Solomon Islands Speech by the Minister of Education and Human Resources Development – Hon John Moffat Fugui

- President of the General Conference,
- Chair of the Executive Board,
- Madam Director-General,
- Excellencies,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my distinct honor to be present, today, at this 40th UNESCO General Conference.

Mr. President, first, and foremost, allow me to register my appreciation to the Director General of UNESCO for the apt administration at the UNESCO headquarter, and throughout the UNESCO system, as a whole!

Today, Mr. President, when the world is faced with many challenges, such as: climate change, internecine wars, interminable violence, and unrelenting poverty – just to name a few, the role of UNESCO, as a platform for intellectual debate to foster peace and sustainable development through Education, Science, Social and Human Science and Culture remains ever critical!

Mr. President, I cannot stress enough the importance of education as part of my Ministry’s portfolio. The Solomon Islands Government has made the decision to move actively in this domain that include: literacy and numeracy and lifelong learning. We have also made important progress in primary and secondary education. We also expand and progress early childhood education development. Concomitant to all these, we have initiated focus on school-to-work program.

Mr. President, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a key area where Solomon Islands needs further cooperation and development assistance. In this important area, I renew our appeal to UNESCO to get a substantial programme on the road in the Pacific Islands countries. We await your response on such a program. As with all areas of education, the quality of teaching by teachers is key to quality learning. To train teachers, we need excellent higher education institutions and, of course, educators and academics. At this juncture, Mr. President, I am pleased to report that Solomon Islands has established its first National University (the Solomon...
Island National University – SINU) in 2012. This is progress we have made towards achieving SDG 4, target 4.3. As such, we are now able to accommodate a greater number of students WHO WISH to do tertiary training. These trained people are essential for our Labor Market.

In the area of Culture, Mr. President, we are making progress, especially in the areas of Intangible Heritage and Creative Industries.

Mr. President, Solomon Islands has ratified the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage on the 11th May 2018. This Convention has been entered into force on the 11th August 2019. Solomon Islands is the 178th UNESCO State to join and the 13th State in the Asia Pacific Region, to do so. But, Mr. President, Sir, we need further and better-focused support from UNESCO, is needed!

Mr. President, I wish to reiterate, again, that “climate change and particularly natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and cyclones are life-threatening realities to vulnerable Small Island Developing States, in the Pacific, including my own country - Solomon Islands.” I would like to, once again, call on UNESCO and our development partners to assist us in strengthening of Early Warning Systems and support for Disaster Preparedness Programs.

Mr. President, Solomon Islands is concerned about the budget cuts affecting our region. This has drastically affected the services provided by the Field Office in Apia, Samoa. Mr. President, this is the only office responsible for UNESCO’s work in the seventeen (17) Pacific Islands countries - we come from. Here, Mr. President, I wish to make a strong appeal for UNESCO to strengthen the regional office and make good on previous promises to be more effective on the ground.

Mr. President, although we come from small island states - in the Pacific – our peoples are burdened by some of the largest problems in the world. Make very sure, Mr. President, Sir, that your view of us is not jaundiced by the continental bias and prejudice most non-Pacific Islanders have suffered us for umpteen years. Mr. President, as you would well appreciate, Pacific Islanders are no less important than the rest of Others.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to categorically state that, Solomon Islands assures UNESCO of the support, the continuation and ongoing educational programmes towards the achievement of SDG No. 4 - quality education for all Solomon Islanders.
Mr. President, I wish UNESCO every success - in all its work, now, and in the coming years.

THANK YOU.