

**Statement by**

**Hon (Mrs ) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun**

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**Republic of Mauritius**

**General Policy Debate of the 39<sup>th</sup> General Conference of  
UNESCO**

*Madam The President of the General Conference*

*The President of the Executive Board*

*Madam Director General of UNESCO*

*Excellencies,*

Greetings from the People and Government of the  
Republic of Mauritius.

On behalf of my Delegation and in my own name, allow me to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Madam President, on your accession to the presidency of the 39th General Conference. I would <sup>also</sup> like to thank your predecessor for his contributions and for having skillfully guided discussions during his tenure of office.

Madam President, Excellencies,

We tend to believe that we are living in a challenging time in the history of humanity, in fact challenges have dotted the landscape at all times in history. But, today, the magnitude of problems is enormous:

- Economic and social vulnerability is, sadly, still a reality in many parts of the world.
- There is no letup in environmental concerns while conflict and insecurity have exacerbated the issue of a

massive human mobility and the resulting refugee crisis

- And, this is all happening despite the advances in scientific and technological domains, and the expansion of knowledge

The universal cry today is for more equal, more inclusive and more just societies.

But we are not there yet.

And we must strive to get there.

**Madam President,**

UNESCO today facilitates the coordination, support and implementation of SDG 4 Education 2030 - and rightly so.

The centrality of Education in the attainment of the SDGs and their targets is unquestioned today

As Minister of Education, I am glad to state that Mauritius has already come up with a bold and innovative reform agenda in this sector, commensurate with the pledge and commitment to bring about an inclusive and equitable quality education which promotes lifelong learning opportunities for ALL.

The Nine Year Continuous Basic Education reform enunciated in my address two years back before this very Assembly has been successfully implemented and is being pursued in a cohesive manner

A revisited Curriculum and novel pedagogies in digital classrooms are a reality, the impact of which will definitely be more strongly felt in a few years.

It's worth recalling that this reform package cuts across all the sub-sectors of Education and Training - right from the pre-primary through to TVET and Higher Education.

In Mauritius, Madam President, we are fortunate that, through sound policy decisions, the hurdle posed by lack of access to Education, is behind us.

What is of paramount importance, however, is to tackle what UNESCO itself has defined as the "Learning Crisis".

Schooling **must** mean learning and learning in turn must become a precursor to lifelong learning.

And that implies, among other things, investing in making teachers more pedagogically prepared and motivated; it also implies coming up with informed and evidence based

policies as well as sound investment in learning environments and resources.

Sustainable development has to become the centerpiece of all education policies.

At this juncture, Madam President, let me seize this opportunity to highlight that we are appreciative of UNESCO maintaining Africa as a Global Priority, There is indeed a dire need to fortify the Continent's drive towards educational emancipation.

The fact remains that Africa calls for a sustained and increased effort on the part of UNESCO in the field of Education, and also Science and technology Thus, we are all strongly validating the significance of STEM to drive innovation in Africa.

**Madam President,**

Culture is the other important yardstick by which we gauge the impact of UNESCO's interventions.

The traditional Mauritian Sega Tipik and the Bhojpuri folk songs Geet-Gawai, are now part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

We are also proud that a visually-impaired Mauritian student and artist, Jane Constance, has recently been designated UNESCO Artist for Peace.

**Madam President,**

My Delegation commends the efforts of UNESCO towards the Small Islands Development<sup>ing</sup> States.

It is unfortunate that SIDS continue to bear the negative impact of climate change that, de facto, affects, adversely and directly, peace and national security. No country is

immune to the risks of climate change and environmental degradation.

International cooperation is certainly the key to responding to this threat.

Mauritius makes a plea for an even greater contribution by UNESCO to SIDS in mitigating the devastating impact of climate change.

It is important, for the sake of equity that the financial burden and economic costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation be borne by countries having been most responsible for this state of affairs. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should also apply

For a SIDS like Mauritius, this principle is a cardinal one.



**Madam President**

Indeed, the Mauritian **Vision 2030** blue print recognizes the importance of inclusive educational development, the protection of cultural heritage, the promotion of ICTS and the need for sustainable economic development.

*Permettez-moi Madame La Présidente d'exprimer tout notre appréciation pour le progrès accompli par notre Organisation pendant les deux mandats de son Excellence Mme Irina Bokova en tant que Directrice Générale de L'UNESCO.*

*Je salue ses initiatives, en particulier sa bataille concernant la protection/restauration des sites de patrimoines culturels et son engagement menant vers l'égalité des genres et la promotion des sciences et des mathématiques.*

I would like here also to congratulate Mrs Audrey AZOULAY for her nomination as Director General of

UNESCO and I trust that she will further consolidate our organisations, global reach and impact.

In conclusion, let us applaud UNESCO for its contribution to global peace and security through the implementation of its core programmes. Mauritius will spare no effort in strengthening its strong bond and identifying with UNESCO's mandate.

Nous sommes donc convaincus que l'UNESCO saura épauler et soutenir les efforts des pays membres et ainsi contribuer à l'aboutissement des objectifs de développement durables.

Je vous remercie, Madame La Présidente