

**UNESCO 39TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

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***Remarks delivered by the Honourable Nicolette Henry,***

***Minister of Education***

Madame President, Chairperson of the Executive Board, Director General, Ministers, Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Delegates, Distinguished Invitees, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the government and people of Guyana I wish to congratulate Her Excellency Mrs Zohour Alaoui, on being unanimously elected President of the 39th session of the General Conference of UNESCO.

Commented [P1]: Works for me

Madame President, Guyana applauds UNESCO for its outstanding work in education, science and culture. Permit me to express intense gratitude for the umpteen years of beneficial collaboration between UNESCO and Guyana in various and varying instances and to salute you Director-General of UNESCO Madame Irina Bokova on your astute and stellar leadership in our global village. Guyana salutes you and thank you for the report on the activities UNESCO contained in document 39 C/5.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Madam Audrey Azoulay on her appointment as Director General. Guyana wishes her a successful tenure in her new position.

Commented [P2]: Thanks for this. I was using the information I came across on the website. So thanks for this

**Guyana** today is a country of bright prospect but also one of colossal complexity. In recognition of Guyana's prospect and the role of education, science and culture, His Excellency, President David Granger has commissioned the Department of Education, Innovation and Reform to spearhead the efforts in transforming the education system into one that will provide the people of Guyana with a first-class education. At the heart of this transformation is information, science and technology which pulls us together relentlessly, integrating our communities and connecting our country with the world.

Madame President, during the past two years Guyana has embarked on several initiatives for the development of its peoples. In education we are focusing on teacher training in Micro Science, Mathematics and Guyana as a Green State. More than fifty percent of our teachers have been trained in curricula areas with direct results in an ever-increasing student performance at our National Grade Six Examination and the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC).

Through Instructional Education, Distance Education in Guyana is no longer a 'well thought of concept' but a practical reality for topographically challenging locations in our hinterland. The issues related to gender parity is also a priority to Guyana. With this focus, in January 2016 an inter-ministerial task force was established to address 'trafficking in persons' and the efforts have yielded great success. Guyana's Youth Policy has been finalized. This policy sets out the framework and action plan and makes recommendations for transformative shifts in policies, practices and institutions to promote renewed self-esteem, pride and civic responsibility that comes with education. It is important that these policies are achieved to expand our youths' opportunities. It is also essential to our nation that we produce the next generation of leaders in the areas of agriculture, commercial, scientific and technology entrepreneurs who are innovative and creative and who will lead Guyana into a new era of prosperity, dignity and pride that will lay the foundation for successive generations to come.

Madame President, in Science UNESCO has provided both technical and financial support for myriad projects in Guyana with astounding results. From 2009 to the present, its partnership with Guyana's National Center for Educational Resource Development has resulted in-:

- 2009 - Development of a National Science and Technology Policy and a Master Plan
- 2010 - Inquiry-based Science Education Project for selected primary schools
- 2011 - National Orientation Training Workshop for UNESCO's Global Micro Science Experiments Programme
- 2011-2013 - Global Micro Science Experiments Pilot Project

- 2014-2015 - Subregional Micro Science Experiments Project - Guyana, Belize & St. Lucia
- 2014-2015 - Country Gap Analysis on Science and Technology Needs
- 2014-2015 - Capacity Building in Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development (CCESD)
- 2014-2015 - Inquiry-based Science and Mathematics for selected Primary Schools
- 2015-2017 - Expansion of UNESCO's Global Micro Science Experiments Project for Caribbean Territories (Guyana's Model).

Madame President, Guyana is a country rich with a diverse cultural heritage and culture plays a critical role in the shaping of Guyanese identity. Creative activity is coming out of our particular cultural context and this has tremendous potential of contributing more directly to national development via the potential diversification of the economy.

Guyana currently has a draft policy which focuses on three critical thematic areas: (1) Mainstreaming Culture in Development; (2) Cultural Heritage Preservation, Protection and Promotion; and (3) Creative Arts and Cultural Industries Development.

Cultural Heritage Preservation and Protection is currently the strongest area of operation for Guyana with long-established programmes particularly in the area of protection of built heritage. The successes here have been reflected most recently in the National Trust of Guyana winning an internationally recognized Green Apple Award in 2016 for its work on built heritage protection

Madame President, this draft policy is a derivative. Implementation strategies will be, based on five main pillars: (1) **National Development Centrality** which is inclusive of but not limited to the specific objectives of the thematic area. (2) **Mainstreaming Culture in Development** is meant to support national development in myriad tangible and intangible ways, including primarily those areas related to cultural and artistic expression, but inclusive of the spectrum of human rights and larger freedom.

Commented [PL3]: The idea here is not clear

Commented [P4R3]: What is being said here is that the draft is not original, it fits in with other generic cultural policies and the implementation strategies will be based on five pillars.

(3) **The International Integration Policy** comes at a time when the international community is mainstreaming culture in development as a core pillar of an overall sustainable development paradigm. This policy recognizes that not only is Guyana bound by several international obligations, but that we can provide a critical leadership role via our inherent cultural diversity as a microcosm of a globalized world, as well as our unique strategic position as a vibrant member of several regional blocs. (4) **General Resilience** - considers the critical importance of culture to development. The Cultural policy has to be sustainable in the long term, resilient to a variety of factors including the social, economic, technological, environmental and political factors. Consequently, the primary focus in this regard has to be on consultation, consensus, resource mobilization and innovation. (5) **General Integrity** - cultural policy initiatives cannot be sustainable if there is a lack of integrity in the processes and people involved in implementation, whether it speaks to competence or governance. In keeping with the UNESCO 2005 Convention, policy-based mechanisms for governance are a key component of this aspect of the framework policy. The policy implementation will therefore focus on transparency in the management of cultural initiatives and human resource development to ensure competence in the execution of programmes. **Cultural Equity** - if the primary quality of Guyana's cultural landscape is diverse, it is critical that there is equity in the preservation and expression of that diversity. All policy measures will be developed within the context of that diversity, whether we are considering the religious, the ethnic or the geographical issues. Inherent in the concept of cultural equity is the decentralization of support for culture and the empowerment of communities for cultural self-expression and engagement.

Madame President Guyana looks forward to working closely with UNESCO for its ongoing support to our programme initiatives thus enabling our country to achieve the government's vision as well as the achievement of the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for the opportunity to address this 39th session of the General Conference of UNESCO.