

**NATIONAL STATEMENT BY  
H.E. MRS. MARIAM YALWAJI KATAGUM, AMBASSADOR,  
PERMANENT DELEGATE OF NIGERIA TO UNESCO, DURING THE  
GENERAL POLICY DEBATE AT THE 38<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE GENERAL  
CONFERENCE OF UNESCO  
UNESCO SECRETARIAT, PARIS, FRANCE,  
3<sup>RD</sup> -18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015**

Mr. President of the General Conference,  
Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
Madam Director-General of UNESCO,  
Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you warm greetings and best wishes from the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, *GCFR*, and the people of Nigeria.

We warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your appointment and are confident that you and your great country will provide guidance to the Organisation as we make the first moves towards the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

On this historic occasion, when we mark the Seventieth Anniversary of our dear Organisation, it is with pride and great pleasure, that we in Nigeria acknowledge and celebrate the richness and fruitfulness of our 55 years of association with UNESCO.

Mr. President, in recognition of its mandate and its proven achievements, the international community has placed UNESCO very much in the centre of several of the global activities for today and for the future. It is therefore up to us, as Member States, to ensure that UNESCO is provided with the means it needs to meet its ever-growing responsibilities. This is why Nigeria has often pleaded for more funds for UNESCO; if only some token increase in its budget, which has remained stagnant for several biennia.

Given the prevailing situation in the Organisation, Nigeria is willing to go along with the emerging consensus for the proposed Option for ZNG + scenario for the 2016 to 2017 Budget. Furthermore, we shall continue to provide core budget support for the UNESCO Institute of LifeLong Learning and the International Bureau for Education in recognition of their excellent

performance, although our membership and presidency of the IBE is coming to an end.

Distinguished delegates, Nigeria commends the Director-General for the effective management of the Organisation in spite of the lean financial resources and particularly for intensifying UNESCO's relevance to Africa's development. However, we encourage a re-focusing of the Organisation's programmes and structures in Africa, in the light of the IOS evaluations and the whole concept of Priority Africa, which was launched 25 years ago.

Going forward, Nigeria pledges to continue its support for the UNESCO Multisectoral Office in Abuja, where last year, we were able to second six senior staff to assist with the work in the sub-region. We therefore call on other Member States to follow this example.

Mr. President, Nigeria believes in the wisdom of taking a hard look at the governance of the Organisation. We applaud all the efforts that have so far been made and believe that these can only be beneficial to the Organisation, if they are undertaken with care, with wisdom and with all-inclusive consultations.

In education, we commend UNESCO for its coordinating role in the development of the Education 2030 Agenda. Education remains a priority for our Government, as we tackle issues of access and quality as well as the challenge of out - of - school children. Nigeria has taken proactive measures, such as the *Safe School Initiative*, to address the effect of insecurity on education delivery. We invite the participation of development partners in our efforts to bring education back to North Eastern Nigeria, worst hit by the scourge of Boko Haram insurgency.

Science, Technology and Innovation together constitute one of the main pillars of the agenda for change of the new Nigerian administration. The second phase of the Science Component of the Nigeria/UNESCO Special Plan of Cooperation will be developed as a pilot programme for the attainment of science – related SDGs and the implementation of the STI policy elaborated in cooperation with UNESCO. We are happy to report that the International Center for Biotechnology, a UNESCO Category 2 Center, focusing on food security and tropical diseases, has taken off with three programmes recommended by its International Scientific Advisory Committee.

Mr. President, the Government of Nigeria is committed to the letter and spirit of supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles.

We strongly condemn the illegal destruction of cultural objects and shall continue our cooperation with UNESCO in the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, through the activities of the Institute for African Culture and International Understanding (IACIU), whose designation as a UNESCO Category 2 Institute was recently renewed.

Nigeria recognizes the importance of Communication and Information in the socio-economic development of its citizens. In line with the Freedom of Information Act which guarantees right to access to information and freedom of the press and the United Nations Special Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, we are happy to report that we have responded to the Director-General's request for a status report on the judicial enquiries conducted on journalists killed in Nigeria

from 2006 – 2013. Nigeria has taken steps in the prevention of attacks against journalists through the establishment of a *Safe Monitoring Network*.

Finally, Mr. President, Nigeria wishes to thank the President of the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the General-Conference and the Chairperson of the Executive Board for their contributions to the attainment of UNESCO's lofty goal of creating a better world where Peace will reign supreme!

I thank you for your attention.