

**DRAFT STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY SHEILA SEALY MONTEITH
AMBASSADOR/PERMANENT DELEGATE OF JAMAICA
TO THE PLENARY OF THE 207TH SESSION
OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Mr. Chairman
Madame Director General
Distinguished Colleagues

The delegation of Jamaica aligns itself with the statement delivered by Brazil on behalf of GRULAC.

We find it necessary to refer with regret, sympathy and solidarity, to the devastation occasioned to another member of the UNESCO SIDS family, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, by Hurricane Dorian in September of this year.

This development serves as another reminder that climate change is real. Its destructive impacts on SIDS demand increased attention and focus from this august body. Viewed in that context, the recently-held Caribbean Forum Advocating for SIDS was indeed timely, as it brought into sharp focus a number of important already-known realities and corresponding proposals for action, in relation to the SIDS agenda. We wish to highlight its affirmation of the catalytic role of the National Commissions, by which these bodies were able to present their views on how to strategically reposition the UNESCO SIDS Action Plan. The Forum also allowed for a SIDS consultation process with Permanent Delegates,

in preparation for the SAMOA Pathway High-level Review at the United Nations General Assembly.

It is now patently clear that in our response to the SIDS imperatives, it cannot be business as usual. SIDS must be a global priority plan for UNESCO, like Gender and Africa before it.

Mr. Chairman

Jamaica is mindful of the ongoing budgetary constraints impacting the delivery of UNESCO programmes. At the same time, we are heartened by the work being done to increase the appropriations to the regular programme budget, as a consequence of donations and special contributions.

Our delegation takes note of the significant work being undertaken in utilizing artificial intelligence across UNESCO Conventions and inter-governmental organizations. The recognition of what is possible within this sphere is an exciting one. We are happy to say that the Caribbean is not about to be left behind, as we seek to host a Caribbean Forum on Artificial Intelligence in the coming year. Further, we reiterate the need for policy decisions in the Caribbean region on the implications of AI for a range of sectors, including labour, agriculture, tourism, business process outsourcing (BPO), information and communications technology and education.

Mr. Chairman

The efforts of the Director General in the context of the strategic transformation of the Organisation are of keen interest to Jamaica. We note the work already underway towards the timely implementation of the three pillars and are pleased with the progress in pillar 1 through the Sector for Administration and Management. Pillars 2 and 3 are advancing and we look forward to greater operational efficiency and progress under the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029, in the context of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Jamaica is mindful of the continued efforts to improve the working methods of some of our bodies, including of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations, emphasizing the importance of its alignment to our collective vision of an effective Organisation. We were pleased to have chaired the work of this body over the past two years.

Jamaica continues to support initiatives in UNESCO's main priority areas of Gender and Youth; the upcoming event organized by the SHS Sector of the Kingston Cluster Office on "Promoting Youth Leadership on Climate Change between Knowledge and Decision-making", together with the 'Men4GenderEquality', which are clear and positive indications to our commitments in these areas.

On matters such as the Memory of the World Programme and the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (IFPC), Jamaica is pleased to see the strategic plans moving forward towards the implementation of the objectives for the reform of both programmes.

Finally, we join other members of this Board in support of continued and necessary action by UNESCO against violent extremism, racial discrimination and intolerance among cultures and peoples. In its celebration of the International Year of African Descent, and consistent with the UN Decade for the purpose, Jamaica is pleased to see the resolution for the celebration of African and Afro-descendant Culture and commend it to the Board for approval.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.