

DRAFT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE GAMBIA, HON. FATOU LAMIN FAYE, MINISTER OF BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION AT THE POLICY DEBATE OF THE 38TH SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE, 07TH NOVEMBER 2015

Your Excellency, the President of the General Conference,

Madam Director General, UNESCO,

Excellencies, Members of the Executive Board,

Excellencies, the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

All Other protocols duly and respectfully observed

Let me first and foremost congratulate His Excellency, Stanley Mutumba Simataa on his election to the Presidency of the 38th Session of the General Conference and by the same token, thank his immediate predecessor, His Excellency, Hao Ping for the successful conduct of the 37th Session held in 2013.

The Gambia as a Member State of UNESCO continues to support the promotion of the ideals upon which this organization was founded and the prominence given to its fields of competence for which I am exceedingly pleased to share our country's impressions with this Session.

On **Education**, The Gambia heartily recognizes the leadership role UNESCO has played in leading the preparatory, consultative and finalization processes of the Post-2015 Education Agenda culminating into a Framework of Action that will guide the implementation of our future education endeavours. Accordingly, The Gambia has recently concluded a National Education Conference aimed at formulating a sector-wide Education Policy with clear focus on the provision of an "Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Training for Sustainable Development".

On **Natural Sciences**, The Gambia is appreciative of UNESCO's global initiative in convening the Second Ministerial Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation coupled with the importance of science accorded to the Sustainable Development Goals on the oceans, freshwater and biodiversity. It is therefore by no coincidence that UNESCO provided support to The Gambia to finalize its Science, Technology and Innovation Policy.

On **Social and Human Sciences**, The Gambia applauds UNESCO on the first phase of consolidating the integration of social transformations, foresight and intercultural dialogue.

On the successful organization of the first Global Forum on Youth Policies in Baku in collaboration with the UNDP, The Gambia puts on record its sincere appreciation for this laudable initiative given its potential for enhanced intercultural dialogue and social transformations. Through the 2014 – 2015 UNESCO Participation Programme, The Gambia has received funding to accelerate youth governance with emphasis on improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the National Youth Policy. In the area of Gender, the Government of The Gambia has made encouraging advancements in the formulation and implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy of 2010-2020 and the enactment and enforcement of The Women's Act of 2010, The Domestic Violence and The sexual Offenses Act of 2013.

On **Culture**, The Gambia salutes UNESCO for the progress registered in the implementation of the Culture Conventions; notably the priority focus on statutory meetings, the developed responses to emerging crisis situations, and the substantial work being undertaken to ensure recognition of culture in the post-2015 development agenda. In accordance with the 2003 and 2005 Conventions, the cultural sector in The Gambia has continued to gain momentum. The new Management Plan (2014-2018) for the World Heritage Site of 'Kunta Kinteh Island and Related Sites' has been finalized with support provided by the World Heritage Fund.

Under the 2014 – 2015 Participation Programme, the Sector was provided with funding to train twenty-five young Gambians including women on Motion Pictures Arts Certificate (MPAC) in the various specializations: cinematography, script writing, and directing. This intervention is expected to significantly change the lives of these graduates through self-employment opportunities.

On **Communication and Information**, The Gambia is satisfied with the actions taken thus far relative to freedom of expression, media development, and building knowledge societies through Information Communication Technology. The Government of the Gambia has realised the challenges with our national and international telecommunications connectivity infrastructure. This precipitated the need to overhaul our communication infrastructure to keep up with the progressive advancement of information and communication technologies. The Gambia can now boast of being connected to the global information superhighway through its own submarine cable landing station. This high bandwidth cable is being exploited by the roll out of the national transmission with optical fibre cable around the whole country and supported by the next generation networks to foster an all-inclusive broadband development programme.

In Conclusion, The Gambia wishes to recognize the visible efforts of UNESCO over the past seventy years towards the realization of Peace and Sustainable Development in the Member States and to this end, I am pleased to reaffirm the country's continued resolve to promote and uphold the principles and ideals of this great organization to which The Gambia proudly belongs.

I thank you all for your kind attention.