

**Barbados National Statement – Plenary – 210th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board (in extenso)
delivered by Ms. Alissandra Cummins, Chairperson, Barbados National Commission for UNESCO**

Mr. Chairman, Mme Director General, Mr President of the General Conference, Dear Colleagues

Thank you for this opportunity to address you in this context of the 210th session of the Executive Board. First let me say that Barbados is very encouraged to note the advances which the Secretariat has made in the development and delivery of the report on the implementation on the 40th biennial programme and budget. We have noted some critical improvements and are appreciative of the tremendous efforts of the Director General and her team to respond in a remarkably resilient and resolute fashion to the threat that is COVID 19 which has provided a graphic demonstration of the continued relevance and value of UNESCO to its member states and their communities.

Barbados was particularly pleased to contribute both before and after the onslaught of the pandemic in this endeavour by hosting the UNESCO-CDEMA Workshop on Disaster Resilience in the Caribbean's Culture Sector in March this year before travel was completely locked down, and then virtually hosting in August the Sub-regional Consultation on the Draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. There is nevertheless room for further advancements in this regard.

Mr. Chair, the devastation of post-World War 11 stimulated a global response which led to the creation of a number of vital institutions. Amongst these were of course the United Nations and UNESCO whose 75th anniversaries we were scheduled to be celebrating this year, established to bring countries together to protect the most vulnerable among us. Instead it seems that we are called upon to commemorate an important anniversary in the face of another kind of global conflict to protect the health and well being of both our populations and our communities, which still has not ensured the level of protection from the corrosive pincer grip of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, combined with the continued crisis of climate change where 3 decades later from the start of debates on this issue the first world countries and large continents have yet to appreciate that Climate change – is an existential threat for us SIDS– will amplify the need for increased investment for resilience is ever-present. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it necessary for Caribbean countries to reassess their preparedness against a wider range of increasing risks, including health pandemics and, the manifold implications given this region's economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities.

Chair, Barbados' Prime Minister the Hon. Mia Mottley earlier this year has opined "The multilateral system acknowledges and fosters mutual respect and dignity for all members of the human family, whether they are mighty or meek. It accords to all the right to live in societies that are stable, peaceful, equitable and sustainable, and has stressed further that it is now time that "we need to re-purpose these organisations and having a global leadership initiative, make sure we are really reacting to what is real." The hard lessons of history demonstrate that we can only survive in a world based on a transparent rules-based system; that respects the dignity of citizens; that protects the sovereignty of states to chart their own destiny; that engenders inclusion over alienation; and fairness over favouritism. These are the very essence of multilateralism. ...When this United Nations was founded, our leaders passed to us a baton. It was a vision of hope for humanity. It complements the ongoing advocacy by the SIDS nations for a differential treatment based on their vulnerability. But the sustainability of this response will depend on solidarity and international support. In this regard Barbados supports unreservedly the statement delivered by St. Lucia on behalf of the GRULAC, not least the establishment of SIDS as a global priority of the organization alongside Africa and Gender Equality.

Thank you for your attention.