

Mr. President of the General Conference;

Chairperson of the Executive Board;

Director-General;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Please accept on behalf of the Government of Curaçao, Mr. President, our congratulation on being elected to preside over the 38th General Conference of UNESCO and we wish you sustained success in this year's proceedings. Also congratulations to Montserrat on becoming the tenth Associate Member.

It seems like only yesterday we stood before you to share the challenges we faced and the successes we have achieved during the past two years.

Mr. President, as UNESCO celebrates its 70th anniversary, I am pleased to say that with the support of UNESCO we have been able to make significant progress in the areas of education, the sciences, culture and also communication and information. We are however aware that we have not reached our goal but this is an ongoing process and with the help and support of UNESCO we will achieve our goals.

Early Childhood Education has been a priority for me since I assumed the responsibilities of Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. We started a four phase project of collecting data to be able to register, license and accredit all childcare facilities of Curacao. Two thirds of the population from 0 to 4 year olds are not registered at any known institution recognized by the government. It is in this area that we have to start to work on the development of the child to guarantee that when they grow up they become responsible citizens.

As a Caribbean SIDS we are aware that alone we cannot achieve certain developments in our country that is why we are communicating with CARICOM to join forces to work towards SIDS becoming a global priority for

UNESCO. It is here where the role of UNESCO is very important to help us achieve this goal.

We have to call attention again to developments taking place in our environment, especially Climate Change. UNESCO must continue to address the impacts of climate change on coastal cities from sea level change caused by this. In particular for Caribbean SIDS Climate change is a vital occurrence and cannot be neglected.

Curacao firmly believes that there should be policies in place for Disaster, on Risk Reduction, on comprehensive schools safety and is already working to achieve this.

Mr. President, contrary to other regions, the Caribbean region faces challenges of our young men falling out of the system and attention should be placed on this rather alarming development also taking place in Curacao.

TVET is of vital importance to help our youth obtain the necessary skills to find employment, as 37 percent of our youth is unemployed, most of which are boys. A week ago, October 30th, Curacao held its first and very successful TVET Conference with several specialized speakers from the Caribbean.

Curaçao is also working towards having its TVET Profile entered into the global database.

We also started the process of obtaining a UNEVOC status for our vocational schools.

Mr. President, Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage are important factors in maintaining cultural diversity. Also in the face of growing globalization cultural heritage is not the manifestation itself but the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted from generation to generation.

The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for the population of our country and is constantly recreated by groups and communities in response to their surroundings, interaction with nature and their history. We must not only focus on the tangible and intangible but also on natural heritage.

We will be achieving this by incorporating educational materials and working with civil society through all the major programmes of UNESCO.

Mr. President, I am very pleased to inform that UNESCO has renewed the Chair at the University of Curaçao for another four years, and also agreed to the name change to “UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development of Caribbean SIDS”.

We are working on a STI policy for our ministry through the Participation Programme and recently we held a workshop on Open Educational Resources which was also very successful. This was facilitated by the Programme Advisor Communication and Information of the Kingston cluster Office.

Finally Mr President, as UNESCO celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, it is also Curacaos third participation as Associate Member. Curaçao also looks back at 5 years of obtaining an autonomous status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and continues to look towards UNESCO for continued support.

Congratulations on 70 years of UNESCO and that UNESCO continue to play a vital role in working towards peace in the world through the implementation of its programmes.

Masha danki, thank you, muchas gracias, dank u, merci beaucoup.