



**Draft Speech by Hon. Minister Shaun Richards at
the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference
7th November 2015**

Salutation

Mr. President of the General Conference, His Excellency, Chairman, the Honorable Stanley Simataa of the Executive Board, our esteemed Director General, and her colleagues, fellow Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis, and on my own behalf as deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and UNESCO affairs, I wish to heartily congratulate UNESCO in the attainment of an important milestone in reaching 70 years of fruitful existence. My Government would also want to express our gratitude to UNESCO for its overwhelming support to my country in providing expertise and assistance on the ground, notably in education, human science, Information Society and culture.

We live in a world where emerging crises arising from economic, environmental and sovereign state challenges continue to have an adverse impact on the quality of life of citizens who inhabit this earth. By any measure, UNESCO has successfully weathered the impact of these storms over the years in delivering its mandate to its Member States, especially in the field of Education for ALL, and, importantly, at ALL levels.

In speaking from the perspective as part of a group of small island states, faced with immense vulnerabilities, and external economic and climatic challenges to our open-market island economies, our continued survival in a world of rapid upheaval and transformation requires the continued, structured intervention and expertise by UNESCO at all levels.

Earlier this year, I had indeed the honour to attend and actively participate in the 2015 World Education Forum in Incheon, in order to contribute to the 2030 Education agenda. My Government remains more convinced than ever that equality education at all levels holds is the key to alleviate poverty and boost sustainable growth, especially in the context of SIDS, which includes my own country.

We urge UNESCO to give special emphasis to the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development programme as a critical priority, especially taking account of the high dropout rate of our young males, and the concomitant consequences of

youth violence. We endorse the strong emphasis on the need for moral values, attitudes and behaviours conducive to a culture of peace and non-violence, respecting cultural diversity and human rights, with youth at the centre of this philosophy.

We must be able to unleash and discover the full potential and immense talent that lies within our young people in more innovative and creative ways.

Our cultural heritage and its role in boosting tourism, considering our rich and vibrant historical and cultural heritage and legacy must be deployed in a more professional manner as a means of adding value to the tourism sector. This is why my Government will be shortly ratifying two additional UNESCO cultural Conventions.

UNESCO is strategically well placed to assist our sub-region in amplifying our intercultural dialogue to others based on our cultural heritage.

My Delegation applauds UNESCO for its work on the draft action plan for small island developing states. We are confident that this work will assist us to achieve our global agenda, mitigating against emerging challenges such as climate change and the ensuring sustainable use of fresh water resources.