

Bismillaherrahmanirrahim

Honorable Director General, respected President of the General Conference, respected Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Good Morning&AssalamoAlaikum,

It is indeed a privilege and a great honor to contribute to the discussions at the 38th session of the General Conference.

2. While UNESCO celebrates its 70th anniversary, Pakistan admires, acknowledges and strongly supports the continued effort of UNESCO in the critically vital and important sectors of education, culture and science. UNESCO's role in shaping up and finalizing the education agenda for SDGs 2030 is truly commendable. A dynamic and strong organization has to be ever-evolving and should continue reforming itself from within.

3. Pakistan wants to see UNESCO grow stronger and more effective. After finalizing the education agenda and adopting framework for action for SDGs 2030, now UNESCO has to prove its relevance and effectiveness through demonstrating results in its strategic areas of intervention, by not only keeping an oversight and mapping the progress towards achieving the relevant goals but has to be very effective in ensuring "financing for development" and O.D.A. targets, without which all of us know that it will remain a shattered dream.

4. Sustainable Development Goals 2030 are human centric targets. They talk of every child, every human being and our planet earth, without any discrimination. Pakistan fully stands committed to these goals so much so that we have declared and adopted these goals as our National Development Goals 2030. We have established cells at Foreign Office, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education for SDGs which are fully functional now, while remaining relevant Ministries are in the process to do the same. Our vision, strategy and plans are being aligned with these ambitious goals.

5. The current federal and provincial governments of Pakistan inherited huge problems in education with millions of children who are out of school, high drop out rate, gender disparity and low literacy rate. Within first year of the governments i.e. in 2013-2014 we saw that all the provincial governments were spending around quarter of their entire budgets, while Federal Government almost doubled it in two years. The results were impressive within one year. The number of out of school children dropped by 10%, net enrollment went up by 7%, literacy rate went up by 3.5%. It is very promising and speaks volumes about our commitment, resolve and seriousness.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Honorable Director General in her opening address made an appeal for advancing education of every child especially girls. Girl child education is very close to our hearts. Pakistan has seen those terrible times when schools especially girl schools were being blown up by terrorists. All of us know the story of Malala Yousafzai, the courageous daughter of Pakistan who stood up for education. Malala Yousafzai, a noble laureate now, is a towering figure and is recognized throughout the globe as icon of education especially for girls education. Pakistan by donating US\$ 10 million has helped create a UNESCO MALALA FUND to be utilized globally for the cause of girls education. I urge that all nations should contribute in this UNESCO MALALA Fund. No matter how large or small your contribution is, but it should be there. All of us must be supportive of this noble cause.

7. Here, I must also share with you that besides education, ending extremism has been one of the top four priorities of the government. Now, alhumdulillah, after impressive ongoing military operation, legislation and other measures, the extremist elements have either been taken out or are on the run. Incidents of terrorism and bomb blasts have been reduced significantly. The areas where schools were being blown up or evacuated are now witnessing that new schools are being built.

8. Extremists and terrorists have lost and Malala mindset has won. But, it is just a beginning.

9. Yesterday I witnessed the impressive ceremony for the award of UNESCO AVICENNA PRIZE FOR ETHICS IN SCIENCE. I congratulate UNESCO for duly recognizing and highlighting importance of ethics in science which is much needed today. I would also like to thank the government of

Islamic Republic of Iran for co-sponsoring the prize. Here I would like to congratulate the winner of the prize, DR. ZABTA KHAN SHINWARI who is an accomplished Pakistani scientist, for making us all proud of him and his achievements which are now being recognized globally.

10. Here, I would also like to draw the attention of the house to towards weak Convention and legislation regarding stolen cultural artifacts. Pakistan had to run from pillar to post but in vain as we still could not get back our illegally excavated FASTING BUDHA and numerous stolen artifacts which are still being illegally traded in the United States. We must further strengthen our Conventions.

11. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, in the end, let me emphasize that the very purpose of this august gathering is to streamline international cooperation, bring about solidarity, promote tolerance and understand and respect others' point of view, to share good practices and synergise.

12. These goals of human development cannot be achieved, even if a single nation, or a country or a human being is left behind. No one should be allowed to stay behind for lack of resources or bad governance or anything else.

Let us stand united for a common goal of a better future, a better world.

Thank you all.