

PHILIPPINES

Statement of H.E. Maria Theresa P. Lazaro
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Philippines
207th Session of the Executive Board

Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. Chairperson, for your leadership of the Executive Board, as well as Madame Alaoui for her effective Presidency of the General Conference. We also thank the Director-General for her remarks and efforts to promote UNESCO. It is vital for all three organs to work together with a common vision and shared responsibility.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

New realities beset our world today. It is a complex multipolar system with technology enflaming geopolitical tensions; the fabric of societies are disrupted from within, creating schisms across the globe as nationalistic tendencies grapple, often violently, with globalization.

With the climate crisis, economic recession and prolonged conflicts in many parts of the world, one can only wonder if we are not merely repeating the mistakes of the past, again foregoing international norms and solidarity in favor of narrow self-interests? On the verge of celebrating UNESCO's 75th anniversary in 2020, we must ask ourselves this essential question.

We can draw inspiration from the spirit and letter of the UNESCO Constitution, and work towards renewing UNESCO, adapting it to the challenges of today and the needs of a diverse and dynamic global community.

The Philippines reaffirms its support to UNESCO and highlights the governance reform and strategic transformation processes, whose aims are complementary. A more open and agile UNESCO, delivering on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, should be one that is inclusive, participatory, and balanced – where all its Member States, big and small, large contributors, as well as those with more modest means – have reasonable opportunities to serve on the Executive Board.

Hence, we strongly support rotation as a principle of good governance and means to enhance multilateralism and international cooperation. It embraces the values of UNESCO and the SDGs of diversity, equity, solidarity and leaving no one behind. In fact, since the beginning of UNESCO in 1945 until the 1991 Constitutional reform, members of the Executive Board were subject to term-limits. Likewise, the General Conference, under whose authority the Board functions, voted on and endorsed a very clear recommendation at its 39th session in 2017. Extensive discussions have taken place on this issue for years. Thus, 37 co-sponsor Member States have submitted an amendment to the Article V of the Constitution to the 40th session of the General Conference.

Noting the call for more intersectoral activities, we encourage synergies not only between programme sectors, but also among the wide array of Category I and II centres, and UNESCO international and intergovernmental bodies. This is a key finding of the Working Group on

Governance: the various councils, programmes and institutes continue to work, largely, in silos. We have many resources in-house that we may not be using optimally. We encourage Member States, the Secretariat and relevant bodies to look into this. For the programme and budget, there is a need to take into account the views of all Member States in determining the acceptable scenario.

Looking to the forthcoming 41 C/4 Mid-Term Strategy, we believe there should be a sharper focus on the outcomes we want to achieve, rather than on quantitative outputs, through a robust results framework. We also call on donors to un-earmark their extra-budgetary contributions so that the Organization can focus on system-wide priorities agreed by the Board and General Conference.

We underscore the importance of ethics, transparency and equitable geographic representation throughout the Organization. We wish to see the Administration resolutely address all alleged reports of fraud and misconduct in a timely manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to share some of the Philippines Government's recent gains in implementation of the SDGs related to UNESCO's mandate:

- The Philippines has achieved near universal primary school enrollment at 94.2%;
- The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report highlighted progress in ensuring access to education for vulnerable

groups, such as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, out-of-school youth and overseas Filipinos;

- The Green Jobs Act promotes decent jobs that are environment-friendly, protect ecosystems and biodiversity, and help minimize waste generation and pollution;
- Maternity leave benefits have been significantly expanded by new legislation;
- On climate action, partnership between academe and the government provides weather information in real-time for disaster preparedness; and
- Ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law is building foundations for lasting peace and prosperity in Mindanao in the southern Philippines.

In the context of UNESCO's contributions to peace and security, we would like to ask Madame Director-General if the Organization has established cooperation or dialogue with the UN Peacebuilding Commission. As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, we would also like to inquire about UNESCO's enhanced role on climate action.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and we wish all colleagues a fruitful 207th session of the Executive Board.