyez moins et qui, à la technique, à la logistique, ici même en régie, au service médical, dans les cabines de traduction, d'interprétation, à la sécurité, au protocole, ont su gérer des contraintes sans précédent pour vous offrir malgré tout un cadre de travail adapté.

(La Directrice générale poursuit en espagnol)

6.5 Excelencias, señoras y señores: también deseo dar las gracias, una vez más, a todos los miembros del Consejo Ejecutivo por el excelente trabajo de preparación que han realizado en estos últimos años y, en particular, a su Presidente, el excelentísimo señor Agapito Mba Mokuy. Estimado señor, en un minuto le ofreceré, como manda la tradición, la medalla de la UNESCO como símbolo de nuestro reconocimiento. Espero que le recuerde los desafíos que hemos superado juntos y los éxitos que hemos logrado colectivamente en el largo camino hacia esta reunión de la Conferencia General.

6.6 Por último, me gustaría dar las gracias, por supuesto, al Presidente de esta reunión de la Conferencia General, el excelentísimo señor Santiago Irazabal Mourão. Como dijo usted en su discurso de apertura, frente a los desafíos contemporáneos, hoy reviste más importancia que nunca aprovechar al máximo el multilateralismo para promover el mandato de la UNESCO. Esto es lo que hacemos cuando cada Estado expresa su opinión para que podamos tomar juntos decisiones importantes. Armado con su diligencia, usted ha garantizado el espíritu del multilateralismo a lo largo de esta reunión. De acuerdo con la tradición, hoy le entrego, en muestra de nuestra gratitud, un mazo grabado que simboliza el éxito de esta reunión de la Conferencia General, así como la ambición y la esperanza que encierra para los años venideros.

(The Director-General continues in French)

6.7 Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, nous sommes bien placés désormais pour conduire ensemble le travail de ces deux et même ces huit prochaines années pour continuer à faire honneur à la vocation de notre Institution. Et en cette semaine africaine qui a débuté hier, je voudrais conclure avec le grand écrivain et homme d'État sénégalais Léopold Sédar Senghor, lorsqu'il parlait de la vocation de l'UNESCO, à l'occasion d'une célébration, déjà, mais c'était celle de notre 30^e anniversaire. « Notre vocation », disait-il, « c'est d'être l'Institution qui incarne les plus hautes promesses de liberté, de paix, de dignité retrouvée pour tous les peuples de la Terre, par-delà les différences, les incompréhensions, les oppositions qui séparent les hommes dans la nuit de notre monde en crise ». Continuons donc ensemble à éclairer ce monde en crise, mais aussi en transformation. Je vous remercie.

7.1 Le Président :

Merci, merci Madame la Directrice générale, merci pour cet extraordinaire marteau que je reçois ici.

(Le Président poursuit en anglais)

7.2 I am now giving the floor to the President of the Executive Board, His Excellency, Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy.

8.1 Sr. Mba Mokuy (Guinea Ecuatorial) (Presidente del Consejo Ejecutivo):

Señor Presidente de la Conferencia General, señora Directora General, excelencias, señoras y señores: permítanme expresar mi más sincero agradecimiento por el homenaje que me acaba de rendir esta mañana esta augusta y máxima asamblea de la UNESCO que es la Conferencia General. También agradezco a la Directora General, apreciada Audrey Azoulay, la medalla que me acaba de entregar. La guardaré preciosamente como recuerdo de nuestra colaboración, que permitió que los Estados Miembros pudieran garantizar el ininterrumpido funcionamiento de la Organización en un período lleno de obstáculos y circunstancias jamás vistas en su historia.

8.2 Si he sido merecedor de este reconocimiento, es gracias al trabajo en equipo del Consejo Ejecutivo que he tenido el honor de presidir durante un bienio particularmente histórico por el devastador impacto de la COVID-19 en las áreas de competencia de la UNESCO: educación, ciencia, cultura y comunicación. Quisiera, por tanto, reiterar aquí que debo especial gratitud a los compañeros miembros del Consejo Ejecutivo por su colaboración, determinación, profesionalismo y compromiso con el mandato fundacional de la UNESCO. Extiendo mi agradecimiento a Su Excelencia, el Presidente Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, al Gobierno y el pueblo de la República de Guinea Ecuatorial, por la confianza que depositaron en mi persona para representar a Guinea Ecuatorial ante el Consejo Ejecutivo, así como el apoyo brindado a mi candidatura para el cargo de Presidente de este órgano rector de la Organización.

(The Chairperson continues in English)

8.3 Mr President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, when you hear about medals, it brings the Olympic Games to mind. What we experienced at the Executive Board is in a way comparable. During the last two years, Member States exchanged ideas like marathon runners and became champions of typing in the chat box, with agility, like ping pong players. The motto of the Olympics is *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, which means “Faster, Higher, Stronger”. This is what the Executive Board strove for to render our dear Organization stronger and take it with the Director-General to the highest level. We are all gold medal winners, and I salute you all for our fair play, for our agreement to disagree and for the compromises to reach consensus in order to advance the ultimate goal of peace for all. UNESCO’s Constitution states, and I quote, “a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”.

8.4 As we celebrate UNESCO’s 75th anniversary, we should take this opportunity to revisit our constitutional mandate in order to better position UNESCO in the complex and interconnected world of the twenty-first century. During the national statements and debates at this General Conference, we listened to many insightful interventions by Member States, and we adopted many important and historical decisions on matters such as Priority Africa, the ethics of artificial intelligence and open science. We should not turn the page with the closing of the Conference. Instead, we should be motivated by these statements and use the important decisions adopted in order to better position UNESCO as the leading specialized agency of the United Nations in the areas of education, science, culture and communication.

(The Chairperson continues in French)

8.5 Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs. Nous sommes ravis de l’adoption de la Stratégie à moyen terme pour 2022-2029 pour l’Organisation. Je voudrais réitérer mon appel à tous les États membres de continuer à apporter leur soutien au programme de l’UNESCO. Le multilatéralisme aura toujours son rôle à jouer pour protéger les plus vulnérables et rassembler le monde vers un objectif commun. Le multilatéralisme est en fait la voie à suivre pour faire face aux défis actuels. Nous devons rester attentifs au fait que la paix ne peut pas régner dans un coin du monde, alors que le chaos règne dans d’autres parties du monde. Avec l’expérience malheureuse du COVID-19, j’espère que la communauté internationale aurait appris cette leçon. Pour relever les défis de notre époque, nous devons faire prévaloir les idéaux démocratiques d’un respect de la dignité, de l’égalité et du respect de la personne humaine, tel que prévu dans notre Acte constitutif.

8.6 Avant de clôturer, permettez-moi d’exprimer à nouveau mes remerciements à tout le personnel de l’UNESCO et d’une façon particulière à l’équipe du Secrétariat du Conseil exécutif. Je remercie la collaboration du Directeur Sachin Bhatt et son adjointe Susana Sam-Vargas, ainsi que mes assistants Filsete Girma-Legesse et Vicky Moorhead et les autres membres de cette équipe, qui est petite mais efficace. Je souhaite également remercier les techniciens, traducteurs et interprètes. Ce sont des mains invisibles mais incontournables pour la réussite de nos travaux.

(Le Président poursuit en portugais)

8.7 Senhor presidente, gostaria de reiterar meus parabéns por sua eleição para a presidência da quadragésima décima primeira sessão da Conferência Geral. Parabens também pela maneira eficaz e eficiente como que presidiu os trabalhos dessa sessão.

(The Chairperson continues in French)

8.8 Enfin, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, cela a été un grand plaisir de servir cette Organisation, que nous aimons tous, en tant que Président du Conseil exécutif. Je vous souhaite bonne continuation, et que chacun d’entre nous soit l’avocat de la paix pour tous dans nos pays respectifs.

(Le Président poursuit en anglais)

8.9 Before saying a last thank you, let me just join Ambassador Oike, my dear friend from Japan, in the association of free men. To all of you, thank you, *merci, gracias, xièxie, shukran, spasibo, obrigado, et je vous remercie, distingués délégués et membres pour votre aimable attention.*

9.1 The President:

Thank you very much. Now ladies and gentleman, Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, allow me now to deliver a closing speech.

(The President continues in French)

9.2 Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Madame la Directrice générale, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, je voudrais remercier la Directrice générale, les États membres et le Secrétariat d’avoir fait de cette Conférence générale un véritable succès. Je voudrais notamment exprimer ma gratitude à l’Ambassadeur Altay Cengizer, Président de la 40^e Conférence générale, ainsi que Monsieur Agapito Mba Mokuy, Président du Conseil exécutif, pour la façon constructive avec laquelle ils ont conduit les débats qui ont permis la consolidation des documents présentés à cette session. Ma

reconnaissance va également à la France, en sa qualité de pays hôte, pour les efforts déployés afin que la Conférence générale se réunisse en présentiel.

9.3 Malgré les défis d'organiser un événement d'une telle envergure dans le contexte de la pandémie du COVID-19, 185 États membres et sept Membres associés ont été représentés. Cette représentation reste toujours significative au regard du nombre d'États membres présents lors des sessions précédentes.

9.4 Il est vrai que la pandémie nous a montré comment profiter des technologies de l'information et de la communication pour créer de nouvelles formes d'interactions sociales. Cependant, aucune réunion virtuelle ne peut remplacer les discussions face à face et recréer la richesse derrière l'intense expérience interculturelle de la Conférence générale. Sous le leadership de la Directrice générale, nous avons reçu 26 chefs d'État pour célébrer le 75^e anniversaire de notre Organisation. J'y vois un signe fort de la reconnaissance par les États membres de l'importance de l'UNESCO à travers le monde.

9.5 Cela témoigne également de la légitimité des décisions prises au cours de ces 15 derniers jours. Lors de cette Conférence générale, j'ai souligné à plusieurs reprises la vocation universelle et inclusive de l'UNESCO et de son mandat. Les accords obtenus sur un certain nombre de questions décisives montrent qu'en dépit des tensions et des divergences entre la communauté internationale, nous pouvons parvenir à une compréhension mutuelle globale. Ce n'a pas toujours été une tâche facile et nous le savons. Je tiens à féliciter les présidents de Groupe électoral pour leurs efforts visant à réunir la diversité des opinions et à atteindre ce consensus.

9.6 Le lauréat du prix Nobel de la paix, l'avocat et l'homme politique français Aristide Briand, disait à ce sujet, « La politique est l'art de concilier le désirable avec le possible ». C'est dans cet esprit que nous avons travaillé ensemble ces derniers jours pour aller au-delà de nos divergences afin de faire avancer l'objectif de la paix durable et du bien-être commun de l'humanité. Toutefois, en tant que Président de la Conférence générale, permettez-moi de vous dire que cela n'est qu'une partie de notre travail.

(Le Président poursuit en anglais)

9.7 Ladies and gentlemen, great challenges lie ahead of us if we wish that our Organization builds back better, and this will require us to fine tune our decision-making processes. I commit to listen carefully and continue the discussions with all Member States to make the most of multilateralism for mobilizing collective action towards our common goals. In a world that is increasingly fragmented, as highlighted by the Director-General, we need to give the example by reinforcing our competences for dialogue, reconciliation and understanding. We must also foster inclusion because it is only by hearing all the voices that UNESCO can become stronger to fulfil its mandate. We need to resist any kind of dichotomy that prevents UNESCO from drawing on the diversity and experience of each of us, each country that we represent. The excellent work done by the Commission is a great example of what we can do to improve dialogue and better delivery. And I congratulate the Vice Chairpersons for their important leadership.

(The President continues in Spanish)

9.8 Señoras y señores: la reelección de la Directora General, señora Audrey Azoulay, muestra que estamos en el camino correcto para implementar la Estrategia a Plazo Medio para 2022-2029 y hacer del nuevo Programa y Presupuesto para 2022-2025 una pieza clave para generar un cambio positivo en nuestras sociedades. Para tener un impacto concreto y tangible sobre el terreno debemos hacer de las dos prioridades globales de la Organización, "África" e "Igualdad de género", nuestra brújula. Tengo plena confianza en la capacidad de los Estados Miembros para poner en práctica la inteligencia colectiva, como solicitó la Directora General, en pro de estos dos ejes de inclusión.

9.9 Asimismo, no podemos avanzar en la Agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible sin movilizar la participación de los jóvenes, que son un grupo prioritario de nuestra organización. La celebración del 12^o Foro de la Juventud en estas circunstancias particulares vinculadas a la pandemia sigue siendo un símbolo importante de la atenta escucha que la UNESCO presta a las llamadas de las nuevas generaciones. Nuestro reto ahora consiste en traducir sus recomendaciones en acciones concretas. Recomiendo vivamente a todos los Estados Miembros que se inspiren en sus ideas para construir un futuro sostenible para todos.

9.10 La UNESCO es, de hecho, la casa de todos aquellos que cultivan el ideal de una paz duradera basada en la conciencia humana, comenzando por su Secretaría que trabaja incesantemente para promover las acciones de la Organización. Por ello quisiera expresar muy sinceramente mi agradecimiento a los especialistas y asistentes de programa, técnicos y administradores, traductores e intérpretes, entre tantos otros, que han demostrado una energía y un compromiso inagotables para asegurar el buen desarrollo de esta reunión de la Conferencia General. En particular, me gustaría citar a Sachin Bhatt, Luis Salamanca, Anna Bonetti, Ernesto Calderón, Joyce Monteiro, Catherine Thiounn y Eunice Ong, así como a todo el personal de la Secretaría. Deseo dar las gracias también a Murilo Vieira Komniski, mi asesor especial, por su firme apoyo durante esta reunión. No veo el día de hoy como el final de nuestro trabajo, sino más bien como el camino de transición para seguir fortaleciendo la capacidad de acción de la UNESCO para responder a los desafíos de nuestro siglo.

9.11 Permítanme terminar con las bellas palabras que el poeta y Premio Nobel de Literatura, Pablo Neruda, pronunció en su alocución como representante de Chile ante la UNESCO en la 17^a reunión de la Conferencia General. "Pienso que nuestros proyectos, la proyección de esta Conferencia y de esta institución, deben llegar a todos los rincones del olvido (...) Y cuando en cualquier parte del mundo una lágrima popular haya reconocido nuestra misión, entonces habremos cumplido con nuestros propósitos y con nuestro común destino de representantes de la cultura universal". Gracias. *Merci. Thank you. Xiè. Chocran. Spasiba. Obrigado.*

(Applause)

9.12 Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleagues and friends, we have thus come to the end of our last plenary meeting. I wish to thank you all for your active participation, your thoughtful statements, and wise decisions over the past two weeks. Before I use my new gavel for the first time to mark the end of this session, we will listen to a short musical performance by the UNESCO choir. We will now hear the final chorus of part one of Franz Joseph Haydn's creation, "Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes," known in English as "The Heavens are Telling the Glory of God", a great hymn about the wonder of creation. We thank our choir, its director Connie Glessner, piano accompanist and artistic director Cyrille Kirilov, and the three soloists: Karina Desbordes, Vincent Guérin and Henry Bastien d'Elie.

(Musical interlude)

9.13 Thank you very for this wonderful performance. Dear friends, I bid you all farewell and wish you a safe journey home. I now declare **closed** the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. *The meeting is **adjourned**.*

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.