



204th Session of the Executive Board
4th – 17th April 2018

AFRICA GROUP V (A) STATEMENT

By

**H.E., MRS MARIAM Y. KATAGUM, AMBASSADOR,
PERMANENT DELEGATE OF NIGERIA TO UNESCO,
VICE-CHAIR GROUP V (A)**

Madam President of the General Conference,
Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

On behalf of Group V (a), we welcome you, Madam Director-General, to UNESCO and to the Executive Board.

2. Let me assure you of our full support and cooperation for the success of your work as the head of the Secretariat of UNESCO.

Madam Director General,

3. We thank you for the introduction to our Plenary Debate. We have important programmes to execute this Biennium, which, as usual for this period in the life of the Organization, is fraught with several challenges.

4. Clarity and timeliness of action are very much of the essence for the success of our work. Our Group therefore finds it worrisome that very important documents for the Session were distributed late.

5. Nevertheless, Group V (a) would like to appreciate the quality of the Analytical Programme Implementation Report and congratulate the Secretariat for fully achieving 40 out of the 51 expected results in spite of the challenges encountered and the financial constraints. We hope that these achievements will ensure greater visibility of UNESCO actions and impact for its beneficiaries.

Madam Director-General,

6. We are delighted to learn of your strong commitment to deepen the reform measures, which began almost two decades ago, especially your determination to adopt, "a more collective, systematic, innovative and reformative approach". In our view, the proposed reform initiative should build on previous efforts and be aligned with the recommendations of the Working Group on Governance. We hope that the process of this new reflection will be owned by Member States and the Secretariat working together, and will include a re-conceptualization of UNESCO's Priority Africa, as well as a re-examination of the role of the Organization in building peace in the world.

7. The UIS is certainly one of our flagship institutes that is providing leadership in the development of statistics and in capacity building in Member States. Therefore, we view with great concern the current financial situation of the UIS and express our support for the Director-General's actions to revitalize the Institute, which

should include measures to build confidence in the reliability of UIS statistics and the strengthening of collaboration with specialized institutions at the regional level.

8. Another Institute we have to watch closely, dear Colleagues, is the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) which also appears to be leaning towards financial difficulties.

9. In the report on the sustainability of the field network, we note the difficulties in making comparable analyses of the performance of different offices in different regions of the world. We wonder if more consultations with Member States in the various regions could not contribute to unraveling this difficulty.

10. This brings us to the audit report on UNESCO's Field Network for which we thank the External Auditor. The report is very comprehensive and deserves careful study and consideration of its proposals and recommendations.

11. On Geographical Distribution, Madam Director-General, as you are aware, Group V (A) has the highest number of non and underrepresented countries within UNESCO (22 out of 47 Member States). We urge you to take concrete measures to address this glaring imbalance.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Given the high priority accorded to the attainment of SDG4, the Africa Group welcomes the regional consultations that have been organized by UNESCO notably, the organization of the

upcoming Pan-African High-Level Conference on Education (PACE 2018) in April 2018 by UNESCO and the Government of Kenya, in collaboration with the Africa Union (AU). We look forward to the outcomes of the Conference.

13. Still on the SDGs, we believe that to achieve SDG4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), UNESCO must ensure quality physical education and the learning of values that are essential to personal and collective development through sport. That is why we fully support the Draft Decision on EX/4 Part I, "Promotion of Quality Physical Education", submitted by Madagascar and other countries, which is a follow-up to the Kazan Action Plan and we call upon other Member States to support the said Decision.

14. In science, we congratulate UNESCO and the Government of Equatorial Guinea for the 4th Award Ceremony of the UNESCO–EQUATORIAL GUINEA International Prize for Research in the Life Sciences, which took place in Malabo, on 30th March 2018. Africa appreciates the increasing visibility of the Prize and the worldwide spread of the Laureates.

15. Finally Mr. Chair, the Africa Group V (a) pays tribute to the out-going Deputy Director-General, Mr. Getachew Engida. With over 14 years of dedicated work in our organization, DDG Engida has inevitably become so much part of our working lives in UNESCO.

16. Mr. Engida joined UNESCO as Deputy Assistant Director-General for Administration and Comptroller in June 2004 and was later appointed Deputy Director-General in July 2010.

17. Mr. Engida, we will miss your wise counsel, sincere and deep-felt attachment to UNESCO and to its universal values and objectives. We wish you and your family the very best for the future.

18. Excellencies, dear Colleagues, I thank you very much for your attention as I now turn to Nigeria's National Statement.