



**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA  
TO THE  
205<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD  
ROOM X: FONTENOY BUILDING  
09 OCTOBER 2018**

President of the General Conference

Chairperson of the Executive Board

Director-General of UNESCO

Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to express South Africa's sincere condolences to the Republic of Indonesia on the loss of life and the ongoing devastation caused by the earthquake and tsunami in the past week.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Nigeria on behalf of Africa Group V (a).

On behalf of my Delegation, I would also like to thank the Director-General for the information that she provided and the Secretariat for the documents. While we acknowledge the effort to issue documents on time, there is room for improvement.

**Chairperson,**

South Africa has been actively involved in the discussion on the strategic transformation process proposed by the Director General. We have noted that there has been progress in the process aspects of the transformation project including the establishment of Administration

and Management Unit, and that the four thematic groups have begun their work in earnest. Notwithstanding this, we agree that UNESCO has yet to agree on the vision for the Organization, the nature of change as well as how best to implement it. Furthermore, our delegation has noted that the process underway seeks to incorporate the outstanding recommendations of past reform efforts, including those of the Working Group of Governance, procedures and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO which were endorsed by the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference, and we can only encourage efforts in this regard. South Africa would therefore like to see a strategic transformation that builds on those recommendations, among other reform initiatives.

We underscore once again, the need for the strategic transformation to be an inclusive process in which Member States will be consulted throughout all stages to help shape UNESCO into an Organisation that lives up to the aspirations of all its Members.

### **Chairperson**

Indeed the world needs a UNESCO that is fit to deal with the challenges of our modern world. This year South Africa celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the great Nelson Mandela who said. In this regard, South Africa was deeply honoured by the adoption of the Political Declaration at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit held in the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September this year. The yearning for peace has become more urgent. It is worth recalling in this regard that we cannot have peace where there is poverty and underdevelopment. It is therefore crucial that UNESCO's expertise be harnessed to address these challenges.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”, these were the words of Nelson Mandela. UNESCO's leadership and contribution in ensuring that more and more children and youth receive quality education and the requisite skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and ultimately bring about the enduring change we all yearn for, cannot be overemphasized.

South Africa commends UNESCO's contribution to Education in its coordinating capacity of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee. South Africa was one of many countries who attended and actively participated in the Pan-Africa High-level Conference on Education held in Nairobi, Kenya on 25-27 April 2018. This event took Member States a step forward in the implementation of SDG-4 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025), as well as Agenda 2063, the Africa we want.

We remain concerned about the gap in funding for the Education Major Programme, and express the hope that Education will be accorded the requisite funding in the carry forward of the remaining unspent Regular Budget funds.

Chairperson,

My delegation joins those who are extremely concerned by the plight of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) since the withdrawal by the host country, Switzerland, of its voluntary contributions to the Bureau as of 2018. South Africa acknowledges the pre-eminence of the IBE in matters of curriculum and its invaluable contribution to Member States in the development and strengthening of their curricula. We urge UNSECO to explore all possible avenues to ensure the continued existence of the IBE as a centre of excellence in curriculum.

Chairperson,

We believe that the UNESCO-Equatorial Guinea International Prize for Research in Life Sciences makes a commendable contribution to Science, an initiative which we support.

South Africa wishes to reiterate the importance of the STEM initiatives to foster the learning and research in the fields of mathematics and the sciences and we therefore note with concern the funding gap for the Science Sector in the 39 C/5. The IOS Reports have also highlighted this challenge, as well as the inadequate human resources. This is why our Delegation observed with interest the SFD that was convened by the Director-General last month, and commend this initiative. We hope that the Director-General's efforts will yield positive results which will assist in strengthening the support provided to the Science Sector. To this end, the Director-General may want to consider extending the reach of the SFD to ensure the active participation of African donors in future SFDs with a view to further broadening UNESCO's partnership base.

We would also like to commend the Member States for the initiative of celebrating an International Day of Mathematics. South Africa is glad to co-sponsor this item.

**Chairperson,**

The Field Network plays an essential role in the implementation of UNESCO Programmes, including in particular, Priority Africa's Flagship Programmes. It therefore stands to reason that these Offices should be adequately resourced and provided for in the 40 C/5, particularly with regard to equipping Field Officers with the requisite skills for resource mobilisation. The Southern Africa Sub-region has made its views known to the Director-General pertaining to the Southern African Regional Field Office, including on its current location to promote greater stability of the office.

South Africa welcomes the Human Resource Management Strategy for 2017-2022 and the efforts to bring about a more equitable geographical and gender balance. Efforts made through the Young Professionals Programme are commended. We would like to encourage UNESCO to expedite recruitment amongst under-represented and non-represented groups, particularly from the developing world, to redress imbalances in the Secretariat. The ongoing

recruitment from the countries of the Global North does not augur well if we are to redress these imbalances.

**Chairperson,**

The African Continent is rich in culture and natural resources. Acknowledgement of the nexus between the protection of culture and the exploitation of natural resources for sustainable economic development, particularly in Africa, is long overdue. We therefore look forward to discussions on this matter in the World Heritage Committee, in view of the preliminary discussions that our Minister of Arts and Culture had with the Director-General on this matter, including on liberation heritage.

In this context, South Africa successfully inscribed one of its natural sites, the Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains on the World Heritage List during the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of the WHC in Bahrain in July 2018, and the Groot Marico Biosphere Reserve was listed in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves during its 30<sup>th</sup> Session. We would like to thank the members of the World Heritage Committee for this recognition, as well as those of the International Coordinating Committee of the Man and the Biosphere Programme

We would like to take this opportunity to request the Director-General to continue her efforts to strengthen the capacity of African Member States in order to increase the number of African World Heritage sites on the World Heritage List.

Chairperson, the plight of the International fund for the Protection of Culture which is at risk of being closed down, remains a concern. This Fund is particularly important for young African artists to help them ply their trade. South Africa is among eight countries which pledged support to the Fund and calls on other Member States to make voluntary contributions to the Fund to ensure its preservation.

Indeed, Culture is an important vehicle to promote peace and sustainable development. South Africa is therefore proud to associate itself with the Felix Houphouet-Boigny Prize awarded for promoting, safeguarding and maintaining peace and looks forward to its next edition.

**Chairperson,**

South Africa thanks the Director-General for feedback on the updated action plan on the review of the MoW Programme. South Africa recognizes the universal value of the MoW Programme, in ensuring that preservation of our cultural identities is our crucial importance for past, present and future generations to come. The South African delegation recognises and acknowledges that the documentary heritage in archives, libraries and museums constitutes a major part of the memory and reflects the diversity of the peoples, languages and cultures.

South Africa will continue to work in support of not only preserving its collective memory, but in raising public awareness on its heritage.

Finally chairperson, South Africa looks forward to discussions on the collection of Member States contributions. We need to find balance in ensuring the adequate resourcing of the

Organization to ensure programme implementation, and sanctioning such that deserving Member States are afforded the space to contribute to UNESCO

In conclusion, may I wish the Board fruitful deliberations during this Session.

I thank you.