



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

NATIONAL STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

40TH SESSION OF UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE

DATE: 15 NOVEMBER 2019

PARIS, FRANCE

Mr. President

The Director-General of UNESCO

Chairperson of UNESCO Executive Board

Heads of Delegations

Excellences

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

1. My Delegation and I bring you warm greetings from His Excellency the President Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, and the People of the Republic of Botswana. I wish to assure you of the continued commitment, dedication and strong support of the Government of the Republic of Botswana to the ideals and aspirations of UNESCO. Botswana reiterates its commitment to multilateralism and the Rule of Law.
2. Mr. President, Botswana would like to join other Member States in congratulating you on your election to the Presidency of the 40th Session of UNESCO General Conference and wish you success in discharging your roles and responsibilities throughout this General Conference and the next biennium. We also thank your illustrious predecessor for a job well done.

3. Botswana further commends the Director General and her team of Technical Experts and Professionals for leading the organization towards a clearly defined Transformation Strategy. We remain positive that this transformation strategy will ensure that UNESCO continues to play a leading role in its areas of competence and that UNESCO's programmes shall continue to be of relevance to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

4. Mr. President, we reach out in solidarity to all our colleagues who were adversely affected by natural disasters that hit their countries in 2019. We note with regret that climate change remains one of the greatest challenges that the world is facing today. As such, there is need for UNESCO to show commitment to addressing this global challenge by developing a clear strategy for its mitigation that will form part of the next UNESCO Medium Term Strategy (2022 – 2029).

5. I am happy to indicate that in an effort to ensure inclusive and equitable quality Education, Botswana has developed a National Implementation Plan for SDG4. The approach that the country has taken is geared towards enabling it to transform from a resource based to a knowledge based economy.

Botswana has also embraced multiple pathways in order to enable learners to pursue different academic paths based on their academic potential and unique needs.

6. In response to SDG 4.2, Botswana has introduced reception classes as part of the formal education system. In 2019 alone, 25,271 learners accessed Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes through the reception class dispensation which has been rolled out to 597 primary schools country wide.

7. We wish to acknowledge the support we received through the Republic of Korea's Bridge Africa Project, which enabled us to construct a Community Learning Centre in the disadvantaged community of Mmaothate. The main purpose of this project is to empower local communities to be self-sufficient through education based initiatives. As a result of this project, **206** disadvantaged learners gained access to education. Botswana was also privileged to participate in the Africa Code Week and acknowledges the assistance from UNESCO and SAP.

8. Mr. President, Botswana recognizes Science, Technology and Innovation as critical in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development as well as the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. As such, there is need for UNESCO to continue building the capacities of its Member States to design effective science policies including putting more emphasis on Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Botswana also supports the move towards a standard setting instrument on Open Science.

9. In order to focus attention on increasing access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, Botswana through its National Development Plan 11 (2017-2023) has made an effort to translate SDG 6 into national priorities, with particular attention on promotion of efficient water resources utilization and infrastructure development. Botswana appreciates the assistance it has received through the GGRETA Project. Botswana also supports the Revision of Statutes of the International Hydrological Programme including changing the name to Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme.
10. Mr. President, the development of renewable energy technologies and the reduction of our global carbon footprint cannot be over emphasized. We urge, UNESCO to strengthen the capacities of Member States to build a sustainable energy

base that will respond to the global energy needs.

11. Botswana notes the importance of intercultural dialogue in building lasting peace and security. We, therefore, believe strengthening capacities of Member States in the implementation of UNESCO Cultural Protocols is critical. UNESCO needs to continue to allocate resources, both technical and financial, towards cultural advancements geared towards promoting preservation of cultural heritage.
12. Botswana has continued to strengthen efforts to promote the use of E-learning platforms. So far Wi-Fi generating gadgets that are pre-loaded with educational content have been provided to schools nationwide. In an effort to ensure technical management of these gadgets, 68 IT graduates have been deployed to schools.
13. Similarly, 3000 teachers have been trained on ICT integration in teaching and learning through the support of the UNESCO Participation Programme. Furthermore, in order to support learning for the visually impaired, textbooks are being converted to audio books and installed in portable listening

devices.

14. In this current biennium, five projects from Botswana have received funding through the Participation Programme. In order to strengthen effort to ensure maximum benefit from UNESCO programmes, Botswana submitted a proposal to host the UNESCO Chair on African Heritage Studies. Botswana expresses its appreciation to the Director General for selecting the University of Botswana to establish the UNESCO Chair on African Heritage Studies.
15. With regard to the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD, Botswana is proud that one of its NGOs dealing with people living with disabilities, is one of the recipients of this year's Prize. This demonstrates our commitment as a Nation to providing quality inclusive education to all our citizens.
16. Mr. President, in conclusion, Botswana joins other Member States in acknowledging the 2020 - 2021 Draft Programme and Budget as an effective operational plan for the implementation of UNESCO'S Medium Term Strategy 2014 – 2021. We also call on UNESCO to continue to ensure adequate

funding for Priority Africa which should be evaluated to ensure that commitments are met.

I thank you. PULA!