

Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO

Paris

Draft Statement for India's Representative to UNESCO

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Madam President of the General Conference;

Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board;

Madam Director General;

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address this gathering on this very special occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. At UNESCO, we celebrated this momentous occasion by bringing the Mahatma alive once again as a hologram which spoke his wise words in his own voice. We would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to the participants and the Secretariat of UNESCO for their overwhelming support to the 4th Ahinsa lecture held on 1 October 2019.

2. In public perception, democracy provides people an opportunity to choose the Government which in turn is supposed to meet their aspiration and expectation. But Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the real power of democracy that would offer dignity to each and every one irrespective of his or her social, economic, cultural station in life. He pioneered a social system that did not depend on the government. He brought change, it is well known, but it is also fair to say that he awakened the inner strength of the people and awakened them to bring about change.

3. To bring about this awakening, Gandhi ji brought attention to seven vices in society. These are:

Politics without principles
Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Knowledge without character
Commerce without morality
Science without humanity
Worship without sacrifice

4. Whether it is climate change or addressing developmental challenges, the above mentioned principles could act as a guide to protect humanity and restore the sensitive bond between man and nature. Realization of the follies committed by human beings; ^{indicate} ~~above~~, would pave the way to a peaceful, harmonious, inclusive and integrated world order. We have to remember ^{that} ~~the~~ Gandhian assertion that if everyone does his duty, everyone else would get their rights. The challenge before humanity is to put these revelations of truth into practice and strive to ~~leave~~ ^{create} a better world for generation ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. As always, an exhaustive agenda is before us at the current session of the Executive Board. India has always played a positive and constructive role to realize our shared objectives and take forward UNESCO's mission and will continue to do so during this session. We will continue to encourage UNESCO to focus its programs and activities on its core mandate. We reiterate the need for UNESCO to integrate the reform of the organization into the broader framework of the reform of the United Nations.

6. In light of this, we look forward to being informed about the changes that have taken place within Director General's initiatives on Strategic Transformation of UNESCO, especially the High-Level Reflection Group. We would like to see consensus-based reforms to the important Memory of the World Program in the future.

7. We would also like to add that fundamental changes to the structure and constitution of the organization should be done in a spirit of collaboration. We believe that proposed changes to the constitution do not have a consensus and therefore require further examination.

8. The proposed amendments which have a bearing on the payment of dues by Member States may disproportionately affect the voting rights of the developing countries and thereby prevent the participation of the very

Member States that may most need this organization. They too require careful examination.

Ladies and Gentlemen

9. I am happy to inform you that in India, we are trying our best to achieve the targets set up under SDGs particularly SDG 4. We are in the process of finalizing a new National Education Policy which would give added impetus to efforts in quality enhancement, skill development and entrepreneurship.

Ladies and Gentlemen

10. In this new technology driven era, we will have to give new direction and energy to multilateralism, to the United Nations system, and to UNESCO. We thank the Director General for her leadership and guidance in this area. I would like to end with the reaffirmation of India's commitment to a consensus driven approach, multilateralism and UNESCO.

Thank you for giving me the floor.