

PLENARY STATEMENT BY

HONOURABLE OLIVIA GRANGE CD MP

MINISTER OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

On the Occasion of the

205th Session of the Executive Board

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

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- President of the 39th General Conference
- Chair of the Executive Board
- Director General of UNESCO
- Colleague Member States, Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring you greetings from Jamaica, the country which gave the world Music Icon - Bob Marley and Reggae Music, the father of Pan-Africanism - Marcus Garvey, and the fastest man on earth - Usian Bolt.

Each time I address this great organization, I am compelled to affirm Jamaica's commitment to its ideals, and our support for its ongoing programme of activities. We remain firmly committed to the goals and objectives of UNESCO, and will continue to collaborate with Headquarters, the Caribbean office and the Jamaica National Commission in the implementation of its programmes, which continue to have great impact on the lives of our people.

I want to use this occasion to acknowledge the 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and underscore the relevance it continues to have in shaping global conversations around women's rights and equality, elimination of all forms of discrimination, and fostering democratic ideals.

I also wish to again state Jamaica's support for the strategic reform of the organisation, led by Director General Ms. Audrey Azoulay. We share the view that the reform is timely and necessary, to realise increased focus on programme implementation, transparency, and effective governance. Jamaica, as many member states have articulated, is pleased to participate in this process in the spirit of cooperation, to create sustainable mechanisms to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

We do have a cautionary eye on the details as they unfold, particularly as it relates to budget allocations, but in principle, our support is unwavering.

We are particularly heartened by the fact that it is an inclusive process, meant to engage Member States and national commissions, with a view to achieving the goals of Agenda 2030.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Jamaica wishes to express solidarity with our colleagues in Brazil and indeed the rest of the world with the loss of the Museum in Rio. As a member of GRULAC we extend our support in the rebuilding effort.

Esteemed colleagues, Jamaica attaches great significance to Media and Information Literacy (MIL), as responsible media and technology play a vital role in promoting democratic values and fosters inclusive societies.

A UN recognized Global Media and Information Literacy Week is one way of strengthening UNESCO's MIL actions. I make reference to some of the steps implemented so far, such as the Grunwald Declaration 36 years ago, the Fez Declaration on MIL in 2011, the Moscow Declaration

on MIL in 2012, the Riga Recommendations on MIL in Shifting Media and Information Landscape in 2016, and the Youth Declaration on MIL also in 2016. The theme of this year's MIL Conference in Latvia and Lithuania is **“Media and Information Literate Cities: Voices, Powers and Change Makers”**. We have every confidence that it will be a success.

In keeping with my statement at the MIL conference hosted by Jamaica last year, where I committed to sustained efforts by Jamaica to lobby for the strengthening of the MIL programme, we have a draft resolution (205 EX/34) on the agenda at this session of the Executive Board, which calls for the formal proclamation of the Global MIL Week and for the strengthening of the MIL programme. We invite the support of all state parties.

Colleagues, UNESCO in 2015 established an award entitled “the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education” which honours

outstanding and innovative contributions made by individuals, institutions and organizations to advance girl's and women's education. We are extremely honoured that the Women's Centre Foundation of Jamaica was selected as one of two winners for the 2018 UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education. I also want to congratulate the Misr El Kheir Foundation in Egypt, for being the other winner this year.

We do not take this honour lightly, as the work of the Women's Centre Foundation of Jamaica tackles head on, school dropout due to early pregnancies. The Foundation gives tangible support to the babies and teen mothers and ensures that they return to school to complete their education, with over a 80% success rate.

Ladies and Gentlemen in this same vein, the delegation from Jamaica applauds the initiative introduced by our colleague from Ghana which is cosponsored by 16 other countries on the observance of an annual day of mathematics. While many of our countries are matriculating more women

in universities, a much smaller percentage of females are actively involved in STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We agree that the interdisciplinary nature of mathematics can be a catalyst for discussions around multiple issues and will serve to advance cooperation and dialogue in a number of critical areas.

We believe that UNESCO's remit continues to be of great importance to small island developing states like Jamaica, and also in the role it plays in softening tensions, within and between member states across the globe.

Colleagues ... I close with the words of Bob Marley .. which align seamlessly with the ideals of this Organization. One Love. One Heart. Let's work together to achieve UNESCO's goals and objectives.