

Saint  
Lucia

# UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE 38<sup>th</sup> session, 2015

## NATIONAL STATEMENT

Mr President of the General Conference

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board

Madam Director General

Distinguished representatives of member states

Esteemed delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

Mr President permit me to convey congratulations on your election to the presidency of the 38<sup>th</sup> General Conference. By the same token I wish to acknowledge the <sup>in</sup>valuable contribution of Mr Hao Ping President of the 37<sup>th</sup> <sup>^</sup>session and the hard work of the President of the Executive Board, Mr Sameh Amr

I wish also to congratulate Monserrat on attaining associate membership to UNESCO and welcome them to the UNESCO family.

Mr President we meet at a very important moment in our history, at a time when the organisation celebrates 70 years of contribution to peace and development of humanity.

This session also comes on the heels of the adoption by our respective governments of a new sustainable development agenda and a commitment to pursue 17 sustainable development goals.

It is also being held just weeks prior to the cop 21 which will be held right here in Paris where our governments will seek consensus on the future of our planet as it relates to climate change. The vulnerability of sides in the face of climate change is well documented and the fact that we are disproportionately affected despite being the smallest contributors to this phenomenon is well known.

Mr President, we note that 17 SDGs are quite ambitious. It places ownership on our Government, the education sector and our stakeholder community to achieve the goals of inclusive and equitable education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities.

The Government of Saint Lucia supports the SDGs and it is the responsibility of my Ministry now to work at achieving the targets under the SDGs even with our limited resources.

The Government of Saint Lucia, through the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development and Labour, on September 17, 2015, launched its Education Sector Development Plan for 2015 – 2020. This plan brings renewed focus and new emphasis to the Government of Saint Lucia's drive in education. We see Education as the main vehicle for economic and social change. All our efforts must be driven by a desire to give our people, Saint Lucia's most critical resource, the best educational opportunities.

Providing our youth with quality education, opportunities for technical and vocational training and employment opportunities is the only way to seriously address poverty and is still and will always be the best way to fight violence and extremism.

Teacher quality, as recognised by UNESCO, has a positive effect on global citizenship. My Government reaffirms its commitment to raise the standards of teaching and to work towards ensuring that teachers play a significant role in building a culture of peace and security among citizens and communities.

Mr President, the Government has embarked, with assistance from UNESCO, on the development of a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy. This policy it is hoped will provide the impetus for the renewal of competency-based instruction in our schools and the certification of persons in critical manpower areas in the country.

Mr President, culture is an important part of the development agenda. We believe that this is best achieved through the implementation of the culture conventions. St Lucia continues to derive tremendous benefit from the work done through these conventions most notably the Cultural diversity and intangible cultural heritage conventions. We urge continued support to the secretariats of these conventions.

Mr President we have all been appalled by the destruction of cultural heritage around the world. The advocacy campaign launched by UNESCO for the protection of heritage has raised the expectations and the organisation has to deliver in order to meet these expectations.

Mr President, Saint Lucia has consistently called for the increased recognition of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as a UNESCO priority. We recognize the efforts made over the years in response to this request. However we believe that more needs to be done.

SIDS cannot remain a priority group only on paper. All member States recognize the vulnerability of SIDS in the face of the adverse effects of Climate change that can disrupt infrastructural development and impact negatively on all sectors of activity. The SIDS Action Plan cannot rely only on extra budgetary funds. We believe that its budget must be fully integrated in the 39C/5 and complemented by extra budgetary funds and not the reverse.

St Lucia takes tremendous pride in our two Nobel laureates:

Sir Arthur Lewis and Hon Derek Walcott and their contributions in the fields of economics and literature respectively.

January 2015 marked the centenary of the birth of our first noble prize winner Sir William Arthur Lewis. The general conference at its 37<sup>th</sup> session adopted a decision to associate UNESCO with this important anniversary. We are pleased to announce that through the collaboration of the Participation Programme section, the Human and Social Science Sector and the Kingston cluster office, this anniversary was celebrated through a number of very high level and high profile events during the year including a global forum on the work of Sir Arthur and a panel on Sir Arthur Lewis at the recently held world social science conference in Durban, South Africa.

Mr President, my government notes with great concern the diminished capacity both in terms of financial and human resources of the cluster office for the Caribbean.

We urge that closer attention be paid to this office. This is critical especially in respect of its capacity to deliver on the SIDS action plan and as well its ability to assist us in meeting the SDGs related to UNESCO's areas of competence. We also call for greater synergies and increased collaboration between the Kingston office and the other regional offices in meeting these objectives

Mr. President, Saint Lucia attaches great importance to Reform. We welcome the recommendations of internal oversight on the recruitment procedures which we expect to be fully transparent, leading to the recruitment of highly qualified staff of exemplary character. We look forward to the elaboration and implementation of a full-fledged conflict of interest policy.

Mr. President, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November we are going to elect new members of the Board. Being a member of the Board is a great privilege but is also a big responsibility. The Board represents the General Conference and should therefore be guided by our common interests, ensuring that our decisions are fully implemented and that the Organization is at the service of all member states.

Mr President I wish to end by reiterating my Governments commitment to UNESCO and to pledge our continued support to our esteemed organization in the pursuit of its mandate.

I thank you.