



**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE 207<sup>TH</sup>  
SESSION OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**PARIS, FRANCE**

**ROOM X: FONTENOY BUILDING**

**14 OCTOBER 2019**

Chairperson of the Executive Board

President of the General Conference

Director-General

Dear Colleagues and distinguished delegates,

South Africa expresses its appreciation to the Director-General for her opening statement and the Secretariat for all the preparations for this session of the Executive Board.

My delegation endorses the statements of the **Africa Group V (a)** and the **Non Aligned Movement** delivered by Nigeria and Venezuela, respectively. In addition, we would like to make the following statement in our national capacity.

**Chairperson,**

Discussions on the 2020-2021 Programme and Budget have reached a critical stage. There are a few options on the table for consideration by Member States. What is evident however is that the Organisation is called upon to do more with less without compromising the programmes especially those benefitting developing countries. My delegation will continue to constructively engage with other delegations in order to arrive at a consensus on the Programme and Budget.

**Excellencies,**

Global Priority Africa is important for the African continent. This initiative was intended to place Africa at the centre of UNESCO's programmes. It is almost 3 decades since its inception. It has become necessary and urgent that this programme should be assessed in order to make it more impactful and strengthen its alignment to the African continent's development plan, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. We should thus ensure that UNESCO's Medium Strategy 2022-2029 responds to this imperative.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

My delegation is closely following the process of *Strategic Transformation* initiated by the DG. This process is important because it holds the promise of making the Organisation fit-for-purpose. As previously stated, it is critical that there is sufficient consultation with all Member States in order for this process to yield expected outcomes.

**Chairperson,**

South Africa shares the sense of urgency for (not in)? addressing the climate emergency, not least because we have experienced the adverse impacts thereof, including extreme drought, but also because of its potential adverse impact on our biodiversity. This is why South Africa continues to attach significant importance to the Man and the Biosphere Programme of UNESCO. South Africa is one of the third most bio diverse countries in the world, and also one of the 17 mega diverse nations when it comes to plant and marine species. South Africa also has highest number of Biosphere Reserves in Africa.

In this regard, we would like to extend our appreciation to Germany for partnering with us in building capacity in our region. Through this partnership we have assisted with the establishment of the first eSwatini Biosphere Reserve namely, the Lubombo Biosphere Reserve which was designated during the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the International Coordination Council (ICC) of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, held in June this year. We continue to work with other countries in the region towards the same objective.

On the Oceans, South Africa hosted in 2017 and 2018, two training research expeditions on the SA Agulhas II in order to create scientific and technical capacity for the Africa region. 150 Scientists from 17 African countries participated in this Mission. South Africa is looking forward to participating in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030, as well as in the IOC organized activity to revive the Global Ocean Observations Systems for Africa (GOOS-Africa).

We also look forward to the continuation of Phase three of the GGRETA Project, within the context of the International Hydrological Programme, upon submission of the reports of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase in order to make a comprehensive assessment of the status quo prior to the commencement of Phase three. In this regard, we wish to recognize the support of the Swiss Development Agency to the GGRETA Projects.

In the field of Culture, South Africa underscores the continuing importance of UNESCO's support to address the underrepresentation of Africa on the World Heritage List. Out of 1121 World Heritage Sites globally, only 137 such sites are located in Africa, whilst Africa is over-represented on the List of World Heritage in Danger, with 22 out of 54 sites in danger being in Africa. South Africa hosts the African World Heritage Fund, a UNESCO Category 2 Centre which provides funding and technical support for the effective conservation and protection of Africa's natural and cultural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value, as well as to develop an ongoing strategy to deal with challenges that most African States Parties have in implementing the 1972 World Heritage Convention, including the rehabilitation of sites inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. We therefore call on Member

States to support Africa in this endeavour, by contributing to the African World Heritage Fund.

Chairperson, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge UNESCO's support during a train-the-trainer and peer learning on participatory monitoring workshop on the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions held in South Africa, on 13 – 20 September 2019 which included participants from Southern and Eastern Africa States. The objective of this workshop was to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of governmental and civil society actors in monitoring and reshaping their cultural policies through the elaboration of quadrennial reports.

We also appreciated the contribution of UNESCO under the Information for All Programme (IFAP) when South Africa, celebrated the International Day for Universal Access to Information on 27 September 2019 in collaboration with various partners, including the South African NATCOM for UNESCO, Media Monitoring Africa, and the African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics. The celebration focused on universal access to the internet in view of the importance of the internet in facilitating the exercise of the right of access to information, which is recognized as a justiciable right in the Constitution of our Republic.

I thank you.