

207th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board
9th – 23rd October, 2019

ELECTORAL GROUP V (A) STATEMENT

BY
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Madam President of the General Conference,
Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madam Director-General,
Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Group V(a) would like to pay tribute to late Ambassador Patrick Seddoh, former Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Ghana and Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board (1983-1985), who contributed immensely to the work of UNESCO and this Board. We express our condolences.

2. Group V(a) thanks the Director-General for the documents, as well as her introduction to the Plenary Debate.

3. Let me begin with **Global Priority Africa**. We appreciate the efforts of the PAX Sector to forge new partnerships in support of Priority Africa activities and in the provision of strategic guidance for the implementation of the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa. The Group congratulates the Government of Angola for the organisation of the first edition of the Pan African

Forum for the Culture of Peace “**Biennale of Luanda**”, in cooperation with UNESCO and the African Union.

4. In line with the implementation of objectives 16 (Peace, Justice, and strong institutions) and 17 (Partnerships) of the Agenda 2030; the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063 on the search for a sustainable peace; as well as UNESCO's Operational Strategy, the Biennale for the Culture of Peace in Africa deserves a strong follow-up action.

5. In this regard, we note with satisfaction that in the Draft Resolution for the PAX Sector, to be examined at the 40th General Conference, the Director-General has been requested to “mobilize and extend partnerships and networks in support of the promotion of a culture of peace in Africa, including the follow-up of the Pan-African Forum for a Culture of Peace, ‘Biennale of Luanda’”. We urge the Director-general to propose concrete follow-up activities. We also appeal that the PX Commission considers the adoption of the Draft Decision on the subject.

6. Excellencies, the Priority Africa Programme was initiated in June 1989 as part of the 1990-1995 Medium Term Plan. In the foreword to the programme document, the then Director-General, wrote that UNESCO has always achieved great things, despite limited financial resources. Therefore, nothing should prevent us from overcoming the challenge of underfunding indicated in the summary strategic assessment of the implementation of Priority Africa.

7. Madam Director-General, the Members of the Bureau of the Africa Group, at a meeting held with you shortly after your election, highlighted the need to re-conceptualise the Priority Africa Programme. This is still our view and we encourage the Secretariat, to engage in a reflection leading to a new programme

framework in the upcoming Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4), which will include areas of cooperation with the African Union Commission and the Regional Economic Communities. There is also need to identify measures to ensure its proper funding, such as proposed by ADG/PAX during the dialogue held with Permanent Delegations on 7th October.

8. Concerning **field network**, the Africa Group looks forward to the report on UNESCO's presence worldwide to be submitted to the Executive Board at its 209th session (April 2020) as part of UNESCO's Strategic Transformation, and hopes that the Secretariat will consult Member States of UNESCO widely before taking final decisions on the new field structure.

9. In **Science**, the Africa Group emphasizes the need to strengthen the mandate of the IHP as the only intergovernmental platform dealing with water science and capacity building in the United Nations system and welcomes the proposal to establish an Intergovernmental Observatory of Water for Peace and the revision of the IHP statutes to be adopted by the 40th session of the General Conference

10. We appreciate the work accomplished by the IOC in the preparatory phase of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030); and call on the IOC to strengthen capacity building and awareness raising for inclusive participation, in particular from Africa.

11. In **Education**, we urge the Secretariat to reinforce its cooperation with the Africa Union to ensure the effective implementation of SDG4-Education 2030 in line with AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA, 16-25), in cooperation with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). On the International Bureau of Education (IBE), considering the

utmost importance of curriculum development for Member-States as underscored by IOS in document 207 EX/13.INF, our Group calls for the option that will uphold the foundational building block of the education system of Member-States in a cost-effective manner. We therefore expect the Secretariat to pay due attention to maintaining the original mandate of the IBE to provide technical assistance in curriculum.

12. In **Culture**, we appreciate UNESCO's continued efforts to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Africa and particularly welcomes the recently organized Regional Meeting dedicated to Indigenous African languages in July 2019, organized in Addis-Ababa. Furthermore, Africa Group supports a proclamation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages as one of the key conclusions of the International Year and a way forward to ensure sustainability of already taken measures.

13. Finally, Group V (extends its warmest congratulations to Ethiopia for the deserving award of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali.

Thank you for your attention.