

## **Eighteenth plenary meeting of the 40th session of the General Conference**

Wednesday 27 November 2019 at 3.40 p.m.

President: **Mr Altay Cengizer** (Turkey)

### **Tribute to the President of the 39th session of the General Conference**

#### **1.1 The President:**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I declare open the eighteenth plenary meeting of the General Conference, the very last one of the 40th session of the General Conference. More than 3,000 delegates have attended this session, coming from a record number of Member States. We have exchanged our views, we have greeted many distinguished guests and deliberated on many important issues. We have approved an amendment to UNESCO's Constitution, becoming the 23rd session of the General Conference to do so. We have accomplished a lot together over the past 15 days, and our work is almost done. However, there are very important items which we are yet to consider today.

1.2 The first item on our agenda concerns the tribute to the President of the 39th session of the General Conference, Ms Zohour Alaoui. The Bureau of the General Conference, at its meeting last week, acknowledged the constant commitment to advocate for dialogue, unity and culture of peace, with which Ms Zohour Alaoui presided over the Conference, and it therefore recommended that the plenary adopts the draft resolution contained in document 40 C/PLEN/DR.4.Rev. which has been distributed a few days ago and which is before you. Ladies and gentleman, may I take it that the General Conference adopts this resolution by acclamation?

*(Applause)*

1.3 *It is so **decided**.*

1.4 Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, the round of applause shows our collective appreciation of Ms Zohour Alaoui's leadership.

### **Tribute to the Chairperson of the Executive Board**

#### **2.1 The President:**

Ladies and gentlemen, the General Committee also decided to pay tribute to the Chairperson of the Executive Board, His Excellency Mr Lee Byong-hyun. The Committee recognized the diplomatic skills, experience and dedication with which he presided over the Board, and proposed that the General Conference adopts the draft resolution contained in document 40 C/PLEN/DR.5, which has been distributed a few days ago and which is before you. Ladies and gentlemen, may I also take it that the General Conference adopts this resolution by acclamation?

*(Applause)*

2.2 *It is so **decided**.*

2.3 Thank you. The Republic of Korea has asked for the floor.

#### **3. Republic of Korea:**

Thank you, Mr President. I would like to commend Mr Lee Byong-hyun's leadership in steering the Executive Board and enabling us to proceed efficiently to conduct our business, particularly at such an important moment where we need to revitalize the Organization to match our collective ambition. We are indeed very much indebted to you, Mr Chairperson, for your wisdom and guidance during the past two years. Thus, I would like to convey our sincere gratitude as well as our best wishes for your future endeavours. Thank you, Mr President.

### **Item 15.1: Venue of the 41st session of the General Conference (40 C/60)**

#### **4.1 The President:**

Ladies and gentlemen, I now invite you to examine item **15.1** of the agenda, which concerns the venue of the 41st session of the General Conference. As you can see in document 40 C/60, the Executive Board has already made a recommendation on this matter through 207 EX/Decision 27.V. I would like to ask if the General Conference wishes to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 6 of document 40 C/60, which proposes to hold the 41st session of the General Conference at the Headquarters of the Organization in Paris. Are there any objections to this proposal? I see none.

4.2 *It is so **decided**.*

### **Report of the Joint Meeting of Commissions (40 C/96)**

#### **5. The President:**

Ladies and gentlemen, let us now examine the report of the Joint Meeting of Commissions. The joint meeting was held this morning, under the able chairmanship of Her Excellency Ms Maria Diamantopoulou, Chairperson of the APX Commission. She will present the report contained in document 40 C/96. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

#### **6.1 Ms Diamantopoulou (Chairperson of the Joint Meeting of Commissions):**

Thank you very much. Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, Madam Director-General, distinguished delegates, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I had the honour of chairing the Joint Meeting of Commissions, which examined five items during two sessions held on 13 November and today, 27 November, until late in the morning.

6.2 Our first meeting of 13 November was devoted to the examination of item **4.4** “Adoption of the provisional budget ceiling”. The Joint Meeting of Commissions examined the recommendation of the Executive Board contained in document 40 C/6 Add. Part II, which reflected the highest budget scenario of those proposed for the 40 C/5, namely \$534.6 million. As you may recall, the said recommendation of the Executive Board contained a budget ceiling of \$534.6 million, which was kept in brackets to reflect the debates during the Executive Board. The recommendation also included a paragraph clearly stating that this position is specific to UNESCO and its current budgetary circumstances and is taken without prejudice to Member States’ stance on budgetary issues in the wider United Nations system.

6.3 Now, I will do my best to present the most salient aspects of the important deliberations at the first Joint Meeting of Commissions where 48 Member States took the floor. In particular, I will reflect the interventions of Member States who asked me to do so. The broadest support for the highest scenario of \$534.6 million for the regular programme was expressed by Member States, noting in particular that UNESCO needs to be given adequate resources in order to respond to the ever-increasing demands placed on it and to ensure its positioning within the multilateral system. Many highlighted the unique financial difficulties UNESCO has faced. Certain Member States reiterated their support for UNESCO, its mandate and, however, noted that it would be difficult for them to finance an increase in their assessments at this time, reminding the Commissions that their countries apply a principle of zero nominal growth across the United Nations system. In spite of different positions on the budget ceiling, Member States in favour of a lower budget scenario stated that they would not stand in the way of consensus.

6.4 Thanks to the cooperation and commitment of Member States with our cherished Organization and following a substantive discussion where all voices were heard; we removed the brackets and the Joint Meeting of Commissions agreed on the provisional budget ceiling including appropriations for the budget scenario of \$534.6 million. This allowed for the work of the six commissions of the 40th session of the General Conference to begin as planned.

6.5 As requested, I shall now report on the positions of Member States who asked me to do so. Australia expressed the country’s strong support to the principle of zero nominal growth – or ZNG – across the United Nations. As well, they stated that for them, the decision taken would not represent the basis for the budget ceilings to be discussed at the next session of the General Conference. Chile, Czechia, Dominican Republic and Hungary also explicitly outlined their support for a lower budget scenario, particularly due to their position on budgetary issues across the United Nations system in favour of a principle of ZNG. Venezuela as well, favored the ZNG option and expressed their concern with regard to the scale of assessments whose re-evaluation should reflect the actual financial capacities of Member States.

6.6 Mr President, our second meeting took place today. Prior to the examination of the items included in our agenda for today, I requested that we be allowed to complete one important matter related to the work of the APX Commission. Following the voluntary finalization of the term of three of its Members, we completed the election of the new members of the Working Group on Contributions established by Rule 82 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. Given that there were three seats available corresponding to electoral groups I, II and IV, the Commissions elected Portugal, Lithuania and Bangladesh, respectively. So, the composition of the Working Group on Contributions is now by electoral group: Portugal, Lithuania, El Salvador, Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Oman. During the 41st session of the General Conference, the APX Commission will elect three new members of the Working Group from Electoral Groups III, V (a) and V (b), when El Salvador, Mozambique, and Oman, will have completed their four-year term.

6.7 We then proceeded with the examination of item **5.5** “Conclusions of the Youth Forum”. The recommendations of the 11th UNESCO Youth Forum “Youth Spaces in Action”, that was held during the General Conference on 18 and 19 November, were presented by two Forum participants. Member States valued the contribution of young women and men to UNESCO’s work and recognized the importance of youth engagement with the Organization. During the debate, several Member States stated that the recommendations from the Forum contained elements of a legal and financial nature that the General Conference could not endorse at this stage. They requested for no decision to be taken on this item and that document 40 C/19 be replaced by an INF. document. The representative of the Director-General proposed that a report be presented to the Executive Board on the progress made in assessing the recommendations of the Youth Forum and their applicability. The Commissions then decided an INF. document will replace document 40 C/19 and no resolution was adopted on this item.

6.8 We then moved to the examination of item **3.1** “Preparation of the Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4)” and item **3.2** “Preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5)”. These two items were examined by all programme commissions and the APX Commission which have presented their respective reports to the Plenary. We thus proceeded with the examination of the draft decision on item **3.1** on the future 41 C/4, submitted by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Oman and Sweden. The draft resolution was adopted with amendments. Then, we proceeded with the examination of draft resolution of item **3.2** on the future 41 C/5, which was adopted without amendments.

6.9 Mr President, we finally concluded our agenda with the examination of item **4.3** concerning the “Adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2020-2021”. The Joint Commissions examined the draft appropriation resolution contained in document 40 C/13. During the debate, two amendments were introduced with regard to paragraph 8. First, some Member States emphasized that transfers between appropriation lines related to the regular programme budget up to 5% of the initial appropriated regular programme budget, can be acceptable only if the purpose is to encourage intersectoral activities and with no prejudice to any major programme. Second, as relates to budget transfers from the appropriation line established for the reserve for staffing adjustments, the Commissions decided that the Director-General is authorized to do so in line with financial and staff regulations. The recommendation to the General Conference for the adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2020-2021, as amended by the Commissions, is now contained in document 40 C/13 Rev. The Joint Meeting of Commissions also adopted as a whole documents 40 C/6 and 40 C/6 Addendum, taking into account the examination and adoption of their relevant parts by each programme commission and the APX Commission.

6.10 Mr President, as this is my last report to the Plenary, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all Member States for their active participation and for their constructive support throughout our deliberations. For their unfailing support and cooperation, I should like to thank the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of all the commissions. Let me also express my thanks to the Director-General, the Deputy Director-General, Assistant Directors-General, the Director of BSP, the Chief Finance Officer and the Legal Adviser, and particularly colleagues from the governing bodies Secretariat, who were available to provide the necessary clarifications and answers to our queries. Thanks as ever to the interpreters, the translators, the conference room clerks and all the technicians for their support. Finally, my very special thanks to the Secretary of the Joint Meeting of Commissions, Mr Salvatore Mineo, and his team. Thank you for your attention.

7.1 **The President:**

Thank you for your report Ambassador Diamantopoulou. Everyone knows how you are a very dedicated and professional diplomat. We all have to be late from time to time! Please, no longer worry because I know you are still worried about this – you do not need to. Thank you. Dear colleagues, are there any comments on document 40 C/96? As there are no comments or suggestions, may I then assume that the General Conference takes note of the report of the Joint Meeting of Commissions and adopts the draft resolutions contained in it, subject to the decisions that the Conference may take on budgetary issues when adopting the Appropriation Resolution for the next biennium? Thank you.

7.2 *It is so **decided**.*

7.3 Fiji, you have the floor please.

8. **Fiji:**

Apologies, Mr President, you did not see my nameplate going up as quickly as I would like. On page two, in item number two, there is a typographical error which would need to be corrected before it goes onto the website. And in paragraph 3 (c), I would like to suggest that instead of saying “such as small island developing States”, we say “particularly small island developing States and youth”. So it is just a suggestion of one change in 3 (c) please.

**Item 4.3: Adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2020-2021 (40 C/13)**

9.1 **The President:**

I think that should be fine. Thank you. So let us do that correction. Dear colleagues, the last item remaining on our agenda is item 4.3 “Adoption of the Appropriation Resolution for 2020-2021”. The document pertaining to this item is 40 C/13. In her report, Ambassador Diamantopoulou presented the Appropriation Resolution, which the six commissions, at their joint meeting, recommended for adoption, with amendments. These amendments are contained in document 40 C/13 Rev. Are there any comments on this resolution? I see none. May I take it that the General Conference takes note of the report of the Chairperson of the APX Commission and adopts the Appropriation Resolution for 2020-2021 contained in document 40 C/13 Rev. as amended by the Commission in their joint meeting?

9.2 *It is so **decided**.*

**Closure of the 40th session of the General Conference**

10. **The President:**

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, we have just finished our formal agenda for this session of the General Conference. Allow me now to give the floor to the Director-General who wishes to say a few words as this session draws to a close.

11.1 **La Directrice générale:**

Merci Monsieur le Président. Monsieur le Président de la Conférence générale, Monsieur le Président du Conseil exécutif, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, chers amis, chers collègues, cette 40<sup>e</sup> Conférence générale de l'histoire de notre Organisation touche à son terme. Elle a été ouverte par les mots du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, stimulée dès les premiers jours par les attentes de la jeunesse, et par les engagements des chefs d'État et de gouvernement qui nous ont rejoint. Durant ces semaines, une même ambition, une même conviction, je crois, vous ont réuni, nous ont réuni. Et je veux tous ici présents vous saluer très chaleureusement. Je veux vous remercier aussi de la participation massive de vos ministres, aussi bien de plus de 120 ministres de la culture qui nous ont rejoint pour le Forum, les plus de 100 ministres de l'éducation et de l'enseignement supérieur et la centaine aussi de recteurs et de présidents d'université qui nous ont rejoint pour le Forum de l'éducation.

11.2 Cet idéal qui nous a tous rassemblés, venant d'horizons si divers, c'est celui qu'a décrit je crois Antonio Guterres en disant que dans le contexte dans lequel nous sommes, d'un monde de fissures et de fractures, l'action de l'UNESCO est essentielle pour rassembler le monde. Résorber ces fissures et ces fractures par la culture, par les arts, par les sciences, par l'information, telle a été notre ambition commune lors de cette session. Nous avons proposé à cette Conférence générale un agenda ambitieux et je veux vous remercier d'avoir exprimé avec la force du consensus votre adhésion à cet agenda.

11.3 Des décisions importantes ont été prises sur de multiples domaines de substance de notre mandat, qu'il s'agisse des ressources libres pour l'éducation, ou du chantier des sciences ouvertes, ou de l'éthique de l'intelligence artificielle, en passant par la facilitation de la mobilité académique à l'échelle mondiale dans l'enseignement supérieur, mais aussi la place des humanités, de la liberté de la presse, le rôle du patrimoine et des arts, pour ne citer que ceux-là.

11.4 Nos priorités transversales consacrées à l'Afrique et à l'égalité des genres ont été renforcées, et le tout, comme cela vient d'être adopté à l'instant, dans un cadre budgétaire actualisé pour 2020-2012, nous permettant de travailler avec plus de sérénité, et je veux là aussi collectivement vous en remercier très sincèrement.

11.5 Je voudrais aussi remercier les Présidents et les Présidentes de commissions et des comités qui ont préparé cette Conférence générale et dont le travail remarquable a permis de forger ces consensus. Et grâce à vous, et à partir de maintenant, les deux années qui viennent, nous disposons d'un agenda de travail très clair et qui est partagé pour ces deux prochaines années. Je veux aussi remercier tous mes collègues, tous les personnels de l'UNESCO, et j'aurai l'occasion de le faire plus tard, qui ont travaillé arrache-pied pour que cette Conférence se passe bien, particulièrement le Secrétariat de la Conférence générale et particulièrement, pour bien des raisons, Mme Karima Bekri-Lisner dont le travail a permis le bon déroulement de cette Conférence, mais plus généralement pour toutes ses années ici à notre service à tous à l'UNESCO.

*(La Directrice générale poursuit en anglais)*

11.6 Ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, none of this would have been possible without the cohesion and mutual respect between UNESCO's governing bodies. Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, as the Board prepares to meet again this Friday in a new composition, I would like to thank you for your achievements. Once again – I have done it already, but it is a pleasure to do it again – I wish to underline the essential role that you have played over this three-year period. Your engagement for multilateralism, your commitment to always putting the best interest of the Organization first are seeds that have borne fruit during this General Conference. So let me thank you again very sincerely. Thanks to your efforts and to your skills and also those of the Preparatory Group that I do not forget, a spirit of consensus has reigned during the debates both on the Executive Board and beyond, helping to create political balance and make the revitalization of UNESCO possible. Thank you very much.

11.7 Mr. President of the General Conference, I would like to thank you also very much for having the vision and also the ability necessary to lead these debates, which, as you underlined a few days ago, were the crystallization of 2,000 years of thoughts in all their complexity and finesse. All the Member States here, and I join my voice to them, have welcomed the way you have handled the debates in ensuring that all voices and complexity and differences of opinion were heard. You have helped to show where there was consensus and also where there was not. Perhaps this ability comes also from your knowledge of diplomatic history, which I believe you read very much, and that your efforts to arbitrate, mediate and rely on everyone in this room are so effective. We have all benefited from your talents and I think all the persons here agree with that and we want to thank you very much.

11.8 Mr President, just one more thing too, because it is a tradition. I am not going to play the piano, although I am tempted, but I wish Mr President of the General Conference, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, to express our gratitude traditionally. Please accept, Mr President, this gavel, and to you, Mr Chairperson, this gold medal as tokens of our appreciation. Thank you very much.

*(Applause)*

## 12. **The President:**

Thank you very much for summing up Madam Director-General. I am gratified by your words. I will not give the floor to the Chairperson of the Executive Board.

### 13.1 **M. Lee Byong-hyun** (Président du Conseil exécutif) :

Merci Monsieur le Président, Merci Madame la Directrice générale. La médaille que vous m'avez remise me touche vraiment sincèrement. Avec ces figures de cercles harmonieux des cinq continents, une représentation des valeurs précieuses de la coopération multilatérale. Ce fut avec grand plaisir que je j'ai travaillé avec vous ces deux dernières années pour apporter des changements concrets et visibles à cette Organisation grâce à vos initiatives nouvelles et dynamiques. Je quitte cette Organisation en sachant que l'UNESCO est entre de très bonnes mains. Je voudrais également saisir cette occasion pour remercier le Gouvernement de la République de Corée de m'avoir soutenu tous les moments durant mon mandat de Président du Conseil exécutif pendant les deux dernières années.

*(L'orateur poursuit en anglais)*

13.2 Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, throughout the past two-and-a-half weeks, we all demonstrated our resolve to be engaged in dialogue with each other, and in that I saw hope to be engaged for the future of this Organization, I have witnessed the energy and the willingness of the Member States to build the future of this Organization based on the spirit of multilateralism.

13.3 I learned a long time ago that the well-respected former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld enjoyed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. After many years of service at the United Nations in New York and here at UNESCO, I now fully understand his appreciation of this particular symphony, because our engagement in multilateral institutions requires the harmonious interplay of all parties, like the orchestra and the chorus making music together. In this, I find that it is very befitting that this session of the General Conference will be ending with the music by the UNESCO choir. As my term of office as the Chairperson of the Executive Board ends, I wish for the three principal organs of UNESCO – the General Conference, the Executive Board and the Secretariat – to continue to work harmoniously like an orchestra. In the end, we are all the UNESCO family. The three principal organs are like cogs in a wheel, where only when the three work together can the Organization function properly and fluidly.

13.4 I am fully confident that His Excellency, Ambassador Altay Cengizer, the President of our General Conference will guide the Member States with much wisdom throughout the next two years to enable UNESCO to deliver on the mandate of building peace in the minds of men and women. With these words, I would like to thank all of you once again for the confidence you placed in me as Chairperson of the Executive Board and to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve our beloved Organization, our UNESCO. Thank you very much.

#### 14.1 **The President:**

Thank you very much, your Excellency, for a very eloquent speech. We will always keep you in mind, you can be sure about that. This Organization is ours and it requires that we work together. Allow me now, please, to deliver a closing statement.

14.2 Madam Director General, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, distinguished heads of delegations, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I thank in utmost sincerity all the delegations for making this 40th session of the General Conference one that is to be especially remembered in years to come. Our proceedings do not only reflect a whole series of eloquent and convincing interventions, but goes further in offering a trove of meaningful and relevant points of reference that will guide us. The committees and commissions worked hard and with devotion to fulfil their duties. Their reports cannot only be seen as mere compilations. They are to be read carefully as they point to where we stand right now and to where we can go altogether. I thank them all and also, of course, the Legal Committee. I particularly wish to salute the interventions from small island developing States – after all, they constitute the other half of planet Earth. For those Members who came from faraway places and who might have already departed to their countries, I say thank you and see you again at the 41st session of the General Conference here in Paris at UNESCO Headquarters.

14.3 On the whole, we have had enlightening discussions with a large number of interventions. Madam Director-General, the distinguished Chairperson of the Executive Board, myself and all those persons that were sitting here today listened very carefully to your interventions, which I can only describe as powerful. I believe this discussion that we had over recent weeks enriched us all in a unique way, and I was happy to see that the delegations were listening to each other carefully. You made this gathering wonderful. The videos and proceedings of this General Conference should be taught and shown in universities because listening to our debates would enrich future diplomats. The morning of 12 November is far different than this evening of 27 November because we all reached a higher moral ground by our eloquent defense of our positions. However, let me at this juncture remind you of the high number of abstentions during the voting. Abstention does not reflect an incapability to make a decision. Abstention means that given the present context and with the amount of information supplied, especially with regard to the implications of a certain resolution, a delegation was not able to arrive at an informed decision. Hence, it would be worthwhile for everyone if we can be more in contact with each other and start a genuine conversation I undertake today before you all to play my part in this noble effort.

*(The President continues in French)*

14.4 Donc j'ai toutes les raisons de croire qu'une période fructueuse et moins controversée de deux ans nous attend. Nous clôturons la 40<sup>e</sup> session de la Conférence générale renforcés avec une morale élevée. Nous irons de l'avant. Nous voyons déjà les années suivantes comme une chance plus que tout autre chose. Une chance, en effet, de conduire l'UNESCO au premier rang parmi les autres agences du système des Nations Unies, de lui conférer une pertinence unique alors que nous efforçons à traiter efficacement les questions les plus importantes d'aujourd'hui.

*(Le Président poursuit en anglais)*

14.5 I am talking about real issues of today. Let us not forget that UNESCO has the potential to become a game changer because it has the capabilities and expertise to deal effectively and creatively with the contemporary issues of great importance. Let us remember that we have just received a bleak United Nations report talking of a planet in peril. This is only one issue among many that our Organization is capable of working towards in finding creative solutions and helping decision-makers. A San Diego based company is experimenting with drones that can locate whales and warn nearby ships to slow down. With artificial intelligence, researchers are trying to predict, treat and block breast tumours because we now have machines that register subtle changes that humans cannot. I have recently watched a video showing polar bear Tonja leading her cub off to water for the first time at the Berlin zoo. What a beautiful animal. But what are we going to do if they are to disappear?

14.6 Ladies and gentlemen, a few months after his election as Director-General of UNESCO in 1953, Luther Evans undertook a tour of visits to Member States. Some weeks later, when he came back to Paris, he called the directors to a meeting in his office at the Hotel Majestic and told them that UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization and the Secretariat should not be subversive. That is, UNESCO should work with governments and not against them. Apparently the intergovernmental nature of UNESCO created a certain level of tension from the very start. This is inescapable, but it is nothing to be worried about, let alone dramatized. We can work with each other and continue to strengthen the Secretariat. We can formulate our national positions. While doing so, we can take into account many factors. We can think about our national interests. There is nothing wrong in this. But what about our truly higher interests, our many interdependencies which continue to augment rather than shrink? There should be a way out. Formulating our national positions in the UNESCO context can help us all – that is, formulate in the usual way but at the same time take into account the UNESCO context. Here we stretch national interests so as to produce in greater quantities the public goods that States left to their own means would under-produce.

14.7 Distinguished delegates, Madam Director-General, the position of the President of the General Conference is an *in personam* position, but it does not mean that the President should be someone without a country, without a passport. Thank God we are all nationals of different countries. I therefore would like to thank the Turkish Government, which showed confidence in me, that I can remain just and unblemished throughout the execution of my duties.

14.8 I am thankful to my capable and hardworking delegation, especially Ms Eylem Tandogan, Deputy Permanent Representative, for taking due care of the incessant daily business of the delegation. I also thank those members of the delegation who came to Paris for the General Conference, especially to Professor Ócal Oğuz who presides over our National Commission. I thank heartily the vice-presidents of the 40th session of the General Conference, the Chairperson of the Executive Board, His Excellency Mr Lee Byong-hyun, and also the Director-General, the esteemed Madam Audrey Azoulay, and the Deputy Director General, Mr Xing Qu, and the chairpersons of the different committees and commissions. I also wish to thank our Legal Adviser, Mr Santiago Villalpando, and the Secretary of the General Conference, Ms Karima Bekri-

Lisner – and I wish her the best of luck in her future endeavours. Thanks also to her hardworking team. Let me say that I was amazed with their knowledge and efficiency: Mr Luis Salamanques, Ms Anna Bonetti, Ms Catherine Thiounn, Ms Lynda Zerguine, Ms Eunice Ong, Ms Sandra Gallet and Ms Nathalie Hellec. I should also like to thank, of course, my personal assistant, Ms Irena Caquet. Last but not least, I thank all those who ensure the smooth running of this session – the interpreters, the technicians, the clerks and the support staff. I repeat that my door is open to everyone, that I will be accessible in the rooms and approachable in the corridors. Thank you all very much.

*(Applause)*

14.9 We have thus come to the end of our last plenary meeting. I wish to thank you all again for your active participation, your thoughtful statements and the decisions that you have reached over the past two weeks. Before I use my new gavel for the first time, to mark the end of the session, we will listen to a short musical performance by the UNESCO choir. The choir is under the direction of Connie Glessner and is accompanied at the piano by its artistic director, Cyrille Kirilov. The first musical piece we will hear is the “Allegro” from the “Te Deum laudamus” by Franz Joseph Haydn, a great hymn of praise. It will be followed by “Dry your tears, Afrika”, a song written by the composer John Williams whose lyrics were adapted from a poem written by the celebrated Ivoirian poet, Bernard Binlin Dadié. Thank you.

*(Musical interlude)*

14.10 Thank you very much for this sincerely wonderful performance and very beautiful music. Dear friends, for those who will be leaving to go back to their countries, I wish you all a safe journey home. I now declare the 40th session of the General Conference of UNESCO **closed**. Thank you.

*The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.*