

**Pakistan's National Statement by Minister For
Federal Education & Professional Training,
Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman on 39th Session of
UNESCO General Conference
03 November 2017**

**The President, 39th General Conference of UNESCO,
Director-General, Ms. Irina Bokova,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies & Gentlemen**

It is indeed a pleasure and honour for me to address the UNESCO General Conference for the 3rd time since 2013.

At the outset, let me extend my sincere felicitations to Ms. Irina Bokova, the outgoing Director General for her effective leadership and able stewardship of UNESCO. Despite many administrative and financial challenges which she confronted during her term, she maintained the vibrancy and vitality of UNESCO. She

surely would be remembered for her outstanding achievements and contributions for global peace, understanding and development.

I also extend my best wishes to the incoming Director General Ms. Audrey Azoulay. I assure and pledge my country's full support to her for strengthening and betterment of UNESCO which is a continuous process.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

After the horrors of World War-2, UNESCO's emergence as a harbinger of peace, hope and optimism was a renewed trust in humanity. It is an ideal platform for intellectual discourse which celebrates and respects diversity in cultures and thoughts.

In today's world of conflict, political disputes, cultural differences, widespread poverty and inequalities, UNESCO and its works remain relevant and inspiring. It remains alive through national commissions, field offices, UNESCO associations, world heritage sites,

innumerable UNESCO awards and the network of category-1 & 2 centers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Education and social good cannot prosper or even continue in an environment of terror and extremism. Unfortunately, various regions of Pakistan have suffered deeply for decades due to this extremism and terrorism. In some parts of the country, schools were being targeted, blown up and girls were being stopped from going to school.

The government has made a firm resolve to stop being a hostage to such elements with the resilience and sacrifices of our people and soldiers. We have successfully rooted out this menace from our country. Now I can share with confidence that the terrorist networks in Pakistan have been dismantled, schools in the affected areas are being rebuilt and Pakistan is showing a tremendous improvement.

I also urge all states that we must stand up, raise our voices and take action against oppression, ethnic cleansing, trans border terrorism, brutality and killings especially when it is state sponsored, so that we can create a conducive environment for socio-economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to share with you that Pakistan is showing a significant progress in economy and education as well. I profoundly believe that democracy is the best accountability.

The funding towards education has almost doubled and has also increased in terms of percentage of GDP. Enrolment, net enrolment rate (primary) and transition rates have phenomenally gone up and number of out of school children has been reduced by millions at an unprecedented rate. The quality of education, teacher recruitment & training, and provision of missing

facilities remains a priority. Gender disparity is reducing as well.

I must thank and congratulate UNESCO and its Pakistan office for successfully implementing Malala Fund for girls education which Pakistan helped create by donating US\$ 10 million to UNESCO. I urge all the member states to contribute generously towards this cause in UNESCO Malala Fund for girls' education globally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan is also taking SDG's very seriously and have started working towards achieving these goals with a firm resolve and commitment. We are using non-formal education models and are going to establish numerous new adult literacy centres. We have also started an institute for non-formal education and adult literacy which we later intend to get recognized as UNESCO category-2 center, so that other regional countries could also benefit from it.

We have successfully revived our national assessment system and are all set to launch TIMMS assessment in 2019. We have recently revised our curriculum which now focuses more on character building, values, global competencies, soft skills and global citizenship.

In the end, I would like to say that Pakistan's commitment to UNESCO's mission of creating a just, peaceful and inclusive world remains unwavering. Pakistan would continue to work hand in hand with the global community to make Pakistan and the world a better and safer place for our future generations.

Thank you