

# 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of UNESCO

## Statement of H.E. Dr. Tilaye Gete

4 November 2017

Paris, France

Madam President of the General Conference,

Madam Director General,

Excellencies Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Ethiopia and on my own, let me first congratulate you Madam President Zohour Alaoui, upon your election as the first woman Chairperson of the General Conference.

Let me also congratulate Director-General Irina Bokova for her able leadership during the past eight years. Despite the very challenging context of your tenure, you have managed to successfully advance the objectives of the organization. More importantly UNESCO's success to have a stand-alone goal on SDG 4 on Education, will remain the legacy of your leadership, among others.

I would also like to congratulate Audrey Azoulay for her nomination by the Executive Board as the next DG of UNESCO.

Ethiopia will give its utmost support to the realization of the coming biennium targets. In this regard, I would like to call upon all member states to support Ethiopia's candidatures for a seat in the Executive Board, MOST and IHP.

Madam President,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

We are meeting here two years after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The adoption by itself can be regarded as a breakthrough in its approach and a demonstration of commitment by all countries of the world, big or small, rich or poor. However, the world has faced both natural and manmade challenges of different kinds. In this regard, UNESCO's role is critical.

Ethiopia has shown its commitment to the SDGs by playing a key role in the preparation of Africa's Common Agenda, hosting the third Financing for Development Conference in July 2015 and the outcome was articulated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and by participating in the 2017 Voluntary National Review (VNR) on SDGs. The report was well received at the UN ECOSOC Political Forum and enabled us to draw lessons from others and to share our success stories.

As one of the fastest growing economies in the world, Ethiopia has included the most ambitious SDGs as an integral part of its national development policy and planning framework. Our prevailing goal is poverty reduction and its ultimate eradication through transforming our economy and building democracy.

To ensure inclusiveness, Ethiopia has taken targeted policy interventions with the objective of realizing the vision of leaving no one behind. Ethiopia has created the favorable conditions to successfully implement the SDGs. Nearly 72 per cent of our national spending is allocated to the successful implementation of the SDGs.

Ethiopia with an estimated population of 94.3 Million in 2017 is projected to reach 137 Million by 2030. With the under 25 years old representing more than 60%, youth empowerment, education and employment through skill development is at the forefront of our development agenda aimed at reaping the envisaged demographic dividend considered to be an imperative for Ethiopia's transformation. In this regard, Ethiopia fully supports the Pan African meeting on SDG4 scheduled to take place in Kenya in March 2018.

As there is no future without children, there is no development nor ambition if children are not educated. This is why Ethiopia is highly committed to promoting access to quality education at all levels and endeavors to address lifelong learning.

Enhancing human capital by investing on education is a key towards realizing our vision of becoming a lower middle income country by 2025.

Of the total budget allocated to priority pro-poor sectors education & training accounted for the lion's share which on average stood at 25% of public budget or about 4.5% of GDP. Ethiopia has fully integrated SDG4 into its Fifth Education Sector Development Plan (ESDPV).

Ethiopia is moving forward to build one economic and political society. This is clearly stipulated in the constitution. In addition to the existing legal institutions, civics and ethical education is our major instrument in view of advancing democracy, peace building as well as addressing the diverse interest of our nation and build global citizenship. Yet, fake news, hate speech and inappropriate use of social media is becoming a new challenge to our efforts. As we have seen, it has also become a challenge to other member states. Thus, UNESCO should continue its commitment to address this world wide problem.

Madam President,

Madam Director General,

Ethiopia is a rich cultural mosaic of various Nations and Nationalities and languages. In the past decades, 9 World Heritage sites, 3 intangible Heritages and 3 biosphere reserves were inscribed. Thus, UNESCO's work in both tangible and intangible heritage conservation and protection is very important to us.

I cannot pass without thanking the World Heritage Centre and its advisory bodies for all their support in the management of our heritage sites and for all the work undertaken to remove Simien Mountains National Park from the World's endangered Heritage Sites list. Moreover, Ethiopia was very pleased not only to host the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding

of the Intangible Cultural Heritage but also to inscribe the Gada System, which is a profoundly democratic socio-political system of the Oromo People.

As a fore-runner in Africa in upholding the climate agenda globally, Ethiopia has launched and is implementing the Climate Resilience Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy since 2011. In this regard, UNESCO can play a central role in climate change issues through its various works in the science sector and through its different organs. I call upon all member states to support the establishment of the Africa Bio Fund which will provide financial support to the realization of the Man and Biosphere strategy in Africa.

Madam President

Madam Director General,

Cognizant of the role of science and technology to achieve meaningful growth and development, apart from enrolling 70 percent of the higher education students on science and technology fields, Ethiopia has established two universities exclusively dedicated to science and technology education and research.

Finally, I would like to assure that Ethiopia will strongly committed to UNESCO`s constitution, work towards the attainment of its goals and will continue working together.

I Thank you