

Mr. President

Madam Director General

Colleague Ministers

Representatives of the various delegations

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon.

It is truly an esteemed honour and privilege to address this 38th General Conference of UNESCO on behalf of the government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas as Minister of Education, Science and Technology.

The Bahamas stands at the crossroads of the Americas and Europe ready to embrace the opportunities that await our archipelagic nation. Like most civilizations, ours is rich in culture and history and through the years our people have been liberated, educated and celebrated.

UNESCO continues to be pivotal in the realization of many aspirations both individually and collectively. It provides a platform for the advancement of educational, scientific and cultural pursuits and to harness the power of education, science and culture to empower citizens of the world. Specifically, UNESCO has helped the citizens of The Bahamas to think outside the realm of normalcy and to venture into areas infrequently traveled, highlighting the collective strength of a unified people.

We commit our unwavering support in all peace-centred initiatives. We must continue to be relentless in our peace-seeking initiatives and we must use peace not just as the antidote to war but as a means of spreading universal love.

This 38th General Conference takes place at an important juncture in global events. The world over has now adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and while the focus remains aligned with the Millennium Development Goals, we have entered the next phase. Now fifteen years after the Millennium Development Goals, the world has experienced the evolution and revolution of a myriad of ideas. While

there are still many uncertainties, one thing is for certain; the need for global policies to preserve the world for future generations.

As Minister of Education, I wholeheartedly believe that education is at the nucleus of the Sustainable Development Goals. While Sustainable Development Goal number four which is to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”; I believe the success of all the other Sustainable Development Goals hinges on our ability to educate and inform the people of the world of the impact and effects of not taking proactive measures to sustain our communities, colonies, countries, and by extension the world. By 2030, there are some ambitious goals that we hope to accomplish, and I am optimistic that with political will and by properly informing and having optimal participation by our respective citizens, we can successfully achieve these goals.

The Bahamas recognizes the role of education in sustaining its people, environment, natural resources and economy. This year, the government of The Bahamas had the privilege of hosting the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers and based on the Nassau Declaration there is a renewed focus on the importance of education to the success and longevity of any country.

The Bahamas’ UNESCO office has had the opportunity to advance the objectives of UNESCO through a number of strategic initiatives since the last General Conference in 2013. In keeping with the mandates of UNESCO, the following were realized:

- Nassau was designated as a UNESCO Creative City in Arts & Craft;
- Our country became party to three Cultural Conventions and;
- We are in the process of recommending several potential sites to be considered as World Heritage sites.

Additionally, we have hosted a number of events, namely:

- A Regional Conference on the 2001 Underwater Cultural Convention
- A Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Workshop which brought together local governmental and non-governmental stakeholders with a view to develop a comprehensive policy and programme for science and technology for the entire Bahamas. UNESCO sponsored the various presenters and speakers.
- International Jazz Day on April 30 2014 & 2015, an all day event exposing locals to the genre of jazz featuring local bands inclusive of schools both public & private.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must remain resolute in our commitment to ensuring that holistic policies are developed and enacted that will address issues of global importance. We must be united on educational, social and environmental. Education must remain paramount to the sustainability of the initiatives and outputs deemed necessary and important to the continued development of the world and its people.

We have a unique opportunity to change the trajectory of millions of children through education. We must find ways to convey to every boy and girl, the power of education to transform their lives. We must make education relevant and appealing and we must be creative and innovative in our approach.

Hope must no longer be on the horizon, for the horizon seems unreachable. Hope must be at the shoreline - a footstep away and within our grasp. We must ignite the passion that flickers in the hearts and minds of humanity. The future is now; sustainable development is imperative today for tomorrow's existence.

We unequivocally give our support to the continued empowerment of UNESCO to "build peace in the minds of men and women" in order that the world again may achieve solidarity and unity in its pursuits for a happier, healthier, safer world. Together we can empower, educate and enlighten humanity for the greater good. Thank you!