



**39<sup>TH</sup> UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE: NATIONAL STATEMENT  
READ BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION,  
MRS ANGELINA MATSIE MOTSHEKGA (MP) ON 03<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER  
2017, ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Madam President, let me congratulate you on your election as the President of the 39<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNESCO. You and the UNESCO collective leadership, can rest assured of our support as a Delegation and proud Member State of UNESCO.

The erstwhile President of the 38<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNESCO, Mr Stanley Mutumba, the Deputy Minister of Information and Communication Technology from the Republic of Namibia, our neighbour, you definitely managed the gavel in ensuring total observance of the Rules of engagement during your tenure as the President of the 38<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNESCO.

Madam Irina Bokova, the outgoing Director-General of UNESCO, your active engagement in international efforts to advance quality education for all, gender equality, the protection of cultural heritage as a humanitarian imperative, and the security of the planet, among many of your achievements as the Director-General of this august organisation, cannot go by unnoticed. Your deliberate efforts to recognise all regions

of the world equally, especially your deliberate elevation of the African Continent's agenda, your resoluteness against extremism, youth radicalisation, and hatred among the peoples of the world, are unequalled.

President Mutumba and Director-General Bokova, the South African Delegation that I lead, wish you all the best for the future. You are indeed visionary leaders, without whom, UNESCO would have not been where it is today. This you managed to do, despite the financial and other hardships associated with the multilateral agenda of this organisation. Thank you for your incisive stewardship.

Madam President, at the outset, let me state that the Republic of South Africa reaffirms its commitment to promoting a peaceful, equitable and just world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. The spirit of multilateralism, in support of global values, supported by the majority of the world's countries, is manifested in the spirit and actions of UNESCO through its various structures, programmes and activities. The Delegation that I lead, holds the view that if we are united in the vision for UNESCO, we will be able to find solutions together for the common interest of humanity.

We have noted and support the proposals made in ensuring the predictability of the financial stability of UNESCO. However, we would like to underline the importance of inclusivity in this process, particularly in terms of regional representativity. Related to this, we would like to

reiterate the importance of capacity-building, particularly in the field offices for the implementation of the flagship *Priority Africa Strategy 2014-2021* programmes, so that these offices can be impactful at the grassroots level, where it matters the most.

Madam President, the rise of prejudices, hatred and violence, which we see manifested in some regions and countries, and against particular sections of communities, makes UNESCO's mission and interventions even more urgent. As the Republic of South Africa, we note with concern, the reported rise of extremism and intolerance in the various parts of the world. These are tendencies that militate against the shared global values that UNESCO espouses.

The Republic South Africa reaffirms the role of UNESCO in the industrialised and developing world, geared at the eradication of the impediments towards human rights and human dignity, and towards a peaceful, secure and safe planet. Such impediments threaten many of our development gains we all year for.

Madam President, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hold hope for us, as they have been incorporated into our government's *National Development Plan: Vision 2030*, which has a 2030 horizon; and maps out the national development priorities for our country, which are articulated in the *2014-2019 Medium Term Strategic Framework* of our Government, and aligned to the *African Union's Agenda 2063*.

Focused on sector outcomes, South Africa has adopted a multi-layered integrated approach to planning and delivery, incorporating an evidence-based approach, driven through the Presidency and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. In addition, Statistics South Africa, a government agency, is enjoined to periodically provide our government with the requisite empirical evidence, data and statistics on a variety of issues.

Madam President, I am happy to announce that most recently, we released the *Sustainable Development Goals: 2017 Indicator Baseline Report*, which sheds light on the extent to which we have implemented the SDGs, and in what areas the implementation needs to be accelerated in order to rid South Africa of extreme triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. We are of the view that this *Baseline Report* will form a solid basis for high stakes decision-making, strategic planning, programme and intervention implementation, as well as funding and accountability imperatives in our country. The *Report* is accessible from the website – [SDG@stassa.gov.za](http://SDG@stassa.gov.za).

Madam President, I must stress that the deliberate integration of the SDGs with our country's *National Development Plan*, our Government's *Medium Term Strategic Framework*, and the AU's *Agenda 2063* is especially important in a complex sector like education, which in our country straddles basic education, vocational / technical education, as well as higher education and training. The global commitments in the

SDGs, help us to deepen the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of the people of South Africa and of other Member States globally.

In the basic education sector for example, several evaluations have been completed, in order to ensure that the implementation of strategic programmes, is aligned substantively to the anticipated outcomes envisioned in the *National Development Plan*, the basic education sector plan, and the AU's *Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2025*.

In conclusion Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, let me quote the wise words of President Nelson Mandela, when he said "*it is now in our hands to make a difference, through our contribution to humanity*". South Africa cannot afford to isolate itself from global partnerships striving for the betterment of humankind and the planet. We will continue our active membership to UNESCO, so that we can reap from the collective wisdom of Member States.

I thank you