

National Statement of Bangladesh

Statement by Mr. Md. Sohorab Hossain

Representative of Bangladesh to the UNESCO Executive Board & Secretary,
Secondary and Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education at the Plenary
Debate of the 204th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board, Paris, 10 April
2018.

Mr. Chairperson,
President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General,
Distinguished Representatives and Delegates,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

I am honoured to address this august assembly for the first time as the Representative of Bangladesh. I would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to all Members States for your support to Bangladesh to serve on UNSECO's Executive Board.

2. I congratulate Ambassador Lee on his election as the Chairperson of the Executive Board. I assure of our full support to you in steering this important session to a successful conclusion.

3. I would also like to thank UNESCO for the inscription of the Historic 7th March Speech of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in the Memory of the World Register last year.

4. Bangladesh has been a strong advocate of promoting UNESCO's ideals and objectives. Our commitment to UNESCO's mandate and mission remain unwavering.

5. At a time when UNESCO is faced with multifarious challenges, the Director General's policy statement yesterday on Strategic Transformation have given us a renewed sense of optimism and enthusiasm about the future of our Organization. We are heartened by her commitment to bring in new dynamism and greater efficiency in the work of the organization with a robust engagement of the Member States. We would like to see UNESCO transformed into a smarter, effective and more visible entity promoting peace and harmony across the world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. We commend the Secretariat for successfully implementing major programs despite the financial difficulties. While we hope the situation improves through our collectively efforts, we would urge for greater prudence in prioritisation of programmes and projects within the available resources. Our aspiration remains to see a UNESCO more robust and visible at the country level undertaking and implementing programs and projects that have greater impact on the ground.

7. **Agenda 2030** has clearly set the tone and tenor of our developmental efforts. We have mainstreamed most SDGs into the national development plans. A platform under the direct supervision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been set up. This will closely coordinate and monitor the progress to enable predictive analysis for achieving the goals within the set time-frame.

8. Education plays a vital role in our socio-economic development. We have attained gender parity in primary and secondary education. Our target now is to ensure gender parity in higher education through attainment of SDG-4. More than 20 per cent of our 160 million people are between the age of 15 and 24. Our focus thus is on skill development of the youth. At the same time, reducing gender gap in all walks of life also remains high on our priority.

9. The role of science, technology and innovations in transforming the lives of millions is undeniable. UNESCO's support to member states these areas would enhance our capacities for innovation and creativity to ensure sustainable development.

Mr. Chair,

10. Bangladesh is now hosting more than one million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals (Rohingyas). Apart from providing shelter and security, health services and other necessary physical support to them, 1102 learning centres has been set up to provide informal education to about 114, 000 Rohingya children. We hope the displaced Myanmar nationals can return to their home country in safety, security and dignity soon.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. We are passing through a challenging time. Challenges of climate change, natural and man-made disasters threaten to take away our hard-earned development gains. Bangladesh remains on the frontline of the threat from climate change. Terrorism and violent extremism poses formidable threat to global peace, stability and development. We need to act collectively to combat these challenges. UNESCO should sharpen its focus using education as tool to prevent radicalization. At the same time, we believe, nurturing and celebrating cultural diversity will contribute to building tolerance and understanding among peoples and societies. UNESCO should continue to promote intercultural dialogue.

12. I will conclude by extending my best wishes on Bangla New Year. 14th of April marks the beginning of a New Year. Thanks to all of you - Mongol Shovajatra, a colorful procession held to welcome the new year, is now in the list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

13. Shuvo Nabo Borsho : Happy Bangla New Year.

14. Thank you.