



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

39TH UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE

MALAWI POLICY STATEMENT

BY

HON. BRIGHT MSAKA , S.C.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

President of the General Conference

Director - General of UNESCO

Distinguished Delegates

Madam President,

Allow me, at the outset, to express my delegation's sincere congratulations on your accession to the Presidency of the 39th Session of the UNESCO General Conference. I have the confidence that our organisation will benefit greatly from your wisdom, experience and commitment. I wish you, Madam President, a very successful term of office.

I bring fraternal greetings from His Excellency Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi. He is confident that deliberations during the 39th Session will, like in the past, bring focus on UNESCO's importance and relevance, in, not only setting the international agenda, but also in ensuring that the agenda is tackled effectively and meaningfully for the satisfactory accomplishment of the endeavours of mankind.

Madam President, almost two years have passed since Heads of State, Government leaders, UN High level Representatives and civil society adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. It is pleasing to note that UNESCO has already taken concrete action in order to contribute to the SDGs through its work in Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Science, Culture, Communication and Information.

Since the establishment, in Zimbabwe, of the Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA), the country has been a witness to and beneficiary of initiatives and collaborations anchored in that office. Principal among such collaboration was the effort and dedication that went into preparatory work and development of the Skills and Technical Programme (STEP) funded by the European Union.

Madam President,

Malawi continues to place emphasis on the importance of education. This is evidenced by the fact that in its 2017/18 budget 18% has been allocated to education. This allocation is more than in any other single sector of Malawi's economy. Further, recently Malawi adopted a National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2017 - 2021) as a response to the challenges facing the education sector. The strategy is in line with the national education goals and objectives of promoting equity, access, quality, relevance, governance and management in education.

Furthermore, our national strategy responds to the UN conventions and agreements to which Malawi is party. More specifically, it is designed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, in line with the aims of SDG4.

Regarding UNESCO's Draft Programme and Budget for 2018/2019, my delegation appreciates and supports the reasons and wisdom in reducing the number of main lines of action from 16 to 11. At a time when UNESCO has been and will be operating under a severely constrained budget, such sharpening of the focus of programmes will enhance the impact of activities in various areas, as resources will not be unnecessarily scattered.

Madam President, my delegation is happy to note that UNESCO's programmes will continue to advance gender equality, and that the Organisation will continue providing support to member states in that regard. My delegation wishes to draw attention to the current review of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policies which many countries in Southern Africa, and indeed in the whole of Africa, have embarked upon. One of the major issues of attention is the mainstreaming of gender in the STI policies. UNESCO should continue such efforts in the 2018/2019 period of operation.

Regrettably, little progress was registered in the Social and Human Sciences programmes in Southern Africa. One reason for this was the absence of programme specialists in the regional office. It is therefore gratifying to note that the Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) now has a programme specialist for Social and Human Sciences. We are confident that the sector will now receive the attention it deserves. We have already started noticing results.

Culture, justifiably, must continue to receive priority attention. This is so because culture defines who a people are and has lasting effects on how people approach and address life's challenges. It is gratifying to note that the importance that UNESCO has always placed on culture in development is now widely acknowledged. Countries and Organisations that financially support UNESCO to strengthen the implementation of various cultural conventions should, therefore, be commended and encouraged to continue in this noble agenda.

Madam President, my delegation is of the view that the two mainlines of action under the Communication and Information Programme adequately take care of needs of inclusive societies where the importance of freedom of expression, and universal access to information, are central issues. In that connection, my delegation is honored to report that Malawi now has an Access to Information (ATI) Law which is a product of very wide consultations. Malawi is confident that this is a step in the right direction as it will drive

issues of freedom of expression and universal access to various kinds of information. We believe that both are of major importance to the functioning of modern democracy.

Madam President,

My delegation's contribution would be incomplete if I did not comment on the Participation Programme (PP) as it assures UNESCO's visibility in member states. My delegation would like to commend the Director General for the assurance to continue to resource this programme adequately.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous work the National Commissions are doing to make UNESCO visible in member states. In order for them to continue with this necessary work, there is need to sustain programmes of information sharing and capacity building started under the North - North, North-South and South - South cooperation. In that connection I would like to express my appreciation for efforts undertaken by the German National Commission for UNESCO in the past biennia to build the capacity of National Commissions in Southern Africa. I believe this strategy will serve the organization well, especially in the majority of member states where UNESCO is not physically present.

Madam President, my delegation would also like to register our appreciation to the South Korea National Commission for UNESCO for the Bridge Programme activities and the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding with some National Commissions of the Southern Africa region, including Malawi, in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Education 2030 Agenda. It is also important to mention the support that the Korean Government provided under the Better Education for Africa Rise (BEAR) in the TVET sector. Their support is most timely and I would like to encourage other National Commissions to emulate this generous example.

Madam President, equally commendable and most beneficial are our partnerships with Rei Foundation of New Zealand, the Flanders Government and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). I believe initiatives like these will afford National Commissions greater opportunities to work together in supporting UNESCO programmes.

Madam President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, my delegation wishes UNESCO unlimited success as it fulfills its noble mandate on the aspirations of humankind.

I thank you for your kind attention.