

204th Session of Executive Board

OF

**UNESCO HEADQUARTERS
PARIS**

**PAKISTAN
NATIONAL STATEMENT**

BY

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Executive Board**

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**Mr. Chairman,
President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It is indeed a pleasure for me to represent Pakistan at the 204th Session of the Executive Board.

Let me first congratulate Ambassador Lee Byong Hyun on his election as the Chairperson of the Executive Board. He has our full support in carrying out his important assignment.

We also welcome Director General Madam Audrey Azoulay and have listened very carefully to her inaugural address to the Executive Board yesterday.

We would also like to take this opportunity to align ourselves fully with the joint ASPAC Statement delivered by the Honorable Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Japan, His Excellence Mr Takio Yamada.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that our organization is going through a difficult time and its “credibility has been weakened” as mentioned by the Director General yesterday. Besides its financial woes, this house of intellectual debate is becoming more and more politicized amidst threats to the cohesion and utility of the multilateral system.

UNESCO has been an integral part of the UN system, which was so painstakingly put in place after the horrors of World War-II. It has made valuable contributions to dialogue and cultural diversity. It has

ameliorated lives of millions through education and scientific cooperation.

It is, therefore, our shared responsibility to strengthen it in this difficult time rather than abandon UNESCO ship in turbulent waters. We are confident that the collective will of member states would not let the UNESCO dream fade away and together we would weather any storm and overcome all challenges, as failure is not an option.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this backdrop, Director General's reform proposal for strategic transformation of UNESCO is timely and an important exercise. We appreciate her leadership and her efforts for strengthening UNESCO by bringing more efficiency and vitality to the work of UNESCO. On our part, we believe that three elements are important for such an exercise.

- i. Conformity with the core mandate of UNESCO.
- ii. Inclusiveness and transparency.
- iii. Respect for intergovernmental character of UNESCO.

Pakistan's commitment to the mandate and the principles espoused by UNESCO remains unshakable. This forum of global peace and constructive debate has achieved many milestones in the fields of education, culture, science and communication and we are sure that we could reach new frontiers in future as well. In this respect, Director General's proposal of looking into the ethics of Artificial Intelligence is interesting and we will look forward to more details on this subject.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan Government duly recognizes the importance of societal development and empowerment of people. It has embarked on a broad based programme for social sector development.

Education and especially girls education remains an area of priority for us in Pakistan. We, therefore, fully support UNESCO's commendable efforts in the field of education. The 10 million dollar Malala Fund is our humble voluntary contribution to UNESCO to supplement its efforts for promoting girl child education globally.

We would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for their generous contribution of US\$3.4 million to Malala Fund, the agreement for which was signed last month. We also thank the governments of Italy and Qatar for their substantial contributions to this Fund.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Pakistan is a land of ancient civilizations, rich history and a place where great religions of the world have flourished and co-existed together. As an elected member from the city of Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of the founder of the Sikh faith, I strongly believe in the values of interfaith dialogue and respect for cultural diversity, which are essential for peaceful coexistence. I thank UNESCO for its support in preserving Pakistan's historical cultural heritage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the 21st century, the world still faces the challenges of poverty, inequality and extremism. There are still millions without access to education, millions die of hunger and disease and millions are displaced

due to conflicts. Many of these victims are children, women and elderly. To play our due role in helping these people, UNESCO requires a strong political commitment and financial support from the member states.

For its part, Pakistan would fulfill its obligations and would continue to work together with the global community in striving for an equitable, just, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world. Let us all resolve to make the world a better place for our future generations.

Thank you.
