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**STATEMENT BY
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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF
INDIA TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, UNESCO**

**AT
THE 195TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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Speech by DR KARAN SINGH
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195TH Session, October 2014

Mr. President, Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madame Director General, Distinguished Members of the Board, Friends and Colleagues

1. It is indeed a pleasure to be amongst friends again as we review and set the pace for the next six months at UNESCO. The Director General in her impressive opening remarks has set the ball rolling and I congratulate her for the drive and determination that sees UNESCO position itself more strongly than ever before, as the world seeks to evolve a Development Agenda in the post-2015 era that will have far reaching implications for us all.

2. UNESCO has been an essential part of this global reflection through its contribution to the discourse on Education and of course the threads of Culture and Science that run through the Outcome Document's 17 goals and 169 targets. However, a greater task lies ahead as we work towards the alignment of the educational agendas of the World Education Forum 2015 and the post-2015 Development Agenda that will emerge from the

United Nations Summit next September. We must prepare a “*Framework for Action*” of a future architecture for the implementation of the post-2015 education agenda. The New Delhi based Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), of which I am Chairman, reflects our commitment both to Education and Sustainable Development, and I look forward to its growth into a regional hub for research and education: Let me add my personal view that the missing link in the UNMD goals has been the exclusion of global understanding and Interfaith Harmony. This should have been added as the 9th goal, for without interfaith harmony there will never be peace on planet earth, and values of ethics, faith appreciation and tolerance need to be introduced in textbooks around the World. I hope it can be added to the post-2015 Development goals.

3. We should not forget the less advantaged or those with disabilities, important areas of concern in the global discourse on education, and must ensure that they are provided the conditions necessary for them to enjoy universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. A key and recurrent struggle faced by the disabled is related to their access to

education, information and knowledge. We are looking forward to the UNESCO-backed conference "From Exclusion to Empowerment: Role of Information and Communication Technologies for Persons with Disabilities", which will be held in New Delhi from 24-26 November 2014.

4. There is now a consensus that our current models of development place an unsustainable burden on nature and cause irreversible damage endangering our very existence. India strongly believes that oceans are central to sustainable development and are a part of our common heritage. We are gratified that this thinking underlines the Outcome Document of the post-2015 era through Goal 14 on "Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources". It is also this belief that guides our support for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission's plans, of which we are members, for the 2nd International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2) to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of IIOE in 2015.

5. We have worked together over the years in our common endeavour to nourish and nurture, protect and promote the cultural heritage of the world. To this end, UNESCO's efforts to link culture and development

and to establish culture not only as a corollary but as a driver and catalyst of development deserve plaudits. The Outcome Document of the post-2015 era bears testimony to this. The World Heritage Convention is the best known of UNESCO's standard setting instruments in any field, and over the years has established for itself a brand name and an image. The dual inscriptions of *Rani-ki-Vav* and *the Great Himalayan National Park* on the World Heritage List this year were a matter of satisfaction for us in India. We have the privilege of hosting a UNESCO Category II Centre at Dehradun in the field of Natural Heritage. Through this, we offer our services in strengthening capacities in the management and protection of world heritage, leading to a more efficient overall management of systems in keeping with the letter and spirit of the World Heritage Convention.

6. The Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage is above all a joyous and celebratory Convention, unfortunately mired in process and procedure to the detriment of its initial intent. It is our hope that this Convention will be restored to its original vision, and as a newly elected Member of the Committee for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural

Heritage we look forward to a constructive engagement in the best traditions of this unique Convention. We have also followed with interest the progress made in recent months to revive the 1970 Convention on Return of Cultural Property. We hope and are indeed confident that the adoption of Operational Guidelines next year will provide a much needed mechanism to deal with cases of the illicit trafficking of cultural objects, the bane of many a developing country today.

7. In closing, let me reiterate that India's ties with UNESCO are strong and abiding and our contribution will always be purposeful and meaningful. We are at one with its vision and values and believe profoundly in the healing power of the principles of UNESCO. Rightly was it said by our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the UNESCO General Conference held in New Delhi in 1956 "Man does not live by politics alone, nor indeed wholly by economics. And so UNESCO came to represent something that was vital to human existence and progress. Even as the United Nations General Assembly represents the political will of the world community, UNESCO represents the finer and deeper sides of human life and indeed might be said to represent the conscience

of the world community”. Let us never forget this core and central message as we seek collectively to usher in a new world order in the post 2015 era.
