

**Address by Hon. Akila Viraj Kariyawasam Minister of Education, Sri Lanka
at the 205th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board.**

: Madam President of the General Conference,
: Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board,
: Madam Director General,
: Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am indeed honored and humbled with the opportunity of being present here at this momentous occasion and, address the Executive Board at a time the world is facing many challenges with rapid changes arising in a 21st Century knowledge society, with great strides in scientific and technological innovations on the one hand and, man made and natural disasters on the other hand. These are the challenges that, a global inter-governmental organization like UNESCO has to contend along with, its member states and continue to seek solutions, to address such situations and to achieve peace and sustainable development in a complex world.

We believe that education plays a vital role in shaping a country's social, cultural and personal life. The social and cultural foundations of an enlightened modern democracy are established at the age of, general education. Hence, the school system has central role to play in the development of a liberal democracy. In order to achieve and uphold those enshrined educational objectives, we are bound to provide quality education for our children.

Being a state party to international conventions and initiatives to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education for all. Sri Lanka is moving

towards sector-wide approach to achieve Sustainable Development Goals attuning to the global requirements. In order to sustain this, we have introduced some major educational reforms to achieve quality development, which include extending the age compulsory schooling for thirteen years to, assure that no child is left behind. This step will ensure that all children will achieve literacy, numeracy and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education.

It is also important to generate amongst stakeholders of education, on the inter-relationship between education and sustainable peace. We try our level best to introduce this culture, through our formal and informal education programmes.

In order to address issues of peace and sustainable development, holistic and integrated methods must be used in the teaching and learning processes, to impart values for respect for the dignity and rights of the other, including respect for the scarce resource, which is the environment. It should be our duty to provide the students with the knowledge to have healthy life styles, as also, knowledge of the economy and of society and, above all, the ability to inculcate positive attitudes.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates

I am pleased to mention that Sri Lanka had the honor and privilege of hosting of the 3rd International Day for, Universal Access to Information on 28th September 2018, under the theme, **“The Asian Digital Revolution: Transforming the Digital Divide into a Dividend through Universal Access”** with, national and international participation. Bringing out the **“Colombo**

Statement” the participants called upon UNESCO and its Member States, partners and stakeholders, to continue to support initiatives, to play a key role in advocacy, capacity building and dissemination, to promote access to information and knowledge education for all, women and men including through the principles of “Free and Open Sources of software” Right to Information, Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Ethical Norms and Behaviors Online, as keystones to accelerated development of inclusive knowledge societies.

Mr. Chairman;

As an island nation, Sri Lanka has agreed on a bold and coordinated approach to protect the Ocean. Sri Lanka has been mentioned by the international Community to be a champion of mangrove restoration, together with other countries, for other areas relevant to sustainable Ocean Development and conservation. As concerns forest cover, we are also, well ahead to reach our “Nationally Determined Contribution” target of 32%, as per the Paris Agreement by 2030.

Ladies & Gentlemen

UNESCO is expected to play a leading role in the implementation of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and in shaping the UN development agenda. We need to see a more agile UNESCO which is better equipped to quickly yet efficiently respond to the needs of its Member States and to emerging challenges. In this regard, Sri Lanka notes that several items of strategic importance are to be discussed during this session and wish to highlight the following:

In relation to the budget of the organization, Sri Lanka anticipates a concise and effective draft programme and budget for the next biennium using the integrated budget framework. With regard to the proposals for the unspent funds from the previous biennium, Sri Lanka is of the view that allocating Eleven Million for the next Fourty C/5 out of the unsent funds is practical as well as sustainable to maintain the budget ceiling of Five Hundred and Eighteen million given the current financial situation of the organization.

With regard to the Human Resources Management Strategy, Sri Lanka being a non-represented Member State at UNESCO, wishes to urge for equitable geographical representation with gender balance.

It is also important that UNESCO has struggled to maintain a competitive advantage in the UN system, Sri Lanka has noted the 'Strategic Transformation Process' launched by the Director-General with the aim of strengthening its programs while modernizing the organization to improve its strategic positioning. Sri Lanka hopes that this process will yield in positive results where UNESCO's overall efficiency, transparency and accountability are strengthened. In this respect, Sri Lanka expects to constructively contribute to this process and look forward to further engagement between the secretariat and the Member States.

However, Sri Lanka wishes also to reiterate that while invigorating the organization's overall performance though systematic yet innovative methods, UNESCO's intergovernmental nature should be maintained at all times.

I shall remain wishing all success in your endeavors.

Thank you.