

National Statement

Honorable President,
Madam DG,
Chairperson of the General Conference,
Distinguished Representatives,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

This Executive Board meeting takes place under challenging times, when human life stands greatly disturbed but begins to adjust to a new way, we are inspired by the efforts of every nation to face the Covid-19 challenge. We also commend the efforts of UNESCO to support nations in all areas relevant to its operations.

Excellencies!

To meet the COVID-19 challenge, the Government of India announced an unprecedented economic package worth around 10% of the country's GDP. From past eight months of the COVID Crisis, 800 million people were given 5 kilograms of free food grains every month. Substantial allocations have been made to boost the health sector. Educational continuity is being ensured through the **PM eVIDYA** initiative for multi-modal technology access. **e-content** has been made available on portals like DIKSHA and SWAYAM. For students who do not have adequate access to digital modes, education is being reached through SWAYAM PRABHA-DTH through TV and radio. Special e-content has been developed for the visually and hearing impaired students. Psychosocial support is also being provided through online counseling.

To assist artists, the Ministry of Culture has devised guidelines to conduct virtual events so that recipients get continued financial assistance.

To meet this COVID-19 challenge "India would like to see continuity in UNESCO's work to ensure that there is no delay in ongoing projects, especially the work on strategic transformation, priority Africa and Gender Equality."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to share that India has launched its **National Education Policy 2020** in July this year. It has been distilled out of inputs received from several hundred thousand stakeholders. The policy is built on the pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability, and is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

This policy envisages fostering a vibrant culture of research and innovation, extensive use of technology, flexible curricula that allow creative subject choices and enhanced global academic collaboration. It seeks to develop rational, compassionate human beings, with scientific temper, creative imagination, and sound ethical moorings. It also lays importance on the teaching and learning of **indigenous languages**.

Gender Equality in Education will be strengthened through the National Education Policy 2020, as it aims at setting up a **Gender Inclusion Fund**. Gender inclusiveness is a priority for the Government of India, as is evident in our Government's earlier initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan under which the Government built 100 million toilets in India, including for girl-students to retain them in schools, or the **Ujwala Yojana** under which cooking gas cylinders were provided to 80 million poor households to provide smoke less kitchens and impacting a population base of about 360 million people.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Massive technological changes are taking place today, that will alter our reality. India lauds the efforts of UNESCO to suggest the draft recommendations on the **Ethics of Artificial Intelligence**. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi had recently given the call for **RAISE** (Responsible AI for Social Empowerment). A global meeting was organized to exchange ideas and chart a course for using Artificial Intelligence for social transformation in areas like healthcare, agriculture, education and social mobility. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, and I quote, “It remains our collective responsibility to ensure trust in how AI is used. **Algorithm transparency** is the key to establishing this trust. Equally important is accountability. We must protect the world against weaponisation of AI by non-state actors”.

Excellencies,

The world today is changing very fast. The global pandemic and the emerging technological innovations are altering lifestyles and behaviours. The world order that existed in the pre-pandemic times will have changed significantly in the post-pandemic times. Our institutions must reflect those changes. We must **regroup, reform and reinvent**. India has always been committed to dialogue and has actively participated in the UN system. We reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism. But in this transformation, it is imperative that the inter-governmental nature of UNESCO enshrined in its constitution, must be protected and preserved. The same spirit of mutual assistance and concern that is mentioned in the constitution of UNESCO is also embedded in Indian thought.

*“India believes in protecting world heritage sites that maybe located in a particular nation, but belong to the whole of humanity. Abiding by the principles of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, we feel that such world heritage sites should be used to **unite** people, rather than being exploited as **divisive** tools. Their functional use must be preserved and their outstanding universal value conserved.”*

In these times of the pandemic, we pray for the well being of the world, “Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramayah” May all be happy ; May all be free from illness.

Thank You

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