

15. **The President:**

Thank you, Your Excellency. Our next speaker is His Excellency, the Honourable Mr Vasant Kumar Bunwaree, Minister of Education and Human Resources of Mauritius.

16.1 **Mr Bunwaree (Mauritius)**

Madam President, Madam Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I wish at the outset to congratulate Mr President on the occasion of his election as President of the General Conference. Madam President, every age brings new challenges but also new opportunities. Our age demands that we put together our collective efforts and respond to the challenges of poverty, exclusion, armed conflicts, natural disasters and also those of sustainable development in the best way we can.

16.2 We all believe that UNESCO has a major role to play here, because it has been invested with a mandate for peace and the responsibility of providing an intellectual forum within the United Nations system. Mauritius accordingly supports the main lines of action in the Draft Programme and Budget for 2014-2017. Indeed, the challenges today are multidimensional and I am happy to note that the emphasis is on innovation and creativity and the design of new approaches, new tools and new policies so as to strengthen the resilience of all countries as they progress on the road to sustainable development.

16.3 Madam President, both the Commonwealth and the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries (CONFEMEN), to which Mauritius belongs, have been energetic contributors to the consultative debates at global level. As Chair of the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group, I had personally the honour to submit our contributions in December last year to the representative of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons and also to UNESCO. We obviously concentrated on the crucial role of education as a driver of change and transformation in society, as an essential element to eradicate poverty, eliminate inequity and be disability-inclusive. Indeed, the Commonwealth's priorities in education were reflected in the United Nations outcomes, especially the principle that the new framework should be based on expanding access, eliminating inequity and improving quality. UNESCO, as the lead organization for education in the United Nations system, must ensure that the overarching inclusive education goal be owned by all countries. Our duty is also to ensure collectively that a global partnership provides genuine support to countries that are still striving to attain the education for all (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

16.4 Madam President, Mauritius has for its part, always assumed its responsibility vis-à-vis the countries in the region. In fact, UNESCO itself has used Mauritius as a platform for the sharing of experiences and good practices in a number of domains. We have now been entrusted by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) with the responsibility for hosting the Inter-Country Quality Node (ICQN) on Early Childhood Development. On the strength of our track record and excellence in capacity building, we are now graduating from the BRENDA-supported "Mauritius – Africa Initiative", a regional programme of capacity building in early childhood development, to becoming the regional hub for this sector. This will thus facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing, and contribute to giving a boost to this new initiative. On the other hand, I must highlight that Mauritius has been able to successfully facilitate ICT-mediated interactive learning in our primary schools through the Sankoré Project. Information and communication technology (ICT) and its accompanying digitized content have today become a reality in Mauritian classrooms. The benefits of this project are soon to be shared with countries in the region.

16.5 Madam President, sustainable development for small island developing States (SIDS) remains a pressing challenge. Vulnerabilities that these States are exposed to could result in underdevelopment and environmental degradation. This is paradoxical, however, since the ocean is there to be put to productive use. Mauritius recently held a national dialogue on how to promote the "ocean economy" or the "blue economy" as one of the main pillars of development. The UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) could certainly provide much-needed support here.

16.6 Madam President, Mauritius fully supports the enunciation of the United Nations Secretary-General to the effect that investing the young with entrepreneurship education is one of the best ways of meeting the challenge of providing half a billion jobs by 2030. In Mauritius, we have already crossed that bridge with the recent introduction of entrepreneurship education in the school curriculum. It is also gratifying to note that we have also successfully introduced our mother tongues, Kreol Morisien (Mauritian Creole) and Bhojpuri, in our school system. They are on a par with the panoply of languages already existing in Mauritius and taught in schools. Moreover, intercultural education is also being introduced in our school curriculum.

(The speaker continues in French)

16.7 Madame la Présidente, s'il est vrai que l'aspiration première de tout jeune quittant le système scolaire est de trouver un emploi décent lorsqu'il accède au marché du travail et d'envisager de créer un foyer ou de fonder une famille, il est non moins vrai que ces événements ne sont que deux éléments, fondamentaux bien sûr, inaugurant le démarrage de ce jeune dans un long périple qui va marquer le parcours de sa vie, au long duquel il devra se tenir sur ses propres pieds, sachant maîtriser les valeurs humaines et morales, sachant qu'il n'est pas seul et que les autres existent aussi et qu'ils évoluent tous dans un même monde qu'ils doivent respecter et savoir préserver pour le bénéfice de ceux qui les entourent et de ceux qui viendront après eux.

16.8 C'est dans cette épreuve de la vie, Madame la Présidente, qu'il faut que ce jeune réussisse et cela nécessite une préparation basée sur l'enseignement scolaire, certes, mais plus encore sur une formation complète, holistique, extracurriculaire, qui s'accompagne de l'apprentissage obligatoire des valeurs humaines.

16.9 Unissons donc nos forces, Madame la Présidente, au sein de cette grande organisation qu'est l'UNESCO, pour que nous réussissions dans cette noble tâche qu'est la préparation de nos enfants, en pleine croissance biologique, physique et intellectuelle, à une vie réussie.

(Le modérateur poursuit en anglais)

16.10 Let us educate our children for life. Thank you Madam President.