

**210<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board**  
**From 2 December 2020 to 27 January 2021**  
**ELECTORAL GROUP V (A) STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. Mr. Henok Teferra,**  
**Ambassador of Ethiopia and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO,**  
**VICE-CHAIR GROUP V (A)**

**Chairperson of the General Conference,**  
**Chairperson of the Executive Board,**  
**Madam Director-General,**  
**Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,**

1. On behalf of Africa Group, allow me at the outset to pay tribute to all Member states of UNESCO and Secretariat, who have lost their loved ones in these difficult times and convey my wishes for quick recovery to those who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. In this context, my sincere gratitude goes to all involved in saving lives and helping those affected by COVID-19.
3. Africa Group would like to express its sincere condolences to their respective Governments, the Peoples, and the bereaved families, on the passing of:

- H.E. Amadou Toumani Touré, former President of the Republic of Mali.
- H.E. Sidimohamed Cheikh Abdallahi, Former President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.
- H.E. Mamadu Tandja, former President of the Republic of Niger.

4. Africa Group warmly congratulates the Chairperson of the Executive Board for his leadership in ensuring the holding of this session under the most challenging circumstances.

5. Our Group highly commends the Director-General and the entire Secretariat for the efforts being made to respond to the challenges posed by the global sanitary crisis. Madame Director-General, we salute your personal leadership in the face of this unprecedented challenge.

### **Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,**

6. The Africa Group expresses profound gratitude to all Member States and the Director-General for placing Africa as a UNESCO Global Priority. In particular, we wish to highlight the 50% increase in allocation of resources to Priority Africa during the last biennium. Talk is cheap but numbers tell the real story, and the numbers tell us that you, Madame Director-General, have truly made Africa your priority. *Enameseghenalen!*

7. We welcome ongoing efforts to re-conceptualize and give fresh impetus to Global Priority Africa including through ongoing consultations on the 41 C/4 and 41C/5. Building on lessons learnt and expectations for the future, we are confident that we can elaborate a Priority Africa that responds to the needs of Member States. The Africa Group also looks forward to the timely outcome of the Priority Africa evaluation which should serve to inform the 41 C/4 and 41 C/5.
  
8. The General History of Africa aims to develop curriculum that highlights the African contribution to the progress of Humanity. African member states and UNESCO need to strengthen their cooperation for its pedagogical use and incorporation in the school curriculum of Member States.

**Madam Director-General,**

9. The COVID-19 crisis has greatly affected Education system in Africa. We applaud UNESCO rapid actions to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the education sector and the progress registered over the last couple of years. In particular, we welcome UNESCO's lead role in the Global Coalition for Education and the Back to School campaign. We urge the Secretariat to strengthen this laudable advocacy work with Member States through field offices with increased resources for Education.

10. The pandemic has interrupted education systems globally, further exacerbating existing inequalities in education and drastically modifying education delivery methods.
11. African Member States have made great efforts in responding to the challenge of ensuring that learning continues. In particular, TVET and Youth & Adult Literacy need to be on top of our joint priorities as we seek to improve equity and quality of Education at all levels and ensure equal access to schooling for women and girls.
12. As we enter the last decade for the achievement of the SDGs, there is increased focus on the achievement of SDG 4 as an enabler for the achievement of the entire SDG framework and a direct response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
13. In this respect, we commend the work of the Futures of Education Commission headed by H.E. President Sahle-Work of Ethiopia both for its holistic approach thru all-round grassroots level consultations and its focus on how to ensure education as a global public good.
14. Regarding the coordination and implementation of SDG4 in Africa, we call on the establishment of single coordination mechanism that would combine both UNESCO'S action through SDG4 and the Africa Union through the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA).

15. We note with satisfaction the establishment of Multi-Partner Platform by UNESCO and the Africa Union Commission to support monitoring, evaluation and reporting of SDG4 and CESA.
16. We welcome the inclusion of the strengthening of the global, regional and national SDG4 Coordination frameworks in the plenary proposals for the UNESCO Medium Term Strategy (2022-2029, 41C/5).
17. The Africa Group takes note of the outcomes of the Working Group in charge of examining the Chinese proposal concerning International Bureau of Education (IBE). Our Group thanks the Working Group for discharging its responsibility assigned by the Director General.
18. The Africa Group welcomes IBE's renewed mandate, in particular the emphasis on curriculum development. The Group also commends China for its proposal, which will greatly benefit and support Africa's efforts to attain SGD 4.
19. We invite the Director General to continue consultations and call on the examination of the technical and legal aspects of the Chinese proposal in view of its implementation.

## **Madam Director-General**

20. On Culture, we applaud the many innovative initiatives taken by the Secretariat, such as *ResiliART*, in response to the COVID19 pandemic and ensure that cultural activities continue.

21. We call on the Secretariat to support African Member States as they strive to enlist more sites on World Heritage lists. Africa is greatly underrepresented on the list, with only 96 sites out of the 1121 inscribed on the World Heritage List or 8.6%. On the other hand, 30% of the sites inscribed on the World Heritage List that are in danger are on our continent. We can only change this dire picture thru joint and sustained efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity of African countries in terms of inscription and sustainable management of the properties.

22. We also call on the Secretariat to strengthen its partnership with African countries in our efforts to return or repatriate cultural property taken from our continent illegally. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there can be no moral or legal justification for accepting these

properties to be outside their home countries. They are expressions of who we are and of our contribution to the world. Their place is in Africa! No ifs or buts.

23. Finally, geographical distribution of staffing at UNESCO and the gender balance still need further improvement. In particular, our Group expresses its profound concern over Africa's under-representation in the recruitment of personnel, and wishes to request the Director-General to redouble her efforts towards finding ways to redress this situation in line with the rules in the United Nations System.

Thank you!