

St Vincent and the Grenadines
207th session of UNESCO's Executive Board
Tuesday 15 October 2019
Plenary Debate

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Mme President of the General Conference,
Mme Director General,
Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

- Climate crisis is a question of environmental and social climate justice, beyond mere physical and environmental matters. We all witnessed how The Bahamas was brought to its knees by Hurricane Dorian. At the UN General Assembly, the Island States unanimously stressed that our efforts to fight this scourge must be matched with diligence and wit. It must be guided by genuine international political will to face the ethical, human and social challenges resulting from natural disasters and hazards.

- This creates upon us, in this assembly, the obligation to nurture UNESCO's role as a specialized agency in bringing policy advice and capacity building, enabling the most vulnerable countries to forge, in a cross-disciplinary manner, more sustainable and resilient societies in our ever-changing world.
- We therefore support Natural Sciences and IOC's works *inter alia* activities on disaster risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation, tsunami alert systems, waters and biodiversity. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is moving swiftly to complete the work to have Tsunami ready communities in our most vulnerable populations.
- Now more than ever, we recall the timeliness of UNESCO's 2017 Declaration on ethical principles in relation to climate change. We look forward to its follow-up. We also look forward to an adjusted SIDS Action Plan following Samoa pathway review outcomes.

- Mr Chairman, St. Vincent and the Grenadines recognizes the critical role youth plays in the preparation of the future. It is “them” who will face the challenges we are creating today. Our generation will be accountable for how it prepares, involves and entrusts them with the future. Emphasis must be placed on programmes anticipating their future needs, attractive enough to inspire them and to enhance their commitment.
- In education, we continue to ensure quality of education for all. Our Government took the initiative to reintegrate marginalized youth – especially young males, back into society. We also put an exceptional emphasis on Special Education. While we continue to encourage inclusive education, further steps are required to ensure that teachers receive the pre-requisite training to work with visually impaired children.

- Furthermore, UNESCO's education programs remain key priorities and need continuously for further scaling up, mainly the access to quality education, TVET opportunities, lifelong learning and Science, Technology and Innovation. Lastly, curriculum updates become essential, where human skills and competencies take a legitimate and full-fledged place.
- Mr Chairman, St Vincent and the Grenadines thanks the Director General and her team for the dialogues established with the Permanent Delegations on the Organization's Strategic Thinking and for the consultations with the National Commissions.
- We hope this process leads to an efficient elaboration of a new mid-term strategy. We wish to see the C/4 developed on the basis of a clear vision, reflecting the world's actual challenges and above all, responding to the needs expressed by Member States in an interconnected world.

- Yes, we do not all face the same challenges or have the same needs, but we all stand steadfast in our belief in the relevance of UNESCO's mandate, its ability to deliver at various levels to achieve equity. We reaffirm our trust in the staff's capacities and dedication and commend their cutting-edge expertise; it is crucial to maintain and bolster the added-value of a specialized UN Organisation such as ours.
- Mr Chairman, we believe that UNESCO needs to be modernized in an agile and yet adapted manner. Work has already been initiated. However, hasty measures such as the ones related to staff mobility or new sectors' structures, should have been subject to further analysis and consultations. We would like to see future actions planned in the light of Pillar 3's outcomes. The re-configuration of UNESCO's field network and the re-design of staff policies such as mobility, career development and recruitment requirements would result from these outcomes and the final objectives of the strategic transformation.

- Additionally, we strongly defend the equitable geographical distribution within the Secretariat. St Vincent and the Grenadines remains unrepresented. We stand ready to explore the situation with the Human Resources Division.
- Mr Chairman, St Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its dedication to UNESCO's mission of creating a peaceful and inclusive society and its commitment in contributing to achieving 2030 agenda.

Thank you for your attention.