



INDIA

भारत

**STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO UNESCO
AT THE UNESCO COMMONWEALTH GROUP MEETING**

PARIS

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PR's Speech at the UNESCO Commonwealth Group lunch (27 June 14)

The Distinguished Ambassador of the UK delegation to UNESCO,

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with much honour and humility that I officially and formally accept the chairmanship of the UNESCO Commonwealth Group on behalf of the Government of India. I feel honoured to undertake the role. There is also a certain sense of homecoming for me, having served as the Deputy Head of Office of the Commonwealth Secretary General in London. This sense derives itself from a kinship forged by the history that we share despite the diversity of our countries.

First of all, I would like to thank the outgoing Chair for his inspiring helmsmanship of this group. The very fact that I look forward to this innings (to use a cricket metaphor that would be lost on most at UNESCO, except for this group) is because of the sterling work that the UK has done as Chair and I look forward to its sagacity and counsel in the future.

I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my gratitude to the esteemed members of this group for the confidence that they have bestowed upon me and my government by extending me the opportunity to chair this group. We

are delighted to accept this honour and will be counting on your dedicated collaboration to ensure that we meet your expectations from this group.

As chair, I shall endeavour to enhance discussions and advocacy on issues of common interest to members at UNESCO, while retaining the informality and frankness that have been the hallmark of discussions within our group. With the cooperation of the members and the UNESCO Secretariat, I shall strive to bring to fruition the excellent work initiated by my predecessors and enhance the role and visibility of this group in UNESCO .

We envisage finalizing an **Action Plan** whose main focus could center around:

- **Seeking to consolidate** the past achievements of this group with a view to cementing its unique identity and attributes;
- **Following up,** in a bid to continue and execute to completion the wonderful job started and pursued by the chairs before us;
- **Identifying** a first menu of actions that seem of particular importance for the immediate future.

We are, of course, mindful of the fact that these actions should not impose any additional financial burden on the members, which runs the risk of stymieing our fledgling efforts. **I would thus like to make it clear that what I offer today are**

mere proposals intended to spark a discussion but the final decision will be based on what is acceptable to everyone. I share some of these ideas with you in the hope that it will bring forth some ideas of your own that we can then fine-tune over subsequent discussions.

Our immediate priority is to work closely with the UK delegation to identify the ongoing processes and activities to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

Of course, one of the major items on our agenda has to be the Post-2015 Development Agenda and how UNESCO can contribute to the formulation of an agenda that helps attain the twin objectives of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

We should try and revive the working luncheon with the Director-General, preferably before the next Executive Board.

We could attempt to liaise with the Secretariat as a group, scheduling briefings and meetings with the Secretariat on specific issues.

We could also try working more closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat in London by inviting the Commonwealth Secretary-General to address the member states at the Executive Board or similar gatherings. And, if the members so desire, we could also try and schedule a visit by the members to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.