



**Intervention of the Honourable Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Afioga Magele Mauiliu Magele, of the Independent State of Samoa to the General Policy Debate – 38<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, France  
6<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

President of the 38<sup>th</sup> General Conference, Director General of UNESCO, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly honoured to present once again at this significant conference. I wish to extend to UNESCO our heartfelt appreciation for its continuing assistance in multiple ways to ensure the world we live in is a better place. Your mission to contribute to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue, with education as one of the key pillars to achieve this aim needs reiterating - this is why Samoa is committed to UNESCO and I wish to give assurance that we will continue to be proactive in our efforts to contribute to the achievement of our collective vision and fundamental duty for a better world.

In my address at the previous conference, I highlighted some of our achievements and this includes joining the ICH Convention. This morning I am pleased to inform you also that Samoa has signed the Instrument of Accession for the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Samoa is keen to continue its active involvement in all areas including culture, sports, education, communication, climate change and information technology, to name a few.

On another positive note, I wish to especially thank the Director General of UNESCO and all the UN family, for your invaluable presence and contribution at the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference hosted by Samoa in September last year. The SIDS Conference was an opportunity to launch significant partnerships that will provide an impetus for our shared agenda for sustainable development not just within but beyond the Pacific arena.

The adoption of the new set of Sustainable Development Goals by the UN family of nations calls for united efforts across the world. Samoa is committed to Education for Sustainable Development not only for the Pacific but more importantly the whole world. As highlighted by our Prime Minister at the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York this year, there is a dire need for all countries to take concerted actions to combat climate change and its impacts. This is also a priority goal enshrined in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

Mr President, the small island states of the Pacific Region are experiencing the impacts more than other countries and the risks posed are a threatening reality we live with on a daily basis. The adverse effects of climate change are real, and as leaders of our global community, the time to act is now.

The debates held around the world have been numerous and attest to the urgency of the issues that threaten our existence. I wish to reiterate the point made earlier, that education is the key, the answer to the dilemmas we face. This was the key message we all took away from the UNESCO Conference on Sustainable Development in Aichi-Nagoya in Korea last year. Our commitment to climate change, poverty reduction, protection of our natural environment and cultural heritage can only be consolidated and made effective through education.

We need to pay more attention to the importance of investing in our youth, natural and social sciences, and culture as well.

Young people are not just the future but they are key drivers of change and can make a huge difference if their role is taken to another level. I salute the UNESCO initiatives for youth around the world, and appeal for more opportunities for our young people. They can bring fresh ideas, enthusiasm and vitality which can lead to more innovative developments to benefit society and the world at large.

It is important also to bring in more and more the natural and social sciences as they are also important to our understanding of the world and the use and development of techniques that are essential to life.

Culture is our foundation means to preserve and nurture the cultural heritage and traditions across the globe, and must continue to be a big part of our deliberations.

The Pacific island countries acknowledge the dedicated efforts made by the UNESCO Secretariat – in particular the UNESCO Apia Office to assist our efforts towards various initiatives including the following:

- (i) literacy and numeracy
- (ii) teacher quality
- (ii) school leadership
- (iii) developing professional standards for teachers
- (iv) Early Childhood Education; and
- (v) integrating sustainable development including climate change, HIV and AIDS, disaster risk management into education

Mr President, the challenges we face across the world are growing by the minute and we can only combat these through united efforts and using Education as our tool to bring about positive change, empower our young generations and ensure a better world for them.

Finally, I wish to close by saying that Samoa is a candidate to the Executive Board because of the genuine and strong commitment of the people of Samoa to peace and international understanding as well as the Government's commitment to education, the sciences, culture and communication in Samoa, the Pacific and the whole world.

May God Bless You All

Soifua.