

## **INDIA**

Mr. President,  
Chairperson of the General Conference,  
Chairperson Executive Board,  
Madame Director General,  
Distinguished Ambassadors and Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to represent India at the General Policy Debate. It has always been a privilege for our Minister of Education to represent the people of India at this global dialogue facilitated by the National Policy Debates at the General Conference of UNESCO.

My Minister is unable to attend the meet due to extenuating and unforeseen circumstances. On her behalf, let me reiterate the importance that India accords to its partnership with UNESCO. As one of the founding members of UNESCO, India has always taken great pride in UNESCO's achievements over the last seven decades. Indeed, as the world seeks to implement the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, everyone needs to realize that education, development of the science and technology, and promotion and protection of cultures are central to rapid and balanced achievement of our development goals.

India recognises that education can help provide answers to some of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, which include poverty, inequality, conflict and threat to climate and environment. It is this faith in the inherent transformative potential of Education that drives India's campaign for universalisation of Education, elementary education through the path-breaking Right to Education legislation. The result has been quickly visible with a record 199 million children attending elementary schools. India also has the world's

largest school meal programme spread over 1.2 million schools. Besides access, equal importance has also been accorded to equity in terms of gender, disability or geography and to quality of education.

We should be especially mindful in the global discourse on education that the less advantaged, the excluded, the marginalised and those with disabilities are provided the conditions necessary for them to enjoy universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

India attaches great importance to use of ICT in education, environment education and multi-linguism. Skill development through technical and vocational education is another priority. Furthering the universalisation of education to the secondary stage is a goal that India would like to take up in the near future. In all these, we look forward to collaboration among countries through the effective forum of UNESCO. As a first step, a conference of SAARC countries was organised successfully in October, 2015 under the auspices of UNESCO at New Delhi.

As the international community looks towards implementing the Agenda 2030, it has recognised that education can play a decisive role in fostering a sense of shared responsibility and in bringing about fundamental changes in how we coexist with each other and our planet. The successful adoption of the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) is abundant testimony to it. This sense of collective duty has also been behind our support for the New-Delhi based Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development - a Category-I UNESCO institute. Our task now is to work with all Educational stakeholders to ensure that in its implementation, Education 2030 fulfills its promise, while acknowledging the varied and unique national contexts and socio-economic diversities.

India strongly believes that oceans are central to sustainable development and are a part of our common heritage. It is this belief that guides our support for the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the multi-national, multi-disciplinary expedition in the Indian Ocean under the banner of Second International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2).

India has an emotional attachment to the IIOE: the first IIOE laid the foundation for modern multidisciplinary oceanographic research in India and culminated in the establishment of the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa. We, therefore, look forward to the planned launch of IIOE-2 at Goa in December, 2015, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the IIOE Expedition and of the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa.

Over the years, we have worked together with UNESCO in our common endeavour to nourish and nurture, protect and promote the cultural heritage of the world. The World Heritage Convention is the best known of UNESCO's standard setting instruments in any field, and over the years has established for itself a brand name and an image.

We have the privilege of hosting a UNESCO Category II Centre at Dehradun in the field of Natural Heritage. Through this, we offer our services in strengthening capacities in the management and protection of world heritage, leading to a more efficient overall management of systems in keeping with the letter and spirit of the World Heritage Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, as founding members, shall be deeply committed to the ideals and objectives of UNESCO. Later this month our organisation will complete seventy years of eventful and impactful existence. The principles that brought

the community of nations together in 1945, are as valid and relevant today, as they were then.

Mr. President and Distinguished Delegates, I wish all success to the work of the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference and look forward to the important exchanges that follow.

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