

**Saint Lucia
Intervention
Plenary Debate on Items 204 EX 4, 5 & 16 – 10th April 2018**

**Distinguished President (Chairperson) of the Executive Board
Madame Director-General of UNESCO
Distinguished President of the General Conference
Colleague Members of the Executive Board**

Saint Lucia commends the Director-General on her vision for the strategic transformation of UNESCO and gives the assurance that it will lend its full support to this process of organizational reform.

Our colleagues, in their various interventions over the last two days, have eloquently and comprehensively addressed many issues arising from the presentation by the Director-General and there is therefore no need to revisit subjects that have already been dealt with in some detail. We will therefore comment on only two issues.

In this milieu of strategic transformation and organizational reform, Saint Lucia is of the view that there is need for the re-evaluation of some of the assumptions that have formed the basis upon which UNESCO's programmes have been formulated so as to determine whether these assumptions remain valid as the organization faces the challenges of a new era under the guidance of its newly-appointed Director-General.

On the subject of gender equality, Saint Lucia recognizes the great strides that have been made by UNESCO in addressing this issue within the organization and notes with approval the information provided by the Director-General that women now constitute more than 50% of UNESCO's personnel. Indeed, Saint Lucia too is proud of our ranking among the top three countries in the world with the highest percentage of women in managerial positions: according to the latest figures available, Jamaica is ranked first with 59.3%; Colombia is ranked second with 53.1%; and Saint Lucia third with 52.3%.

While the focus on gender equality and gender parity must continue, and the gains that have been made must be consolidated, the defining challenge of these times for Caribbean countries is the worsening phenomenon of the marginalization and alienation of young men.

This phenomenon has the capacity to undermine the very sustainability of Caribbean societies as it is some of these thousands of unemployed young men who resort to crime and gang violence and whose actions undermine economic development models that depend almost entirely on attracting tourists to our shores. High crime rates and tourism do not go well together.

The questions that must be asked therefore, are: whether our education systems have failed us in not equipping our men with the skills required for them to survive within the formal economic system? whether there is a need for a re-booting of our education systems not only to avoid the mistakes of the past but also to incorporate remedial education strategies that specifically target these unemployed, and often angry young men? and whether there is now a need to identify young men in Caribbean societies as a gender group on which special focus should be placed?

While our focus is on Caribbean societies, I am sure that many member states outside of the Caribbean can identify with these issues.

We wish to point out also that violent radicalization is not only an online phenomenon but can also manifest itself in the form of crime, gang violence and social anarchism born of joblessness, hopelessness and exclusion from the consumer culture that more privileged groups within our countries take for granted.

Helping countries to confront issues such as these is a role for which UNESCO is ideally suited and we commend for the consideration of the Director-General and her team the need to design relevant gender-focussed educational strategies that address situations as they exist within our countries.

Another issue of specific interest to the Caribbean to which reference has been made during this debate, is that of representation of nationals of member countries among the ranks of UNESCO personnel. It would be instructive if the Director-General conducts an analysis of the number of Caribbean nationals employed by UNESCO to determine whether this Region is equitably represented within the organization's ranks, and whether with reference to the Caribbean, the test of geographical diversity has been met.

In conclusion, Saint Lucia wishes to affirm that it too believes that UNESCO should focus on the fulfilment of its core mission, leveraging its comparative advantage and utilizing its core competencies to best effect. We believe that the vision for the strategic transformation of UNESCO elaborated by the Director-General in her presentation lays the foundation for the restoration of the global credibility of the organization, a necessary pre-condition for the attraction of the human and financial resources required to allow it to fulfil its mandate.

With this renewal of UNESCO, Saint Lucia urges member states to see this as a new beginning, an opportunity to put division aside, to avoid the politicization of the organization and to rally behind the Director-General and her newly-constituted team to chart a future for UNESCO that is true to its mandate to promote peace among mankind and to bring tangible benefits to the populations of our countries.

Thank You