

UNESCO 40th GENERAL CONFERENCE NOV 15, 2019, LIBERIA SPEAKS

The President of the General Conference, Madam Director General, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, I bring you greetings from His Excellency Dr. George Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia and the People of Liberia, and on their behalf congratulate the President of the 40th General Conference of UNESCO, reaffirming Liberia's commitment to the ideals and principles of this institution.

Mr. President, Madam Director General, Liberia as a founding member of UNESCO and the UNITED Nations, has been steadily progressing on its democratic institutions and values, since the civil conflict ended nearly 16 years ago. Liberia continues to commit to constructive dialogue, and promoting peace for the general good of its people and the world

“The Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development”, a five-year national development plan of this Government, takes cognizance of the importance of human development as prerequisite for national development. To guarantee an accelerated rate for such initiative, the President of Liberia, has placed education as the top most life changing priority, second only to road connectivity, which for all intent and purposes supports efficiency in the delivery of all social services needful of the population, including Health. Roads are a major public sector Investment priority, which stands in the way of the efficient delivery of Education, Health and other social services.

Mr. President, Madam Director General, Liberia commits to education and other youth development initiatives even more now, since the hosting of a National Summit on this subject at the inception of this Government in 2018. Too many to be named in a few minutes, but the outcome of the summit concluded with a global call for significant investment in the education.

Combined with the outcomes of the Joint Education Sector Review in 2018, the National Summit, influenced by the global thoughts on education, proposes a shift from knowledge based only to STI, STEM and other forms of competence driven and character development education. This shift imposes the need for rebuilding underdeveloped facilities, and re-fixing the curriculum responsive for such new direction. We confirm that this government has the political will and has taken significant steps to respond to these needs, regardless.

The population of Liberia, like many similar countries, is largely youthful below the age of 35 years, comprising nearly two thirds, of its 4.5 million people. These we must cater for, to sustain the peace and guarantee the future of the nation, failing which, security becomes a matter of national and continental concern. In that regard, the Government of Liberia is grateful for the interventions of major Development Partners, UNESCO included, all of whom are engaged with the country in varying ways. Though enough is never enough for nations experiencing excessive needs, but the results of these interventions would

ultimately bring realization to the concerns of youths regarding education and jobs, in preparation for a future that is filled with so much uncertainties, especially the unpredictable consequences of Global Warming and Climate Change, with more devastating impact for developing countries.

Liberia acknowledges UNESCO's enthusiasm for meeting the 2030 SDGs targets, especially SDG 4, and the Liberian Government expresses gratitude for all interventions, and makes reference to UNESCO / China recent Teaming, to introduce ICT in teacher training, which shall become institutionalized.

Culture

The government of Liberia supports the stance of UNESCO to protect the rights of minorities, and guard the cultural heritage of member states. In that regard, Liberia has declared Ecological Tourism as part of its economic development focus.

Liberia has over the years, cataloged a world heritage tentative list, and has come to this CG 40, to appeal for support in capacity building and training in the effective management thereof. Like many similar countries, Liberia has a unique history which has not been told on the world platform, and we look forward to learning from UNESCO how to best preserve those cultural inheritances, and yet, tell the true story of former slaves who repatriated to West Africa, and establish the first Africa Republic Liberia, without neglecting to incorporate the rich narrative of the indigenous tribes, with whom they built together the Liberian nation, in spite of the diversities of cultures & traditions.

For this reason, Liberia is co-sponsoring Benin's resolution on slave route "Resistance, Liberty and Heritage", and this action greatly bolsters our President's plan to establish a heritage tourism industry.

Mr. President, Madam Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen Liberia is endowed with several untampered historical sites of ecological relevance, and carries nearly 40% of the remaining Upper Guinea Forest Reserves, providing sustainable support for controlling Climate Change; The Sarpo National Park, and the East Nimba Nature Reserves are significant.

Mr. President, Madam Director General, Liberia also pays tribute for the FIFA Football for School Program through UNESCO, with a purpose to create access to this universal sport unmatched in human history. Football is by far a unifying tool, promoting positive values and character changes. Liberia remains committed to the mission of sports in youth development, and by virtue of its standing as the oldest African state, **with a President who is to date, the only African Ballon d'Or**, requests to be considered among the 10 countries from Africa for the integration of football in the architecture of education.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the vast majority of Liberians believe that peace and stability are foundational for education, health, economic growth, job creation and governance. Liberians have come to know by bitter experience, that the absence of Peace is Poverty, and have vowed, that never again shall **they** become **their** own enemy. In response, the Government of Liberia has

become overly accommodating of the exercise of peoples' rights, being cognizant however, that the exercise of such rights, which could impose a return of an already injured country, to its painful history, shall not be looked upon with favor.

Thereupon, President Weah has repeatedly declared Liberia a welcoming place for honest investment and partnership, and I am privileged to amplify that invitation at this General Conference of UNESCO.

Finally, Mr. President, Madam Director General, Excellencies, and delegates, we urge you to join us to ensure that the initiatives of the Liberian Government, to continue to construct the stronghold of peace, tolerance and the protection of human rights and the Climate, which are **imperatives** of national development are guaranteed through **Education**. **To that effect, we are pleased to** inform this 40th GC, that Liberia is ratifying in a few hours, the **both** conventions on TVET and Higher Education.

Grateful thanks.