

Statement of Zimbabwe presented by H. E. Mrs. Abigail Shonhiwa, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Zimbabwe to UNESCO during the Plenary debate of the 210th session of the Executive Board: 3 December 2020

Chairperson of the Executive Board,
Madame Director General
Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we meet for this 210th session of the Executive Board allow me to express my Delegation's appreciation to you Mr. Chairman, for the relentless leadership that you have exhibited in steering the Executive Board in these disruptive Covid-19 times.

While it has not been easy to navigate the unfamiliar territory, it is pleasing to see that we are slowly getting used to the "new normal", with a lot of innovation just to make sure that the vital work of UNESCO continues unimpeded. This session is therefore a very important one as we are testing for the first time, the tools and measures that will enable us to continue carrying out our functions during challenging times, on behalf of Member States.

Permit me Mr. Chairman to recognise and commend the tremendous efforts of the Director General, who has continued to keep her focus on positioning UNESCO for the next decade as the specialized intellectual and cooperation agency of the UN system in the areas of education, science, culture and communication. On this note, my delegation fully supports the DG's candidature for a 2nd term at the helm of the Organisation. We are happy with the work that the DG has done and continues to undertake especially under this Covid environment.

Let me also from the outset, associate my delegation with the statement of Group V(a) presented by Ethiopia as well as the statements of the G77 plus China at UNESCO and the NAM Group at UNESCO to be presented by the respective Chairpersons.

My Delegation appreciates the Report on the preliminary proposals for the elaboration of the Draft Medium- Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) which is the outcome of the extensive consultations that have been

going on. As we anticipate that the next C/4 will lead to the attainment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, we have great expectations that the Strategy for implementing Global Priority Africa will also be strengthened to effectively respond to Africa's needs in line with the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063. It is our hope that the amendments proposed by Group V(a) to item 22 will be adopted during this 210th session.

My Delegation also welcomes the Programme Implementation Report. We take note that there were delays in the implementation of some activities due to COVID-19. We also appreciate the guidance that has been availed to Member States as we tackle the impact of COVID-19 in all the sectors through virtual information and experience sharing sessions. Our concern is that the reporting and assessment mechanisms do not sufficiently indicate the outcome and efficiency of activities. We hope that efforts will continue to be made to reflect these indicators better in future Reports.

The issue of geographical representation in UNESCO is still a far cry from being balanced. We therefore call upon the Director General to continue pursuing the issue.

We welcome the renewal of several UNESCO Prizes, among them the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education which addresses gender disparities in education as well as new Prizes such as the one proposed by Bangladesh on Creativity.

The work being done in developing standard setting instruments on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and Open Science is commendable and important for Member States.

Mr. Chairman, the COVID-19 crisis period has seen the collaboration between Zimbabwe and the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) in Harare growing in strides in all sectors. From the onset of the pandemic Government ministries and civil society entities have come together with the Regional Office to create awareness on Covid-19. Radio talk shows and social media adverts in the media were used.

The SHS sector is working very closely with the National Covid-19 Task Force to address the needs of people living with disabilities especially girls and women during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In education the re-opening of schools has proceeded well and examinations are being conducted. On the use of ICTs in education and promotion of distance learning, ROSA collaborated with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to launch a WhatsApp-based application called "Dzidzo Padeni/Imfundweni ndlini," translated to mean "Education at Home" which was created by a 17-year old young man to support remote learning and access to educational materials. The App will also create awareness among teachers and learners on the importance of health and hygiene and on COVID-19 prevention through age-appropriate information about the coronavirus and other infectious diseases.

Finally, Mr. Chairman and dear Colleagues, Zimbabwe is committed to increasing collaboration with UNESCO and its Member States in the areas of education, culture, communication and science, as we navigate through the challenging COVID-19 times and beyond.

I thank you Chairman.