



Executive Board 201st Session

National Statement by St. Kitts and Nevis

Opening Remarks

As the world becomes a more complex environment, one factor is becoming critical in providing stability and hope in the minds of men – that of eradicating social exclusion, especially amongst the youth.

UNESCO has a central role in addressing this phenomenon through its core expertise and competencies in the field of education, and in particular, by promoting and strengthening the Member State's capacity in life-long learning. It is only through sustainable learning at all stages of a person's life, from youth to adulthood, that we can begin to raise the expectations, perceptions and skills knowledge of people in our common interest.

Report on the further implementation of the small island developing states (SIDS) action plan

Being a small island developing state, St. Kitts and Nevis takes note with satisfaction the emphasis given in the 39 C/5 to mainstreaming specific interventions for youth, LDCs and SIDS. In a distinctly severe budgetary constrained environment, it is reassuring that the DG has reflected sustained efforts to harness UNESCO's multi-and inter-disciplinary expertise and to enhance inter-sectorality as a core comparative advantage in delivering on the Plan of Action and the Implementation Strategy on SIDS.

SIDS retention on UNESCO priority target group list is warranted, more than ever. We need little reminding that SIDS stand at the frontiers of natural disasters brought about by climate change, marginalization due to remoteness from key markets, vulnerability arising from dis-economies of scale vis-à-vis the larger economies.

Frequently, such characteristics are overlooked in the raising and deployment of resources. Criteria such as of GDP per capita to determine ODA funding, and the SIDS borrowing needs, conceal the wider vulnerability story associated with SIDS: high levels of debt, anaemic growth, and the risks perpetuated by extreme weather events.

Thus, while we applaud the fact that SIDS activities will continue to be implemented through actions planned by the all the concerned major UNESCO programmes, our delegation would caution on the risk of fragmentation and dissipation of already limited resources and slow progress in securing voluntary contributions to further implementation of the SIDS Action Plan.

We firstly urge greater use of existing synergies and leverage gained from productive interventions at both policy and community levels in building a series of templates for use across the SIDS constituency, in areas like science, education, social and cultural and information society. For instance, the compelling UNESCO experience in St. Kitts and Nevis in the past year in conducting an in-depth assessment into the country's education policy and mapping out clear, outcome-oriented results and targets, should be seized as an example. UNESCO's capacity-building competencies were also put to good use in St. Kitts and Nevi and indeed St. Lucia, to strengthen the design and implementation policies aimed at transforming TVET in these countries.

Equally, UNESCO's intervention across a number of SIDS – including more recently in St. Kitts and Nevis – in assisting governments to formulate, review and implement youth-related policies and legislation, is yet another example where UNESCO has built a conceptual framework for wider deployment across all SIDS.

Multiple other examples exists where UNESCO can re-package, streamline and deploy its core competencies gained from practical experience in the SIDS regions, thereby avoiding 'reinventing the wheel' and dissipating resources:

- Extending the harmonization and standardization of the IOC tsunami early-warning systems, by installing new sea-level monitoring stations and accompanying training.
- Improving groundwater governance at local, regional and transboundary levels in the SIDS, and, importantly, drought monitoring systems, in those states suffering from severe water restrictions.
- Assisting SIDS to identify, ratify and preserve both tangible and intangible cultural heritages sites for island sustainable developments. Few SIDS have actually ratified the 1970, 2001, 2003 and 2005 Conventions – but a few SIDS cases with

now operational national policies across these Conventions, could point to best practice in rolling out a conceptual framework adapted specifically for SIDS.

1. Final draft for an updated UNESCO strategy for action on climate change

Collectively, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) cannot be attributed as being responsible for climate change, but their geographical, socioeconomic and climate profiles render them particularly vulnerable to its impacts. Natural hazards from floods to tsunamis, landslides to hurricanes, now occur with increasing intensity across the SIDS. The negative impacts are felt on the island's eco-systems, residents' livelihoods and the economy.

We continue to applaud the outcome of the 2015 COP21 climate change conference, but the long-term risk factors for SIDS of climate change-provoked natural hazards remain elusive. The COP22 conference held in Morocco in November last year reinforced the urgency of scientific experts of trying to keep well below 2 °C. This cannot be overstated. With a 2 °C increase, it is predicated that most of the SIDS would be largely or entirely under water, and there would be a significant displacement from other low-lying places worldwide.

Thus, our Delegation fully endorses UNESCO's contribution to system-wide UN strategy to combat climate change. But it is essential to consider concrete ways in which UNESCO, and the UN system, its Member States, and other stakeholders can do more to enable SIDS to address this threat and its effects

We don't have much time and UNESCO resources need to be carefully configured and disaggregated to a local level to address the most critical thematic action focus areas:

- Supporting SIDS governments, and the wider stakeholders, to develop and implement climate change education and public awareness programmes and policies – transcending all of civil society, and integrating climate change in school curricula.
- More actively promoting inter-disciplinary climate knowledge and scientific cooperation at SIDS regional and sub-regional levels, focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

These represent for many SIDS the core of what UNESCO can meaningfully contribute based on its mandated core competencies for the purposes of establishing and achieving their Nationally Determined Contributions under the UNFCCC Paris Agreement.

2. Progress report on the implementation of the Action plan for enhancing the cooperation of the UNESCO secretariat with national commissions for UNESCO.

My Delegation takes favorable note of this progress report, and we urge the Secretariat to continue its commendable work in improving its cooperation with National Commissions for UNESCO. This is especially important in the context of the possible Review of the sustainability of the Field network across regions.

Our Delegation recognizes the role of UNESCO vis-à-vis National Commissions as defined in the Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO, which reaffirms that it is for each Member State to define the range of responsibilities and the nature of the functions of its NatComs. The UNESCO Secretariat, however, enjoys an important role in that it is entrusted to promote exchanges and networking among Natcoms in the context of diversity in the Organization and status, by sharing information and best practices in a transparent and cooperative manner.

National Commissions play a pivotal role in adding value at member states level and at UNESCO in the effective delivery of programmes and policy advice to stakeholders on the ground, in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 agenda. Thus, must be given the requisite tools, resources, and authority, both from UNESCO Secretariat and the member state government, in order to perform their role effectively as significant partners in the development, implementation and evaluation of UNESCO's programme.

3. Comprehensive strategy for the management of social transformations (most) programme

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis commends the UNESCO efforts on the new Comprehensive strategy for the management of social transformations (MOST) programme. As part of the new approach explained in the strategy, we urge the Director General to utilize this unique tool that should enable UNESCO to design targeted actions for its member states, under the umbrella of the organization's unique mandate in social and human sciences within the broader UN System.

My Government strongly believes that Sports constitutes a tool for national development, health, and well-being, Physical Education, and anti-doping, as well as Youth empowerment. These are niches that should be identified for measured and targeted activities in the Caribbean Sub-region.

Slave Route Project

St Kitts and Nevis reaffirms its strong support to the Slave Route project which remains one of the most significant contributions of UNESCO to the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). It is a truly interdisciplinary project which contributes to understanding and hopefully address crucial issues of our contemporary society at large, notably, in fight against racial prejudices, social and cultural exclusion and asymmetrical intercultural dialogue.

In that respect, Saint Kitts has associated the Slave Route project to activities on the ground in preserving sites of memory in our country and would like to benefit from its experience in the construction of monument dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Slave trade and slavery.

Our Government is also poised to benefit from UNESCO heritage expertise and guidance in seeking a listing of the City of Charlestown (Nevis) on the World Heritage List in 2020.

Youth

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis wishes to express its gratitude to UNESCO for its intervention in our country in significantly contributing to assisting the government in developing a youth policy framework, involving the active participation of all levels of the youth constituency in our twin-island state. The St. Kitts and Nevis youth policy exercise also marked a new feature of UNESCO work on youth policy in that it involved the full collaboration of the Commonwealth Secretariat, alongside assessments conducted by both organs of existing youth policies across a number of Commonwealth states, and in assisting governments - with timely input from stakeholders, notably the youth – to formulate a cohesive and inclusive youth policy framework.