

GUYANA

Mr. President of the General Conference
President of the Executive Board
Madame Director General
Excellencies
Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Senior Minister of Education, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, sends his greetings and congratulations to you Mr. President on your election, as President of the 38th General Conference of UNESCO.

Some seventy years ago, the United Nations was founded in the aftermath of a world torn apart by great and terrible conflict; this agency, UNESCO, was a central part of that fundamental infrastructure with the specific mission to foster peace through collaboration and cohesion via the vehicles of education, science and culture. Within that mandate, was a wisdom of critical relevance which endures to this day.

Twenty years after the creation of this august organization, Guyana, a young country was born. As a former plantation colony, faced with structural inequity, injustice and impoverishment yet, we are the embodiment of the truest form of innovation that exists, that which underlies the survival of a reasonably cohesive society and the endurance of human spirit. And while we are a young country in the reckoning of the world, we are rich with the experience of avoidance of devastating division, as well as, rich with the potential of lasting social cohesion, within a milieu of contrasting ethnic and religious communities.

As true of the United Nations, Guyana, as a country has often fallen short of its founding ideals of compromise, cohesion and conciliation. Nonetheless, it's new Administration has taken a giant step towards realizing those ideals, although it is merely a single step in a long journey forward. Next year, as Guyana celebrates its 50th Independence Anniversary, running through all the grand plans will be three central themes: *reflection*; *celebration*; and *preparation*.

Our national anthem exhorts us to strive to *be more worthy our heritage*, this land of six peoples, thrown together by history, from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Indigenous civilizations of the Americas. Over the next year, we will reflect on the richness of this heritage and of our land itself – from Pakaraima's peaks to Corentyne's lush sands – and seek to establish ways and means to protect and preserve our heritage.

Mr. President,

Even as we reflect and celebrate, we are preparing our society for all the challenges and opportunities that exist ahead. Under the stewardship of His Excellency David Granger, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, our Government will seek to address educational issues via a holistic approach, thereby embarking on an integrated curriculum

reform from the learning environment to pedagogy.

The ultimate goal being an education system that is culturally relevant, technologically sustainable, and contextually adaptive, all with a central aspiration towards creativity and innovation.

Mr. President

Over the years, UNESCO has been a strong and reliable partner in education, culture and science. To this end, the Government of Guyana is appreciative of the opportunity afforded by UNESCO in piloting the inquiry based science programme, which provides hands-on experience in facilitating the learning of concepts in mathematics and science. UNESCOs support towards our efforts in introducing Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development and, giving us the opportunity of being a part of UNESCOs Global Micro science Regional Joint Project in the Caribbean should also be acknowledged.

Mr. President,

Guyana looks forward to UNESCOs continued support in our efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Government of Guyana has already crafted and designed policies in ensuring equal access to quality education, information technology, immediate remedial programmes for dropouts focusing on literacy, numeracy and matriculation, and the provision of opportunities for young people to enter technical training institutes. It is our strong belief that every child has a right to knowledge, skills and values which would allow them to be the type of citizen required for the 21st century development of our country. To this end Guyana calls on UNESCO to partner with us in fostering the sustainable implementation of these programmes, and thereby affording all communities access to a good life.

In conclusion, the Government of Guyana commits, over the next fifty years, over the next seventy, and beyond, to share the invaluable lessons of our particular experience in the furtherance of peace and security among the people of the world; and we reaffirm that UNESCO is the most effective forum for reciprocal exchange of experiences, ideas and best practices.

I thank you.