



201ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNESCO

DRAFT STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO ITEMS 4, 5 & 15 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA¹

BY HON. DR. MATTHEW OPOKU PREMPEH, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND GHANA'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chairman of the Executive Board,
President of the General Conference,
Director-General of UNESCO,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me much pleasure to address this august body for the first time in my capacity as Ghana's Minister for Education and her new Representative on the Executive Board of UNESCO.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to convey to you warm felicitations from NANA ADDO DANQUAH AKUFO-ADDO, President of the Republic of Ghana. On my country's behalf we wish to thank UNESCO and the international community for the solidarity and support during Ghana's last general elections in December 2016. We also appreciate the show of goodwill

¹ Ghana is allotted only 5 minutes for this statement. Please kindly check against time.

extended to Ghana on the occasion of our 60th anniversary celebration last month.

We join previous speakers to congratulate the Director-General for her introductory remarks which have set the tone for this insightful debate. We have observed with admiration her efforts to make the impact of UNESCO felt at the global, regional, and national levels in a financially difficult context. Recent efforts in pursuing extra-budgetary funding for the programmes adopted by the General Conference are highly commendable.

Mr. Chairman, we note the challenge of shortage of specialists particularly in the Field Offices, which has undoubtedly constrained the capacity of our Organisation to effectively deliver in the field. We reiterate our call for UNESCO to intensify efforts at strengthening the capacity of the staff of National Commissions in Member States to provide the needed assistance.

UNESCO'S ASSISTANCE IN MEMBER STATES IN THE SDG 4 ROLL-OUT:

Mr. Chairman, UNESCO's efforts to assist Member States to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) clearly demonstrate the Organisation's commitment to lasting peace and development. Ghana notes with satisfaction the various interventions to assist some Member States to achieve the targets that we have collectively set for ourselves.

The Government of Ghana has set out workable and ambitious plans and programmes to achieve the SDGs. As regards SDG 4, Ghana's new education direction emphasizes quality education not only as a human right, but also as a vehicle for the realization of other rights. Education for poverty reduction, employment generation, health promotion, gender equity and environmental sustainability have all been highlighted for special attention.

We are redefining basic education to start from kindergarten to the senior high school level. In that context, we are happy to announce that with effect from September 2017, all children in Ghana will access free, equitable and quality kindergarten, primary and **secondary education** in our public schools as a means of nurturing a solid base of human capital for socio-economic development. We look forward to working with UNESCO and other development partners to make this a big success.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the enormity of youth unemployment across the world continues to be a challenge for many governments. UNESCO's determination to strengthen Member States' capacity to develop and implement evidence-based policies for Technical and Vocational Education and Training is therefore a move in the right direction. The government has put in place comprehensive reforms to overhaul and rebrand Technical, Vocational Education & Training (TVET) to include Agricultural Sciences. We count on UNESCO'S expertise in this

area to make TVET more meaningful to effectively address youth unemployment and reduce poverty.

Mr Chairman, there have been interventions in the communication and information Sector to build capacity in various areas. These include development of Open Educational Resources (OERs), Youth in mobile technology and empowering peoples with disability through ICT in education. This is a move in the right direction. Ghana is grateful to UNESCO for the assistance received in this area.

ENVIRONMENT AND THE PROTECTION OF THE BIOSPHERE:

Mr. Chairman, Ghana supports UNESCO's on-going work to strengthen the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). Climate Change continues to pose a challenge the world over and Ghana commends UNESCO for playing a key role during the COP 21 and COP 22 in Paris and Marrakech respectively.

Our countries continue to see the loss of large acres of land and vegetative cover as a result of anthropogenic activities. We are losing important plant and animal species as well as water resources essential to life. Ghana would like to see UNESCO strengthening the National Committees of MAB and IHP to implement strategies towards safeguarding forests and water resources in our countries.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Ghanaian delegation, I wish to congratulate all the distinguished candidates who have availed themselves to be considered for the high office of the Director-General of UNESCO. We wish them well as they prepare for their interviews.

I thank you for your attention.