



**Republic of Namibia**

**NATIONAL STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY ALBERTUS AOCHAMUB,  
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT DELEGATE TO UNESCO**

**AT THE  
209<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Paris, France**

**02 July 2020**

**Chairperson of the Executive Board**

**President of the General Conference**

**Madam Director-General**

**Colleagues, members of the Executive Board**

1. Allow me to salute the able leadership of the Chair of our Board who has managed to ensure that we finally gather for this 209<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board against the backdrop of one of the most devastating global pandemics in recent memory.
2. We also wish to recognize the tremendous efforts of our Secretariat under the leadership of our Director General, the work of all UNESCO men and women in the field offices worldwide, the National Commissions all working in tandem to promote peace in the minds of men and women.
3. We remain resolute in our belief that with the age-old sense of solidarity which forms the bedrock of our organization, we will eventually restore hope and dignity of all our people whose lives are being decimated by this unprecedented pandemic.
4. Namibia appreciates all the efforts being made by UNESCO to address the challenges in our education systems across the world that have been brought to a grinding halt. Many of our countries continue to face the twin challenges of *affordability* and *access* to bandwidth and equipment as we transition to Virtual Schooling. But with the various initiatives being considered we should be making significant inroads.

5. UNESCO is being challenged to innovate as the creative, scientific and intellectual hub of the UN system. We need to carefully consider all our options and approaches to dealing with the mountainous challenges confronting us all as we finalise our Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2029).
6. Chairperson, Colleagues, Global Priority Africa and Gender Equity remain of paramount importance for UNESCO. We take note that inadequate resources, both financial and human capital, continue to hamper effective implementation of our flagship programmes. Namibia, however, remains hopeful that all initiatives such as the recently concluded UNESCO-Africa-China high-level dialogue are all good indicators of the paths we want to navigate in future. It is our desire that all new proposals dealing with these issues will be robust, bold and inclusive so that Africa does not feel left out.
7. Namibia also recognizes the strategic importance of Natural Sciences in the area of sustainable development. We note the regrettable staffing issues of the Natural Sciences Programmes and the exodus of senior specialists from the Intergovernmental Hydrology Programme (IHP).
8. Similarly, the financial and human resource constraints experienced by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) is a concern to our Delegation. This is a matter that requires urgent attention in view of the important role that the IOC will play in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

9. On the Cultural Heritage front, Namibia applauds UNESCO's efforts to protect cultural heritage and diversity and urge the Secretariat to strengthen the implementation of the 1970 Convention and the creation of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in the case of Illicit Appropriation.
10. Mr Chairperson, on the same score, I am happy to share with you that Namibia has developed '*The National Strategy on Heritage Tourism Development and Employment opportunities at community level*' with the financial and technical inputs of UNESCO. This is major milestone for our country as it will enable us to adopt a structured approach to cultural heritage tourism in collaboration with local communities and organizations to develop sustainable economies.
11. On matters of media, Namibia welcomes UNESCO's continued focus on freedom of expression, the safety of journalists, media pluralism and diversity, and media development. To that end, we wish to commend both UNESCO and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for all the efforts being made to host the 2020 World Press Freedom Conference in November 2020. This year's theme, "Journalism Without Fear or Favour", is something we need to build on. As we are all aware, Namibia has confirmed to host the 2021 celebration of the World Press Freedom Day coupled with the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on Media Pluralism and Independence. It is an event we hope we will all travel to in person as we open up and deconfine the world.

12. We are further pleased to inform this august gathering that the Namibian Government has this June tabled a Draft Bill on Access to Information in Parliament for consideration. This major step underscores our drive to embed a transparent and open governance culture as the bedrock of our democracy.
13. As I conclude, may I underline the fact that the global nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us the importance of multilateralism and a rules-based international order. Namibia will always defend and support all efforts of UNESCO aimed building bridges in bringing the world together to pursue common solutions for all of humanity.

I thank you.

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