REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

NATIONAL STATEMENT

BY HON. DR. ITAH KANDJII-MURANGI, MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INNOVATION,

AT THE 40th SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE

13 November 2019
Paris
President of the 40th Session of the General Conference, Ambassador Ahmet Altay Cengizer

Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay,

Esteemed Colleague Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Namibia congratulates you, Ambassador Cengizer, on your election as the President of the 40th Session of the General Conference. Namibia pledges its full support and commits to working with you during your term of office.

2. The delegation further commends the Director-General for her superb leadership of UNESCO affairs demonstrated by her invaluable contributions to Agenda 2030 and the ongoing UNESCO Strategic Transformation agenda.

3. We strongly believe in a UNESCO that is well aligned to its identified strategic fields of competence; to supporting and strengthening international solidarity; and advancing the course of global thematic areas that further solidify UNESCO’s mandate and Agenda 2030.

Mr President,

4. Humanity faces many social challenges. And akin to other countries, Namibia faces the scourge of climate change. As a nation we experienced the most devastating drought in more than 30 years which has negatively affected human and animal welfare. This drought has heightened the
problem of water scarcity in the country as well as the need for advocacy and education on environmental sustainability. In spite of the current situation, through you, Director General, Namibia sincerely thanks UNESCO for its contribution of 40 000 US Dollars to our National Drought Emergency Fund. We also wish to thank many of the member states who provided moral and material support to us during these difficult and trying times.

5. The existing UNESCO Chair on Hydrology and the Water Sector at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) which is, aimed at advancing research to mitigate the impact of climate change, is a step in the right direction for many arid regions of the world. The UNESCO Chair is also linked to the work of Global Priority Africa, with the objective of strengthening Africa’s Science structures and augmenting pertinent training in research and capacity building.

Furthermore, the evidence-based work of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) is a welcome drive within the fold of UNESCO. This is the only intergovernmental platform dealing with water science and capacity building in the United Nations system and Namibia supports the proposal to establish an Intergovernmental Observatory of Water for Peace. In the same vein, Namibia welcomes the revision of the IHP statutes to be adopted by this session of the General Conference aimed at further strengthening the impact of the programme.

6. UNESCO’s advocacy work in the advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as part of Agenda 2030 is also highly commendable.
Mr President,

7. All forms of Violence; gender disparities; youth unemployment and poverty remain serious challenges that disrupt social cohesion and the equilibrium of peace and stability in our nations. In this regard, Namibia commends the outcome of initiatives such as the ‘Biennale of Luanda’ recently held in September 2019 aimed building strong institutions, systems and processes to advance the Culture of Peace in Africa.

8. In Namibia a strong education system that is accessible, equitable and provides equal opportunity for girls and boys remains a priority. Education is paramount to addressing youth unemployment and in Namibia the prominence given to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) under the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) speaks volumes of our targeted national skills development initiatives.

9. Namibia will play host to the 2020 African TVET Competition and I wish to, therefore, invite all African countries to Windhoek, Namibia in order to showcase what our Continent has to offer in that space.

Mr President,
10. Namibia also embraces the advances in Artificial Intelligence with the realization that it is a tool that should advance our country’s development agenda, industrialization, and optimize the benefits that may accrue to key sectors such as agriculture, health, housing and education. We, therefore, are looking forward to hosting the UNESCO Southern African Artificial Intelligence (AI) Conference during the second quarter of 2020 in Windhoek, Namibia. We once again wish to extend warm invitations to all member states within the Southern Africa Sub-region to attend this important Conference.

11. Another important milestone in the annals of UNESCO’s history in 2021 is the 30th Anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a free, independent and pluralistic press. This is an anniversary that will beg concerted efforts of all member states and the Secretariat to consider how best to make it a memorable celebration as we continue to deepen the core values of a free press. Namibia being the nation with the freest press in Africa believes that this is a cause every nation has to prioritise and transcend.

12. Finally, Mr President,
I wish to underscore that through purposefully focussed and UNESCO-led partnerships as envisaged under the various Academic chairs in the various fields of study and research that speak to our developmental challenges, we stand to unlock the potentials and innovative abilities of member states. Our concerted efforts aimed at building a Culture of Peace will open avenues for less conflict and long-term world peace and stability. Commitment to quality general education and technical and vocational training for the children of the world is a responsibility that every nation needs to invest and commit to.

What that, I thank you for your attention.

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