



**Government of Papua New Guinea
Ministry of Education**

Country Statement

By Hon. Joseph YopyYopy, MP

Minister of Education

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Paris, France

President of the General Conference, Madam Director General, Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Warm Greetings from Papua New Guinea.

Mr. President, I would like to take the que with the rest of my colleague ministers to congratulate you for your appointment as President of the General Conference. And thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of my Goernment.

I would like to speak in support of many likeminded countries that have spoken before me that shared similar issues, aspirations and concerns in this conference.

Papua New Guinea is always proud to declare cultural and natural diversity it endowed with, having over 800 different languages spoken across the country with over 800 different cultures and tribal groups. Nevertheless, we are united as one people, one country and one nation.

Mr. President, Papua New Guinea's Medium Term Development Plan 2018 – 2022 sets out its development objectives and strategies to implement the key priorities, in full alignment to overall framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030.

UNESCO for that matter should continue to aggressively address cross-cutting issues in Education, Sciences, Culture and Communication domains that underpin the quest for international peace and development for everyone right across the Globe.

Papua New Guinea, given its national challenges and issues is proud to announce the achievement of Universal Basic Education that should be fully implemented by the end of 2020, courtesy of the Free Education Policy (TFPE) by my Government in the last eight years that has seen marked increase in all school aged children in the classroom and educated up to the 12th Grade in the formal school system. Equally, alternative pathways in education are also provided for others including Adult Education and lifelong learning.

Papua New Guinea welcomes UNESCO's sustained efforts to empower all vulnerable people in the society including girls and women that is in full alignment to my governments focus and is the priority for the next 10 year period that already commenced in 2018. This is based on the vision for securing a future that is inclusive and sustainable through economic growth propelled by quality education.

Mr. President, it's not the end of the story, but a beginning. The next challenge is for my government to know what children are learning in schools. It is again the government's responsibility to ensure the education that is delivered must be relevant and quality for which UNESCO's support is welcome. In this area UNESCO is urged to strengthen and reinforce efforts by governments, particularly the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in delivering education where in many cases lack basic educational infrastructures compounded with geographical complexities. In this regard, the use of ICT in education to communities, particularly in remote and rural settings is the strategy that can be used as a way forward.

Furthermore, Papua New Guinea congratulates UNESCO for its programs directives in 2020-2021 towards providing the guidance necessary to those Member States in need for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their national education plans and strategies.

Papua New Guinea welcomes the need for UNESCO to further emphasize in the next programs directives, the outstanding focus and priority areas on issues and challenges as captured in the 39C/5 Document. Science based responses to global issues including climate change, mitigation and adaptation must be harnessed through building close national and regional stakeholder consultations focusing on policies that must be integrated and streamlined. The Small Island Developing States in the Pacific region will stand to immensely benefit from UNESCO's effort in setting standards on promoting Science, Technology and Innovation in view of stimulating economic growth foreseen by their governments.

Mr. President, Papua New Guinea offers the world its uniquely rich and diverse cultures that are readily available for education and research. The mammoth task before my government is for an immediate inventory and mapping of the cultural diversity with the aim of protecting and safeguarding, particularly those ones on the verge of disappearance. It is for such reasons Papua New Guinea will make every effort necessary to ratify some of those related international conventions including the 2005 Convention that relates to the Promotion of Cultural Diversities with the aim of mobilizing support from UNESCO and other relevant bodies of the international community, like the European Union.

In this regard, we value UNESCO's aim to refine its work relating to the promotion of various international cultural conventions making them workable for Member States through cross-cutting efforts for sustainable development, however there must be projected practical and concrete targets, including heritage and indigenous peoples' education.

With regards to Communication and Information programs, Papua New Guinea appreciates UNESCO's effort to promote and improve the quality of education through the use of ICT thereby supporting Member States drawing out roadmaps and integrated policy frameworks for effective delivery of education. If our target in the SDG 2030 is to have **no one left behind** cross-cutting approaches must be included in our efforts to support all countries, particularly to harness the potential in ICT for the delivery of quality education to everyone.

Many governments are still restrictive on the flow of information to their people by unjustifiably sabotaging the work of journalists and journalism. Journalists are murdered or imprisoned whilst on the course of their noble duty and UNESCO should be critical on such actions of governments and authorities. Therefore, UNESCO's 2020 – 2021 Work Plans should reflect clearly on its role in policy and regulatory support to governments on the promotion of the freedom and protection of journalists by ensuring independence of the media.

Mr. President, Papua New Guinea is a signatory to the international treaty on the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and has an obligation to be committed to achieving the Agenda 2030 that is coherently aligned to the country's Vision 2050. Despite, record achievements in education huge challenges and issues still remain outstanding including quality of teaching and learning. To be exact, not much has been and will be achieved in terms of SDG4 - Education 2030 since 2015 if UNESCO as a lead agency goes on doing business as usual, positive achievements are unpredictable.

I would like to conclude here by reaffirming the statement made by my Prime Minister, Right Honorable James Marape who stood at this podium in his capacity as Papua New Guinea's Minister for Education in 2011 General Conference inviting the world to appreciate and accept his country's cultural and natural diversity for research and education. That call still stands today as my Prime Minister urges UNESCO and all other partners in the international community to assist by *Taking Back Papua New Guinea* markedly in the next 10 years.

Thank you.

