

**40<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNESCO General Conference**

**Text of the speech by H.E Excellency Mr. Abdullahi Godah Barre  
Minister of Education, Culture and Higher Education  
Federal Republic of Somalia**

**13<sup>th</sup> November 2019, Paris**

**Mr President of the General Conference,  
Mr. Director the Executive Board  
Madam Director General  
Honourable delegates  
Ladies and gentlemen**

Mr. President allow me to congratulate you on behalf of the delegation of the Federal Republic of Somalia, for being elected President of the General Conference.

Mr. President, as a representative of my government, let me start by emphasising that Somalia believes that the work and mandate of UNESCO is crucial to peace and security around the world, especially in promoting collaboration among nations through Education, Science, Culture and Communication. UNESCO plays a vital role in translating the sustainable development goals into concrete action. These goals, which in turn, are essential to combatting the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.

This is in particular, is significant for Somalia in our nation building efforts. The 2030 agenda has been aptly described as the ‘youth agenda’. We are a population, where 70% are under the age of 30, making our populations one of the youngest in the world. Our current Strategic Education Framework ‘**SOMALIA 2030 Education for Everyone**’ echoes the ethos of ‘**Leave No One Behind**’.

## **Education**

Today, our country has one of the world’s lowest enrolment rates for primary school aged children. What this means in real terms is that millions of our children and young people are in desperate need of educational support. We have chosen to start from a belief in a future filled with opportunity — a future where, with the right education and skills, our country can find new routes to growth, built on human capital. We believe that education and skills provide the best route out of poverty, inequality, and instability, and our best safeguard against conflict and extremism.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education of Somalia affirms that the implementation of ‘**SOMALIA 2030 Education for Everyone**’ priority programmes directly corresponds to the accomplishment of **SDG4 and its targets**.

Mr President,

We believe that the first step in the right direction starts with quality Education. Our Ministry has been working intensively across key areas in education in Somalia to ensure the delivery of good and adequate education, for all. These key areas are: the access to education; the quality of education; and the supervision of the education sector in Somalia, both in the public and private sectors.

It is our vision that **by 2030**, all girls and boys will be able to access quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. **By 2030**, all girls and boys in Somalia will be able to complete free, equitable and quality primary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. **By 2030** in secondary school, children will learn the core scientific, humanistic and/or technical knowledge needed to continue their studies. **By 2030**, all students in Somalia will have equitable access to a world-class higher education system leading to better opportunities for employment and significant contributions to a knowledge-based economy. This is our vision and we are tirelessly working towards these goals.

While our challenges are many, we choose to focus on our potential and the achievements we've so far managed to accomplish.

Mr president,

Due to our recent efforts in standardising and reforming the education system in Somalia, while working towards ensuring quality education for all, we saw a record number of pupils across Somalia enrolled to take the primary and secondary school-leaving examinations. We witnessed a dramatic increase in enrolment in the national examinations since they were reinstated in 2016.

This dramatic increase in students sitting their primary and secondary exams is due to the joint efforts between the Federal and state Ministries of Education, its partners, the communities and donors in ensuring that Somali pupils enrol and remain in school until they complete their primary and secondary schooling.

We have also put in place mechanism of evaluating, as well as developing the capacities of schoolteachers. We are now in the process of piloting an online teacher training course to ensure the delivery of quality education for all students.

Similarly, we are currently looking into ways of digitising school textbooks, in order to enrich the content, make them more affordable and equip our pupils with the necessary tools to learn on par with international standards.

In this regards UNESCO remains an invaluable asset, in proving the technical guidance and best practices from similar projects, in contexts similar to ours'.

## **Culture**

Mr. President,

Another area we have recently made significant strides in is in the culture sector. Somalia is facing the great challenge of rebuilding every facet of nationhood. Crucially, we recognise that culture is an essential component for the reconstruction of the Somali social fabric. The post-conflict restoration of the social, political and economic structures of Somalia can only be achieved and sustained if there is a shared common understanding and interest in what constitutes Somali heritage. It is therefore necessary to reinforce the

efforts to rehabilitate the culture sector in Somalia and enable it to play its role in promoting shared values and dialogue, which are both vital instruments in building sustainable peace.

With this in mind, we have sought to establish a cultural heritage management approach in Somalia.

We recognise the importance of our cultural and natural heritage, in all their facets, for our nation's post-conflict reconstruction and we have made significant progress in this area. I am pleased to announce that Somalia has re-established its National Commission for UNESCO earlier this year, with the aim to strengthen collaborations with the Organization, notably in the field of Culture.

On behalf of Somalia, I am honoured to announce our Government's commitment to increase the protection of Somalia's cultural property, as well as, our cultural and natural heritage, through the ratification of UNESCO Conventions. We have recently passed four UNESCO culture conventions in our cabinet, they are now being debated in our parliament, and will hopefully soon all be ratified. The conventions in questions are; the 1954 Hague Convention; the 1972 convention; the 2003 Convention and the 2005 convention.

Somalia has also recently undertaken the complete rehabilitation of our National Museum, the National Theatre, our National Library and the Academy for Arts and Sciences.

We recognize the importance of safeguarding our culture as a means of national identity, peace building, reconciliation and sustainable development.

We are counting on UNESCO and its Member States' support in capacity building to strengthen our legislation and policies, undertake inventories of our cultural heritage and increase our capacities to protect and promote our culture for the sustainable development of Somalia.

For any of you who have seen photographs and video footage of Somalia dating back to the 1960s, you have witnessed the peace and prosperity that used to reign in Somalia. I am confident that with the vision of our Government, the will of the Somali people and the support of UNESCO and the international community, we will once again be able to enjoy the rich cultural heritage and diversity that Somalia has to offer its people and the world.

We consider heritage reconstruction not merely a matter of design and resources; at stake is the re-visioning and reconstruction of people's identities and sense of community.

Mr. President,

Somalia deeply believes in the principles of UNESCO: tolerance, respect for culture and heritage, respect of difference, in ways that promote continued dialogue and peaceful coexistence: these are the ideals that counter much of the insecurity we witness around the world today. Somalia is steadfast in upholding these principles, we strive to incorporate them into every facet of our nation building.

Mr President,

Let me conclude my intervention by saying that me standing here today, addressing you, marks a new beginning for Somalia. We have not participated in the UNESCO General Conference properly since 1988. I share that with you because I believe that it is a cause for

optimism and hope that Somalia is finally out of its recent traumatic past, and before us now lies the road to healing, development and progress, for all Somalis.

***Thank you***