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Organización  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## 201<sup>st</sup> session of the Executive Board of UNESCO

Address by

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### Plenary Debate

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board of UNESCO  
Madam Director-General,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

Reflecting on the menu of agenda items on this session of the Executive Board, I shall confine my intervention to three issues only.

These are the Draft Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 (39 C/5), the bleak financial standing of our Organisation and the forthcoming process of recruiting the next Director-General.

Excellencies,

The 39 C/5 covers the second and final programme period of the Medium-Term Strategy of our Organization and is key in many respects. Not only are we, as Member States, going to define the first Programme and Budget in full alignment with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but we are also about to engage the Organization in a new path of actionable results towards poverty reduction, enhanced resilience, and more inclusive, peaceful societies.

The 39 C/5 of our Organization should also remain a tool for improved results delivery and effectiveness at country level. Member States have a double responsibility in this regard to collectively define the contours of effective programme and adequate budget, but also to allow, at the national level, for its smooth implementation through the establishment of appropriate implementation mechanisms, including equipped and adequately National Commissions for UNESCO.

Mr Chairman,

In sounding my concerns on the slow rate of received assessed contributions, I am not oblivious to the acute financial challenges facing many of our Member States. I am equally fully aware of the prevailing bleak global economic outlook.

Firstly, it suffices to thank all those Member States who have timely honoured the payment of their assessed contributions.

Equally, I respectfully plead with all those with outstanding balances to please, please settle such balances.

As Member States, we have consistently bemoaned the depressed financial situation of our Organisation and rightly so. Indeed, we have consistently advocated for greater efficiency and heightened extra budgetary resource mobilisation, again rightly so! Yet, we have not been inward looking by addressing the pervasive and self-inflicted financial bleeding occasioned by what is reflected in document EX/25 Part I and II respectively. This is further being compounded by the emergence of a very disturbing trend where we, as Member States, are literally imposing conditions on the payment of assessed contributions. This, Your Excellencies, is the elephant in our midst that need resolute action.

Mr Chairman,

Payment of assessed contributions is a sacrosanct constitutional obligation that should not be contested by any Member State. This is a cardinal responsibility we have to our Organisation – a responsibility that should not and must not be abdicated for as long as we continue to be Members! We therefore must do some soul searching on this matter now and not tomorrow for payment of assessed contributions should not be enjoined with emerging issues Member States may legitimately wish to raise with the Organisation. Since the inducement of the distressed financial situation almost six years ago, our Organisation, and now some of its prime institutes have lost and continue to loose valuable human resources. With the continued flight of human capital, it will be extremely difficult for UNESCO to continue to instil

confidence in its mandate within the broader UN Family and other stakeholders.

As a Malawian proverb asserts, *“He/She who thinks is leading but has no followers, is simply taking a walk”*.

Unless we quickly arrest the current depressed financial situation, our Organisation risks losing the trust and confidence stakeholders have placed in our stewardship to lead the global sustainable development agenda in areas that fall within our mandate. We must therefore as of now and not tomorrow, tirelessly work to restore the 100% level of received assessed contributions attained during the 1998-1999 to 2008-2009 biennia. Can we achieve this? To invoke former President Obama’s conviction, *“Yes, we can”* with the proviso that we stop seeking for the financial salvation of our Organisation from outside, when we as Member States hold the keys in our hands to unlock the current financial burden.

Mr Chairman,

During the course of this session, we will set in motion, for the very first time in the history of our Organisation, a more transparent process of recruiting the next Director-General. We stand on the threshold of opportunity by ensuring that we apply the necessary rigour that will yield a candidate who possesses the requisite leadership, organisational and diplomatic acumen to pursue our Organisation’s mandate within the broader scheme of the set global agenda.

I have no doubt therefore that we will adhere to the imperative of meritocracy - over everything else – for it will be perilous for UNESCO to miss such a golden opportunity!

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

*Muchas Gracias!*