40th SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR TILAYE GETE, MINISTER OF EDUCATION OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

Mr. President of the General Conference,

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Madam Director-General,

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, upon your deserved election as Chairperson of the General Conference. I also applaud the Director-General and the Secretariat for the great work they are doing and their tireless effort in ensuring the successful conduct of our session. I would also like to convey the warm greetings of the President of Ethiopia, Her Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde, who is honored to Chair the Commission on the Futures of Education of UNESCO, and our Prime Minister, His Excellency Abiy Ahmed, who is the recipient of the 2019 UNESCO Houphet-Boigny Peace Prize and the 2019 Nobel Peace
Laureate. Ethiopia is indeed proud of these prestigious international recognitions. They are vivid testimonies of the positive and momentous changes that are currently on-going in the country.

We are building democratic institutions, we have levelled the playing field for open, fair and free political competition. We are strengthening the rule of law, the respect for human rights including freedom of expression and pluralistic media.

As a testament to these momentous political changes, we were given the honor and have successfully hosted the 2019 World Press Freedom Day in our capital, Addis Ababa. We appreciate the confidence and the honor bestowed upon us by UNESCO and the international community.

We are undertaking momentous economic reforms guided by homegrown policies targeting inclusive prosperity agenda and have created the conducive conditions for the continuation of fast and inclusive economic growth.

Education, science, technology and innovation are at the heart of our strategy to transform our society through developing a new Education and training Road Map.
We have made and are making great strides in making education accessible to all throughout our country. We are working hard to improve quality at all levels.

Our transformative prosperity agenda is based on sustainable development, including the protection of our environment and the tackling of climate change. As we have undertaken a massive tree planting campaign spearheaded by His Excellency the Prime Minister in person with the planting of trees, we are safeguarding our rich tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage sites.

Our aspiration for inclusive sustainable development is mainly dependent on ourselves, we are very grateful for all the support we receive from UNESCO.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Ethiopia, a founding member of the League of Nations, the United Nations and many international institutions including UNESCO, is a firm believer in the multilateral system.
The pressing global challenges we face, mainly the eradication of poverty and the reduction of global inequities, tackling climate change, combating of hate speech and fake news, and narrowing of the growing digital divide, require global solidarity. We should all unite to fight against these global challenges that affect all humanity. The eradication of poverty is predicated on the achievement of SDGs in general, and the access to quality education by all in particular. We encourage UNESCO to work with Member States to optimize and prioritize its activities so as to improve learning outcomes, especially for women, girls and marginalized communities in vulnerable locations.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

We all agree that UNESCO’s mandate is more relevant today than at any time in its long history. Yet, we have consistently under-invested in its work, particularly in its program in developing countries and in Africa. We fully support the ongoing Strategic Transformation of the organisation with a view to better respond to the needs of Member States.
However, as governing body, we need to give the Secretariat the necessary resources to undertake its activities and fulfill the important mandate we have entrusted it.

To increase their voluntary contributions, particularly in support of Priority Africa Program, the work of the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) and the African World Heritage Fund.

Last but not least, we need to reform the governance system of our organisation much more deeply than what we have attempted or are proposing to-date.

We need to have bigger ambitions by undertaking consensus-based, inclusive, comprehensive and transformative reform of the governance system with the objective of strengthening UNESCO and ensuring its success in the 21st century.

Thank you very much for your Attention.