

**NATIONAL STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE AT THE 38<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO, HONOURABLE DR LAZARUS D.K. DOKORA AT THE 38<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENREAL CONFERENCE IN PARIS, FRANCE ON 5 NOVEMBER 2015**

- The President of the General Conference;
- Chairperson of the Executive Board;
- The Director General;
- Your Excellencies and Delegates.

Mr President,

My Delegation congratulates you on your election and recognizes the sterling work done by your predecessor, H.E. Professor Hao Ping.

Your election is historic and significant in that you are the first President from the Southern Africa sub-region and this is a cause for celebration.

Mr President and the Director General, you can count on my government's full support as you execute your onerous responsibilities.

The 37<sup>th</sup> General Conference highlighted the fact that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were "an unfinished business". A call was made to complete that business and to transcend those challenges. Thanks to the collective efforts of Member States and the Secretariat under the able leadership of the Director General there have been significant achievements. These are reflected in UN Summit document: **Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for global action** adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government in September 2015.

Director General through your efforts SDG 4 has already been transformed into a framework of action which was adopted yesterday by the Education 2030 high level meeting.

Zimbabwe would like to acknowledge the efforts by the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) in coordinating the development of the regional and national Frameworks of Action for Education 2030.

Mr President, Member States and UNESCO must effectively mobilize resources for the successful implementation of the national and regional frameworks.

Zimbabwe has made significant progress from 2000 to 2015 in promoting Education for All (EFA). Madame Director General at the commencement of the current biennium, Zimbabwe had a mere 90,000 learners at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) level. ECD has been expanded (451,000) and mainstreamed in all primary schools as part of the Infant School Module (1,216,555). Of the required teachers (11,000 by 2017) **3 960** teachers have been trained for the Infant Level.

Access to Primary Education throughout the country has been achieved through the establishment of 1 425 satellite schools in new resettlement areas and remote rural villages. From Infant to high school, the total enrolment is 4.066 million learners. The Gender Parity Index stands at 0.98. There is steady improvement in completion rates at primary and secondary levels which stand at 77% and 65% respectively. Zimbabwe recently completed the development of a science and skills-oriented curriculum for basic education which emphasises technical and vocational education and training (TVET), ICTs and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). Issues of equity will receive added focus in the period 2016-2030. Zimbabwe's Literacy rate stands at 92.4 % and is currently the highest in Africa and a greater part of the developing world.

At the tertiary level, females out-number males at teachers' colleges, constituting 74% of enrolment. However, at polytechnics and universities female enrolment stands at 40%. Mr President, we have put in place strategies to increase the participation of the women in STEAM. On average, we only have 28.5% women teachers for Maths and science.

Our focus in the next 15 years is to improve quality learning outcomes, through teacher capacity development, the provision of housing for teachers, the use of ICTs and other emerging technologies. To this end, the Government of Zimbabwe greatly appreciates the inclusion of Zimbabwe in the UNESCO-Korean-Funds-in-Trust for rolling out ICTs in Education.

The Sustainable Development Goals have embraced Science, Technology and Innovation, which resonates well with Zimbabwe's national aspirations to build capacities in science and engineering, as contained in its development blueprint, Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET). Zimbabwe was honoured to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the UNESCO-Africa Engineering Week under the theme, **"Engineering, innovation for accelerated infrastructure development for Africa"**,

At national level, Zimbabwe established an annual Research and Intellectual Outputs, Science and Engineering Expo (RIO-SET) which seeks to increase interest in science, engineering and technology among the youths. Further Zimbabwe hosted the sub-regional Education Conference and Expo in September 2015 whose theme was **Mainstreaming ICTs in Education**. Support is needed to build capacities in science technology and innovation at all levels.

Mr President, the world, and in particular developing countries in Africa, are facing serious challenges related to energy deficit. The just concluded UN Summit has called for affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all. My country has already begun to put in place policies that advocate for the use of renewable energies, in particular solar energy. Another challenge faced by Zimbabwe and the Southern African Region is perennial drought and yet we have a large number of water bodies that remain underutilised. Zimbabwe is located in a drought prone region and would benefit greatly from collaborating with the International Hydrology Programme (IHP) to develop capacity to mitigate water challenges.

Zimbabwe has also participated in the Global Observatory of Science Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments Programme (Go-spin) and has developed a manual on STI incentives

In line with the aspirations of Africa stated in the AU Agenda 2063, Zimbabwe is seeking to eradicate poverty through promoting well educated and skilled citizens. Both our national Constitution and the economic blue print set the tone for social transformation and promotion of an inclusive society, based on fundamental Human Rights. Mr President, support is needed in the area of scientific research which can contribute to the development of modern infrastructure and modern agriculture for increased food production.

Mr President, the last General Conference underlined the role of culture as a driver and enabler for sustainable development. Zimbabwe equally stresses this linkage which ensures greater social inclusion, innovation, creativity and promotes identity, human dignity and enterprise skills.

Zimbabwe is actively implementing the key UNESCO Cultural Conventions which have the potential to promote economic development through utilisation of cultural resources.

The country's priorities in the 2016-2017 biennium include promoting inter-sectoral programming and activities; developing national cultural databases which link up with sub-regional cultural databases for the 2003 and 2005 Conventions; human capital development for the implementation of the Conventions; cultural policy development at local and national levels to enhance the development of cultural and creative industries; projects that enhance women's participation in culture and heritage and pursuit of the return of cultural property illicitly exported.

In the same vein, the Government of Zimbabwe prioritises the writing of the country's liberation history. Zimbabwe will escalate and popularise heritage studies and liberation history, this in accordance with the resolution of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference on African Liberation Heritage. In this regard, any technical assistance would be most appreciated.

Since communication transcends all areas of UNESCO's areas of competence, there is need for collaboration with education, science and culture sectors.

Mr President, as host of the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA), my Government will spare no effort to support the office so that it can deliver on its mandate. We also appreciate the fact that there has been significant improvement in terms of the numbers and quality of Programme Specialists particularly in education, natural sciences and culture despite the financial challenges facing UNESCO. We appeal to the Director General to take similar measures in the fields of Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Information. I also want to appreciate the strong collaboration that exist between the Regional Office for Southern Africa and Member States of the region as evidenced by regional programmes already carried out in the last 12 months.

Mr President since Zimbabwe is the current chair of the African Union it would be remiss of me to conclude my statement without mention of the Priority Africa Programme. While we are grateful for the focus given to Africa, there are inadequate resources to implement the Priority Africa Strategy. Further it would be extremely instructive if more synergies could be drawn by linking the emerging UNESCO architecture for peace building with that of the African Union.

Mr President, I take this opportunity to assure you that you will not walk alone in the journey you have embarked on.

**I THANK YOU.**