



National Statement

by

Her Excellency Dr. Dipu Moni MP

Hon'ble Education Minister of Bangladesh

40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference

General Policy Debate

UNESCO HQs, Room 1

Paris, France

13 November 2019

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(Room No. 1 from 10 am to 1 pm)
(HEM is the 16th speaker on the tentative list)**

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Hon'ble Education Minister of Bangladesh**

Mr. President

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board

Madame Director General

Hon'ble Minister

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the great pleasure and honour to address this august gathering for the first time on behalf of my country, Bangladesh.

I extend my heartiest felicitations to Ambassador Ahmet Altay Cengizer (of Turkey) on his election as the President of the 40th General Conference. I am confident, under his leadership and guidance, we will have a successful Conference.

I also wish to register our deep appreciation to the President of the 39th General Conference Ambassador Madame Zohour Alaoui (of Morocco) for her tireless work for our organization during the last biennium.

Madame Audrey Azoulay, our Director General deserves our special commendation for her timely initiatives to address the present and future challenges that UNESCO is facing. Please be assured, Madame Director General, of our full support to your endeavours.

Excellencies, dear friends,

We are passing through difficult and challenging times, both globally as well within our organisation. As a nation, we remain steadfast to the principles of multilateralism and believe it to be the most effective tool for resolving global problems and create global good. It is only through dialogue and building consensus that we can hope to overcome the challenges. We need to concentrate more on what unites us rather than what divides us.

Mr. President,

UNESCO's work in education, science, culture, social science, information and communications are vitally important for building peace, harmony, mutual respect and understanding. Bangladesh's commitment to UNESCO's mandate and mission remain as strong and unwavering as ever. As a member of the Executive Board, we are supporting the organization deliver on its core areas of competence.

In this context, we support the Director General's *Strategic Transformation* of UNESCO and note with appreciation the progress achieved so far. We hope, the High-Level Reflection Group, through an inclusive and consultative process, would provide us with valuable recommendations for charting a roadmap for the future direction of UNESCO.

We all are aware of the financial difficulties that the UNESCO is facing for the past several years. UNESCO is our organization. As member states, we have the obligation to support and contribute to its ability to deliver. Our demands on UNESCO to deliver keep on rising and it is only reasonable that we back up our aspirations by placing adequate resources at the disposal of the organization. At the same, it is important that the Secretariat keenly focuses on results making best use of available resources. This would ensure the most effective delivery of the projects and programs and make the desired impacts at the field level.

Mr. President,

Our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, aspired to build a "*Sonar Bangla*"- a *Bangladesh of Gold* - a country that would be free from oppression, hunger and deprivation. The torch bearer of his vision and dream is none other than his worthy daughter - our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has embarked on a mission to realize his dream. Her development roadmaps, Vision 2021 and Vision 2041, place an inclusive and participatory development model at the centre of all national development efforts.

Naturally, Bangladesh is strongly committed to Agenda 2030. We have integrated Sustainable Development Goals in the 7th 5-year plan, mainstreaming it in all sectors of the economy, developed a National Action Plan and Monitoring Framework for SDG. These are important building blocks to guide strategies to achieve the SDGs.

We believe, attainment of SDGs greatly hinges upon the attainment of SDG4 (Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education). Today, Bangladesh is globally acknowledged as "development role model". Our goal is to become a "*role model for quality education*".

Our approach to education is two pronged - vertical as well as horizontal. On one hand, we working to ensure access to education to each and every child including children with special needs. Special monetary and non-monetary policies and programmes have been undertaken to ensure their access to public education. We have introduced mother language-based education at pre-primary and primary level for five ethnic minorities (Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo and Sadri) in our country.

On the other hand, our aim is to equip our children with the knowledge, skill, training and education to prepare them for the future world of

work. Improving the quality of education with emphasis on e-learning and enhancing the quality of teachers are our major priorities.

We have introduced digital curriculum to reach 1.73 million primary school students and launched the 'Digital Primary Education' project under which more than 500 model primary schools will be set up across the country.

In 2018-2019, we have established 370 ICT Learning Centres in 64 districts of the country. Our children will now be using computers from their first year of school even in the remotest corners of the country.

Bangladesh deeply appreciates the official launching of UNESCO's global initiative on the Futures of Education. With the advent of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data and machine learning, launching of UNESCO's global initiative on the Futures of Education is most timely and we commend UNESCO for the initiative.

Bangladesh welcomes the holding of the Forum of the Ministers of Culture at the 40th session of the General Conference which will surely impact on formation of cultural policies in the face of contemporary challenges addressed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. President,

The fourth industrial revolution [*Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence AI*] is taking place at an astounding fast pace. It would have an unparalleled and disruptive impact on our societies and could fundamentally transform the way we think, live, and work.

The existing legal and social protection systems are unable to keep up with new and emerging technologies. In this context, we acknowledge UNESCO's multidisciplinary approach to AI as well as its global ethical implications for peace, cultural diversity, gender equality, and

sustainable development and we commend UNESCO initiative to develop a standard-setting instrument on the ethics of artificial intelligence.

**Mr. President,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,**

UNESCO is a symbol of our hope and uniquely positioned to take a leadership role in the promotion of education, science and culture and communication thereby making a positive impact in lives of the people around the world. I assure you that Bangladesh will continue to fulfil its obligation and do even more to strengthen the organisation carry out its mandate effectively, efficiently and meaningfully.

I thank you all.