



**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA  
TO THE  
204<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD  
ROOM X: FONTENOY BUILDING  
09 APRIL 2018**

Madame President of the General Conference

Madame Director-General

Chairperson of the Executive Board

Distinguished Delegates,

Chairperson,

My Delegation welcomes the Director-General to her full session of the Board, and assures her of our Delegation's constructive engagement in the work of UNESCO.

At the onset, our delegation would like to recognize with appreciation the support it received from the General Conference in adopting the resolution to associate UNESCO with the Centenary Celebration of our icon and leader of our nation, Nelson Mandela. One of the greatest virtues of Mandela was to fight for injustice and oppression whenever it exists. The best tribute to this icon would be to see the peoples of Palestine who are

suffering and are oppressed freed and enjoy the freedom that we all yearn for.

Chairperson, South Africa has prioritised education as an apex priority in its development plan in order to contribute to a skilled and capable workforce to support inclusive growth, among others. It is therefore a matter of grave concern to our delegation that a key UNESCO Institution, the UIS continues to face serious financial challenges which have had an adverse impact on its human resources, in particular, retention of skilled personnel. Our delegation looks forward to the implementation of measures aimed at remedying the situation we so that it continues to contribute to SDG4 through its monitoring role and capacity-building.

Chairperson,

South Africa has noted the proposal of the Director-General for the strategic transformation of UNESCO, which was issued rather belatedly. Our delegation would like to encourage the Director-General to undertake inclusive and transparent consultations on her proposal. Additionally, we look forward to the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the General Conference, of the Working Group on Governance in the context of UNESCO reforms.

Consultation and dialogue are at the core of the tenets that underpin South Africa's democracy. In this regard, South Africa has one of the most vibrant civil societies, which is very rich in its diversity. Furthermore, South Africa's leadership at Government level has its foundation in civil society activism. It is for this reason that South Africa supports the participation of civil society in UNESCO, through the mechanisms currently in place for its consultation. On the quest to involve civil society in the decision-making processes of UNESCO, our delegation is apprehensive for the simple reason that UNESCO is an intergovernmental body. We would expect therefore, that Member States, who pay annual dues but are observers on the Executive Board, would be considered first for enhanced participation prior to civil society. It therefore, does not seem plausible to our delegation that civil society should be afforded an opportunity to contribute towards the decision-making processes of UNESCO above Member States who in our view, are more qualified to do so. More

importantly, we are apprehensive of implementation of measures that would compromise the independence and integrity of civil society actors, for they cannot be players and referees at the same time. We value and attach great importance to the contribution of civil society to UNESCO. We nonetheless, remain ready to engage on progressive proposals during consultations on this matter.

Chairperson,

The South African delegation has read with interest, the outcome of the implementation of the Balanced Score Card in assessing the field network. The results, as they pertain to the utility of the tool itself will contribute to the fine-tuning of the assessment tool. On the performance of the field offices in our region, the results are concerning. We would appreciate more information on the measures that the Director-General would be implementing to mitigate the situation, and how such measures, if any, would impact on the process currently underway of negotiating new host country agreements.

On the audit report by the External Auditor, we have noted the recommendations therein, and are of the view that they merit further consultations on the most cost-efficient and effective structure, bearing in mind the need to align the field offices with the Regional Economic Communities, to ensure that they function in concert with, and contribute towards the achievement of sustainable economic development. It may be recalled in the above context, that Africa has always called for well-resourced field offices whose distribution should mirror the African Union configuration so that they should contribute towards the deepening of regional integration. It is for that reason that in 2013 when the former Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova requested South Africa to host a regional office for Southern Africa, that same principle guided South Africa's response thereto.

Needless to say, our delegation reiterates its support and continuing close collaboration with UNESCO as evidenced by the hosting of the 6<sup>th</sup> African Regional Committee Meeting in Port Elizabeth on 12 – 14 July 2017 where National Committee Members and Focal Point from 25 countries participated to address Africa water challenges on our shores, an

important issue in view of the water scarcity challenges that we continue to face.

Furthermore, Professor Heather ZAR who has established a cutting-edge research programme on pneumonia, TB and asthma thereby contributing to saving lives of many children worldwide, and our Continent in particular was awarded the L'Oréal/UNESCO For Women in Science Awards recently, while Ms Danielle Twilly, whose work focuses on the treatment of melanoma, was recognized through its International Rising Talent Fellowship, in addition to hosting one of the best performing Category 2 Centres, the African World Heritage Fund. The AWHF hosted an Annual Coordination Meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage-Related Category 2 Institutions and Centres on 11 – 14 February 2018 in Robben Island to critically reflect on the work of UNESCO World Heritage Category 2 Centres, and to address aspects of nature conservation and protection of cultural properties. As may be recalled, such reflections are key in view of the IOS Audit on Category 2 Institutions and Centres, which found that most of them are not operational. South Africa appreciated the contribution of UNESCO in that effort.

South Africa also hosted a High Level Capacity Building Workshop on strengthening the role of Parliament in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy and Governance for Sustainable Development, a Joint Partnership Initiative between UNESCO, SADC and the Department of Science and Technology in our country.

Chairperson, our delegation would like to thank the Director-General for the update on the financial situation of the Organization, which operated under serious financial constraints during 2017. We are encouraged by the fact that to date, 45% of the membership of UNESCO has already settled their dues for 2018.

We look forward to the discussions on how best to utilize the carry-forward funds from the 38 C/5, where they would have major impact, thereby also raising the profile of UNESCO. In this regard, we would be remiss if we did not encourage UNESCO to invest in its priority projects and programmes, as well as its most important resource, its human resources,

including through an effective and responsive performance management system.

Finally, my delegation would like to align itself with the statement to be delivered by Nigeria on behalf of Africa Group V (a).

I thank you.