

Mr. President,
Madam Director General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel honoured to address this august gathering at this 38th Session of UNESCO General Conference.

Mr. President:

Over the last 70 years, UNESCO has been working as the conscience of the United Nations. As we all know, UNESCO is an idea generating entity. Who generates ideas in a human body? It is the brain. If we consider UN system a human body, UNESCO is obviously its BRAIN.

So what this brain has been doing during the last 70 years? From education for sustainable development to intercultural dialogue, from promoting gender equality or human rights to protecting underwater heritage, from Biosphere reserves network to declaration on Bio-ethics, from protecting endangered languages to developing Tsunami early-warning systems -- UNESCO is always there to address the most pressing needs of humanity of our planet. And almost everywhere UNESCO's involvement makes a difference.

But have we done enough to make this world a peaceful one? A world free from hunger and diseases? Free from inequality, conflicts, chaos and calamities - both natural and man-made? We have certainly achieved some successes in all these areas, but much more needs to be done.

Mr. President,

The year 2015 is indeed a landmark year. It is the final year for MDG and EFA Goals and also the year of adoption of SDGs. The Secretary General of the United Nations has rightly said 'The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history'. Since 1990 the number of people living in extreme poverty and under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, the maternal mortality ratio has declined by 45 per cent worldwide.

As regards EFA Goals, there has been remarkable progress across the globe. The number of out of school children and adolescents has declined by almost half since 2000. Great progress has been achieved in gender parity, particularly in primary education. Government's efforts to improve quality of education has also increased.

However, the progress is uneven and substantial inequalities exist between countries and within countries. Almost all of the 800 million people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger live in developing countries. About 16,000 children die each day before celebrating their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. The maternal mortality ratio in the developing regions is still 14 times higher than in the developed regions. In spite of progress, EFA Goals remains unachieved. There are still 58 million children out of school worldwide and around 100 million children who do not complete primary education. Gender disparity persists in a third of the countries.

Within countries, big gaps still exist between the poorest and richest households. Millions of people are lagging behind because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location. Inequality in education has increased, putting the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized in a challenging situation.

Given this backdrop of MDG and EFA, a new, universal set of goals, targets and indicators of Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted. The SDGs incorporate the unfinished agenda of MDG and EFA and expand those further.

Mr. President

Achieving SDGs would be challenging indeed if we are unable to boost research for tackling climate change impacts on the Small Island Developing States and other vulnerable countries like Bangladesh. Already the world has been introduced with a relatively new term - climate change refugee. If we are not adequately serious about reducing carbon emission and stop the rise of global temperature, the developed world might have to face a huge influx of climate change refugees in the near future and that will certainly hamper achieving SDGs in stipulated time. We are hopeful that COP-21 will address all these and will reach a consensus to tackle climate change impact.

Mr. President

The world is ever changing and the new world is facing complex and trans-national new challenges. Building on our experience and lessons we must respond to the demands of new situations, while remaining true to our long-term commitments.

Thank you Mr. President.
