



**REMARKS
BY
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MINISTER OF EDUCATION

AT THE

**39th UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

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Good afternoon,

I bring greetings and salutations on behalf of both Her Excellency Dame Marguerite Pindling, Governor General; and, Dr. the Honourable Hubert A. Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

I am privileged on their behalf and behalf of our people, to offer congratulations to Her Excellency Mrs. Zohour Alaoui on her election as President of this most prestigious organization; and, to wish Mr. Stanley Mutumba Simataa, outgoing President, every success in his new endeavors. Additionally, my government wishes to express gratitude to Mrs. Irena Bokova, Director General, who will shortly be demitting office; and who after 8 years of tireless efforts and against all odds have managed to not only keep UNESCO relevant during these turmoil times, but have continued to successfully advance the 2030 agenda for Sustain Development Goals. Madam Bokova, The Bahamas wishes you all the best in your future endeavors.

Madam President, I am honoured to address you for the first time at this 39th General Conference. The Bahamas fully supports the strategic objectives of the United Nations, especially cognizant that we live today in a world with ever changing economic, legislative and political realities. Our Country is acutely aware

that the 2030 Agenda for SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, adopted at the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, marked a turning point in the history of international cooperation, Thus, rendering the principals and objectives of UNESCO more globally important now than ever before.

During the past three years, The Bahamas successfully hosted three globally significant UNESCO events. Firstly, in 2015, we conducted a regional workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy and Indicators, where visiting member countries participated in developing guidelines for national and regional STI policies, our aim being to strengthen action towards STI as a key component towards sustainable development.

In July, this year, we welcomed the Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas, in partnership with the Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU), at the CBU's 48th Annual General Assembly. At this meeting delegates from more than 48 media houses, 23 countries and territories from the English, Dutch, French and Spanish speaking Caribbean and South America met to discuss and support the digital revolution in broadcasting and communications in general, and implications for the Caribbean more specifically.

Finally, In September, Our Country was host of UNESCO's 12th International Hydrological Programme Meeting, where delegates from over 65 member nations developed and discussed resolutions for implementation of ways to achieve water security for Small Island Developing States. All of these meetings reinforced our commitment to implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Madam President, like other member states, The Bahamas firmly believe that education is an indispensable element for achieving sustainable development. Thus, our newly elected Government is working steadily to ensure the right of all of its citizens and residents to an equitable and inclusive education; thus, deepening its alignment with SDG 4.

New education policies are being grounded in progressive educational research and planning, improving the learning environment; updating the curriculum and education materials; establishing global standards and conditions; and supporting the advancement and development of educational professionals.

We are also shifting our policies from focusing exclusively on universal primary and secondary education to one that promotes lifelong learning, especially with a particular emphasis on early childhood and pre-school education.

We firmly believe that in addition to those basics that were once the cornerstone of a primary school education, those being literacy, numeracy, orally and cognitive skills development, we must also ensure the vital inclusion of social and emotional values and training of our youngest minds, starting in earliest stages of human life. To facilitate this initiative, our Government has mandated the necessary appropriation of technology in the successful and effective delivery of education. To this end, we have recently introduced iPads into preschools and primary schools as global indicators show that technology and learning in this digital age must merge in the 21st Century classrooms.

Madam President, another crucial area of focus for our country is that of technical and vocational training. In alignment with our national development objectives & UNESCO's Strategy and recommendations for TVET (2016-2021), which was adopted by the Executive Board at its 199th Session, The Bahamas has increased financial assistance for students interested in these technical and vocational fields, concurrent with the expanded role of the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute. By such actions we have seen the numbers of entrants at the institution steadily increase; thus, ensuring that we have a technically skilled workforce to meet the country's future demands.

New local and regional partnerships are being forged while old ones are being strengthened, as The Bahamas recognizes that the support of the international community is necessary if we are to achieve our desired goals. Such partnerships, we believe, enable sustainable development, and play a meaningful role in facilitating the implementation of these various initiatives in Small Island Developing States like The Bahamas.

Madam President, we are committed to the full and constructive participation of the follow-up and review processes of the UNESCO's 2030 Agenda. We will continue to invest the lion's share of our national budget in education, science and technology as we remain focused on not only attaining our national educational ambitions, but the goals and strategies of SGA 4.

We accept that this is fraught with expected and unexpected challenges, considering our fragile resources as an emerging economy, with the added challenge of being an archipelago. Nonetheless, I once again affirm my country's commitment to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Thank you and good afternoon.