

**SPEECH TO THE UNESCO 207TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
TO BE DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE MR. DAVID MABUMBA, MINISTER
OF GENERAL EDUCATION**

The Chairperson of the Executive Board

The President of the General Conference

Madam Director General

Distinguished Delegates

Excellencies

Chairperson, let me begin by expressing gratitude to the efforts of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia following the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to him. The world needs peace and such efforts should be commended.

Chairperson, the 207th session of the Executive Board comes at a critical moment. We are going to take key decisions on the budget, on the strategic transformation and on the future of the International Bureau of Education just to mention a few. There is need for the Board to examine the agenda items very carefully because the decisions that will be taken will have long term impact on the future of UNESCO. Zambia looks forward to the outcome of the debates.

Zambia wishes to express support to the issues raised by Nigeria, Vice-Chair of the Africa Group on the Executive Board.

I would like to commend the Director-General and staff involved in the strategic transformation for the work that has been done so far. My country has noted that some progress has been made when one considers the document to be examined at the 207th session compared to what had been reported during the 206th session. It is gratifying to learn the establishment of the Internal Communications Board and also the new Partnership Directorate. Zambia would like to hear more about the Partnership Directorate, namely its composition, its mandate and what its future plans are to mobilise partnerships for UNESCO.

I would like to commend the Secretariat for ensuring that Member States are informed about what is happening on the strategic transformation and we hope this will continue. My country's main interest is to see that the organisational renewal and adaptation of UNESCO lead to greater operational efficiency in the way UNESCO responds to the needs of its Member States especially in its fields of competency. As part of the Strategic Transformation, my country would want to see a rebranded and repositioned UNESCO with greater visibility such as UNICEF.

Concerning Human Resource Mobility, Zambia appreciates the need to ensure that members of staff do not stay in one place for a very long time. However, my country would like to see this exercise done cautiously so that we do not lose staff in certain key strategic positions. The staff of UNESCO is the greatest asset of the Organisation and hence the need to conduct the mobility exercise carefully.

Chairperson, please allow me to turn to the field network. As the Secretariat is coming up with proposals on the new field structure, there is need to ensure that Africa which is one of the key priorities of UNESCO has a sufficient number of these offices as well as competent staff that will help address the challenges of the region. I also wish to stress the need for wide consultation on this important issue before decisions are taken.

With regard to literacy, it is gratifying to note that we shall be examining an item on UNESCO's strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy. There is a lot that needs to be done to improve levels of literacy. Zambia looks forward to benefit from UNESCO in this area.

On the budget, Zambia has no objection to the 534.6 million option as it will help the Organisation meet its expectations. Notwithstanding the budget debate and the decision to be made, it is Zambia's expectation that UNESCO will continue to deliver its mandate anchored on managing for results.

Mr. Chairperson, no nation can develop without science. One wonders what kind of world this would be without science. Science holds answers to many of the challenges facing mankind. In this regard, my country would like to ensure that science is the heart of its development agenda. A Directorate to take care of science in the country was set up and we have an ambitious programme to transform many secondary schools into STEM Schools.

It is therefore gratifying to note that UNESCO is promoting Open Science. My Government supports the initiative to come up with a recommendation on Open Science aimed at making scientific knowledge more accessible.

May I take this opportunity to stress the need for UNESCO to deepen its efforts towards assisting Member States to manage climate change. In his State of National Address to the National Assembly, the President of the Republic of Zambia H.E Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu delivered a speech titled 'accelerating sustainable development for a better Zambia amidst the impact of climate change. Zambia is not an exception to climate change effects and calls for global collaboration and response in managing the effects of climate change. This is because with the effects of climate change, many countries find it difficult to implement Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education.

As a consequence of climate change, my Government commends the work being done by the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP). Water is very important for every community. People need clean and safe water. The Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme is well placed to promote water research and water education. Thus, there is need for this important body to be strengthened.

Zambia has noted the reforms being carried out at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) such as the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Panel. This and several other reforms may lead to

duplication of the work done by IHP. Specialised Agencies of the United Nations need to complement each other and not compete against each other.

Chairperson, the need to address the challenges of early marriages and early and unintended pregnancy is something that is top on the agenda of my country. My President, His Excellence Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu underscored Zambia's commitment to fight against early child marriages during the recently held United Nations General Assembly. Zambia submitted this matter to be considered on the agenda of the 207th session because we believe that there are many countries that are affected by early marriages and hence the need to think together and find a solution this challenge. Zambia looks forward to more countries supporting and co-sponsoring the draft resolution.

It is gratifying to note the work UNESCO has done in this area, among them, the recently-launched initiative, ***Her education, Our future*** which seeks to accelerate action for girls' and women's education.

Many girls have missed their opportunity to proceed with their education as a result of early marriages, early and unintended pregnancies.

As I end my speech, Zambia looks forward to the support of Member States of UNESCO for this important item of the agenda.

I thank you Mr Chairperson