

UK National Statement to UNESCO Executive Board Meeting April 2017

Thank you Mister Chair, esteemed colleagues,

The UK published its Multilateral Development Review of each of the UN agencies, funds and programmes at the end of last year. At the Intersessional meeting of the Board on 22nd February, we presented an outline of the findings of this review. We would like to use this opportunity to expand on this and on what the UK's priorities are for UNESCO.

The Multilateral Development Review recognised the critical global role which the UN agencies, funds and programmes play. The UK remains fully committed to the UN Development System.

The UK also recognises that UNESCO is both part of the UN Development System and a specialist agency which contributes to other global priorities, and we work with UNESCO in many different ways. For example, in September 2016 the UK was proud to host the first international conference of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network following approval of the designation by the UNESCO General Conference in 2015. 700 delegates from 63 countries attended the conference in the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark. The UK also welcomed UNESCO's launch of the Global Education Monitoring Report of 2016 in London.

However, whilst our support to the UN development system remains steadfast, we are also committed to its improvement. Our Multilateral Development Review found that although there had been progress by agencies, the pace of reform by the multilateral system as a whole has not met expectations. We need more from the UN system than ever before in order to achieve the sustainable development goals. A more joined up system where agencies focus their work on where they can add value, work together and avoid overlap and duplication. Better value for money where programmes are focused where the needs are greatest and on what works. More efficient back office services. Merit based recruitment and effective, professional staff management. And a more transparent and accountable system so that Member States understand what funds are being provided, by whom, what they are spent on, and very importantly, what results they achieve. These are some of the standards which we are asking all parts of the UN system to meet.

Our review identified strengths in each organisation. In the case of UNESCO examples of strengths we identified included strong leadership in the Education 2030 agenda and good work on education monitoring. A positive impact on policies for women and girls and substantive improvements in producing gender disaggregated data. The new transparency portal is extremely positive and we look forward to seeing results data transferred on to it.

However, as I'm sure many of you will know, our review highlighted particularly serious concerns on UNESCO's organisational effectiveness. I

would like to set out some of the changes which we would like to see. Programmes aligned to a clearly defined strategy. Improved programme management which enables managers to identify what results they are achieving, and swift action taken to close poorly performing programmes. Increased transparency not just about resource allocation, expenditure and results, but also on how decisions are made including on recruitment. Competitive contracting as the default practice and transparency about exceptions to this and the reasons for it. Results based management of contractors and implementation partners, with poor performance resulting in termination of contracts. All recruitment on the basis of merit, and all staff having clear job descriptions, agreed objectives and annual performance reporting including Directors of field offices. I know that many of you share these expectations.

We welcome the steps which UNESCO has already taken on reform. The new Programme Management Committee and Risk Management Committee are very positive initiatives. We would like assurances that these committees and other parts of UNESCO responsible for delivering reform will report regularly to the executive board and to know how and when this will be done.

The development of UNESCO's Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2021 is an opportunity for UNESCO to demonstrate that it is serious about taking forward reform. UNESCO needs to make difficult decisions in order to rationalise and focus its programme on where it can add most value. In a time of decreasing overall resources, UNESCO's field presence will need to be aligned to its strategic priorities and will need to demonstrate good value for money. A field office with high running costs and limited ability to mobilise resources and therefore to deliver activities does not represent an efficient use of resources.

We know these will be difficult decisions but we urge UNESCO and Member States to grasp them and the opportunity for change.