

Joint Statement of ASPAC Group at the 207th Session of UNESCO EXB

14 October 2019

**Mr. Chairperson,
Madam President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General,
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates.**

As Vice Chair of the Asia Pacific Group, I have the honor to deliver this Joint Statement on behalf of ASPAC.

I thank you Mr. President for your able conduct of the work of the Executive Board. We would also like to thank the Director General and her team for bringing more focus and vitality to UNESCO's work.

As always, an exhaustive agenda is before us at the current session of the Executive Board. ASPAC group would play a positive and constructive role along with other Member States to realize our shared objectives and take forward UNESCO's mission.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASPAC Group in UNESCO is reflective of the diversity and dynamism of the Region. We underscore UNESCO's relevance today particularly in the struggles against climate change, preventing violent extremism, and raising guards against fake news. We reiterate the need to focus UNESCO's programs and activities in UNESCO's core mandates as well as areas where we have added value within the UN System; and to integrate the reform of the organization into the broader framework of the reform of the United Nations.

We note the progress in restoring the financial stability of the organization that is essential to its efficiency and program implementation. We welcome

the report on resource mobilization particularly with reference to the extra-budgetary contributions. While we welcome this enabling environment, it is important to make more voluntary contributions non-earmarked so that UNESCO has the flexibility to better manage its program activities and focus on its core objectives.

We agree on the need to enhance visibility of UNESCO across the world and to strengthen its role as an intellectual platform reflecting on new and emerging challenges in the fields of education, science and communications. UNESCO has a lead role in addressing ethical challenges of Artificial Intelligence as well as Bioethics.

As to the Director General's initiatives on Strategic Transformation of UNESCO especially the High-Level Reflection Group, ASPAC Member States note the selection of the group and would like to be informed on its deliberations and recommendations to the Director General reiterating the need for transparency and good governance.

Ongoing reforms of the Memory of the World Program are crucial for program continuation. The extension of the Open-ended Working Group will help in arriving at a consensus to make the Program more transparent.

As one of the largest electoral groups in UNESCO, ASPAC is the most underrepresented in terms of number of seats it currently has on the Board. We stress the need for a fair and equitable allocation of Executive Board seats and to this end, invite all Member States to start deliberations on the possible ways to rectify seat allocation on the Board.

Mr. Chairperson,

The current session is a platform for collective reflection and action; let us strengthen mutual trust and collaboration. Let us not forget the ideals of UNESCO and develop educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hatred and intolerance, work towards a common goal so that each child and citizen has access to quality education; and promote cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures to strengthen bonds among nations. With this vision in mind, ASPAC Member States will contribute to the achievement of common goals and shared aspirations and will strive for the principles of multilateralism enshrined in the Charter of UNESCO.

I thank you Mr. President.