

33. **The President:**

Thank you, Your Excellency. Our next speaker is His Excellency, Mr Ivar Asjes, Prime Minister and acting Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Curaçao.

34.1 **Mr Asjes (Curaçao):**

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Chair of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, honourable ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Curaçao congratulates President Hao Ping on being elected to preside over the 37th session of the General Conference of UNESCO and wishes him sustained success in this year's proceedings. We also congratulate Anguilla on becoming the ninth Associate Member and the sixth Caribbean sister island to join UNESCO.

34.2 Once again, we stand before you and are proud to share with you the challenges we have faced and the successes we have achieved during the past year. As a small island developing State (SIDS) we have made good use of the programmes and projects that UNESCO provides.

34.3 Mr President, climate change is a crucial development issue for the Caribbean. There is a vital link between the area of education for social awareness and the scientific endeavours towards the sustainable management of our environmental resources. We will address this through a comprehensive science policy that will be translated into curricula for all levels of education. We hope to continue to count on your support through capacity-building programmes in order to achieve this objective.

34.4 As a young country we are aware that by ourselves we cannot bridge the gap between the need for a strong science and technology infrastructure and the inherited lack of relevant and significant resources. Therefore we look to UNESCO for continued support in the following areas: the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), and the UNESCO Chairs on SIDS and Water Technology.

34.5 Mr President, in the field of culture, according to the basic texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, nomination for the intangible cultural heritage gives Associate Members like us, contrary to nominations for the World Heritage List, the possibility to directly identify our own intangible cultural heritage with the World Heritage Centre. This occurs through accession, as mentioned in Article 33 of said convention. Furthermore Mr President, we support the recommendations arrived at during the meeting of Latin American and Caribbean ministers on the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Mr President, I am also proud to inform you that in 2014, following Jamaica's lead in 2012, Curaçao is preparing the UNESCO Award of Excellence for Handicrafts for the Caribbean.

34.6 The 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the Dutch Kingdom has highlighted the importance of research, education, publication and the overall attention for the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its continuing effects on our societies.

34.7 As an island in the Caribbean, we have furthermore made quite a rapid transition from an agricultural to an industrial to a service and finally to an information economy. In this new context, freedom of speech has come to be appreciated as an inalienable right worldwide. This is why Curaçao realized the importance of hosting World Press Freedom Day and engineering the rebirth of the Caribbean Media Summit. Without a doubt, these events should continue in future.

34.8 We are very pleased that UNESCO has approached us to be the pilot for the investigation to identify media development gaps in the Dutch and English-speaking Caribbean by using media development indicators. This investigation is at present being carried out and helps to strengthen our own links between democracy and journalism.

34.9 Finally, Mr President, we understand the difficult financial situation that UNESCO is facing. Nevertheless, we urge you to reconsider and increase the number of participation programmes for the 38th session of the General Conference back to ten. Earlier on, I mentioned the importance and special needs of Caribbean SIDS; this is one concrete instance in which UNESCO can contribute to accentuating that importance. *Masha danki*, thank you, *muchas gracias*, *dank u*, *merci beaucoup*.