

Statement by H.E. Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid MP, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the General Policy Debate of the 39th Session of UNESCO General Conference, Paris, 04 November 2017.

Madam President
Madam Director General,
Mr President of the Executive Board
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to address the General Conference for the fourth consecutive time.

At the outset, I congratulate Her Excellency Ambassador Johour Alaoui on her election as the President of the 39th General Conference and assure you of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your duties.

I would like to convey our deep appreciation and thanks to you, Madam Director-General for your astute leadership and hard work that has taken UNESCO to a greater height. I wish you the best in your future endeavour.

I also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Madam Audrey Azoulay, the nominated Director General of our Organisation. We look forward to working closely with her for our mutual interest. Bangladesh's support for UNESCO's goals and ideals would be as strong as before with the new set of leadership of UNESCO.

Madam President

Since its inception UNESCO has been striving for the development of the entire humanity by contributing to its fields of competences. Today, UNESCO represents the entire world. It is, perhaps, the most important UN Agency that has the mandate to promote education, science, culture and communication throughout the world.

Madam President,

Bangladesh is strongly committed to regional and global peace and has always been supportive of all agenda for establishing of world peace. We are one of the largest troops contributing countries in the UN Peacekeeping Mission. For Bangladesh, humanitarian considerations are paramount. As a part of the commitment to peace and humanity, Bangladesh is currently sheltering about

one million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals including hundreds of thousands of women and children. Despite severe space and resource constraint, we are providing them with food, shelter, health and other basic humanitarian services. Our efforts have been complemented by supports and sympathies from the international community. The solution to this mammoth humanitarian crisis rests with the Government of Myanmar. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has laid down a 5-point plan at the 72nd session of the UN General for resolving the crisis. It is imperative that Myanmar Government takes back each of their nationals from Bangladesh ensuring their safety, security and dignity in the shortest possible time.

Madam President,

Since its membership to UNESCO in 1972, Bangladesh has closely collaborated with UNESCO. We have ratified almost all the important Conventions of UNESCO. We proudly count the inscription of our three Sites in the world Heritage list including the Sunderbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world. We have three items on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The historic speech of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered on 7th of March 1971, which inspired and galvanized the entire nation to war of liberation has now been enlisted in the Memory of the World International Register. For this we thank UNESCO and especially to Madame Bokova for her continuous support.

Madam President,

In 2001, we established International Mother Language Institute to foster multilingual education. Since 2015, this Institute has been working as UNESCO Category-II Institute with a broad-based mandate to preserve and protect all the languages of the world.

Madam President,

In early February of this year, Bangladesh successfully hosted the Ministerial meeting of E-9 countries in Dhaka. In the *Dhaka Declaration*, we, the E 9 countries, namely Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Bangladesh, reaffirmed our endorsement of the vision, principles, and targets laid out under SDG4 within ‘The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ and the ‘Education 2030 Framework for Action’. As the current Chair of the E-9 Forum, I am happy to let you know that we have decided to put in place a system of sharing experience and learning from each other’s success. These nine countries are home to more than half of the total population of the

world and, no doubt, small achievements of these countries will make big changes in global statistics.

Madam President,

With the continuous support of UNESCO and international communities, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in the fields of girl's education, gender parity, women empowerment, global citizenship education, reducing child mortality, bolstering resilient societies to climate change impact.

To continue many of the current programmes and projects which are aligned with UNESCO's priorities area, we need to engage more strongly with UNESCO and international communities. That is why, Bangladesh has floated its candidature for the membership of the Executive Board for the term of [2017-2021](#). With your valuable support, we believe that we will be able to contribute to the Executive Board in a constructive manner.

Madam President:

Ms. Irina Bokova compared UNESCO's journey with the journey of Greek mythical Hero Odysseus. We fully endorse that view and with Penelope's patience we will wait to see that UNESCO overcomes all the difficulties, and reach its goal braving all hurdles and icebergs.

Madam President:

For the future of our children we must ensure that the soft power wins and prevails.

Thank you for your kind attention.