



GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU

**39th SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE
GENERAL POLICY DEBATE**

**STATEMENT BY
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AND

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Paris**

Madame President

Distinguished Head of State and Government delegations

Madame, Director General of UNESCO

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talofa & Warm Greetings from the smallest independent island nation in the world, Tuvalu.

At the outset, let me associate myself with previous speakers in extending our special congratulations to you, Madame President, on your election as President of the thirty-ninth session of the General Conference and to reassure you of our support during your presidency. I also wish to highly commend your predecessor for his classic leadership and dedication in the work of the General Conference during the past years. Our blessings also to the outgoing Madame Director General. God be with you all.

Madame President, I would like to echo the importance and benefits that Tuvalu received due to its partnership with UNESCO. And we applaud the theme of the Leaders' Forum, "SDGs and UNESCO's Role in the Multilateral System". It underscores that, without UNESCO's field of competence, sustainable development will never be implemented.

Madame President, SDG 4 is of paramount important to each and every member state of UNESCO and that is to "Leave no one behind". Though Tuvalu has a small and simple education system, 'Quality Education' is still yet to be achieved, mainly due to economic and social reasons.

The Tuvalu Education Sector Plan outlines in details a number of strategic activities that aim to enhance quality education. These includes Student Learning and Teacher Pedagogy, Professional Development, Tuvalu Vocational and Skills Development, Governance, Policy and Planning, Data collection and research, and so forth. Tuvalu's attention is now focused more on teachers' competencies. This is because 'no matter how good a curriculum is; no matter how good the classrooms and facilities are; but if teachers are not competent enough, quality education is definitely undermined. Tuvalu also looks at the Vocational Education as an alternative pathway for students and youths.

Furthermore, at the end of this year, Tuvalu will submit its National Progress Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which will mark another milestone that indicates Tuvalu's commitment to the United Nations' convention for children in particular, the protection of all children in all educational institutions in Tuvalu.

Madam President, Culture is also an enabler for sustainable development, as no development projects could be effective and durable, if they are not culturally sensitive, and they fail to take into account the aspirations of community. This important role of culture is acknowledged and recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In many functions, Tuvalu government encourages programs that revive and strengthen cultures.

Madame President, the "Climate Change" phenomenon has forced our people to adapt and to accept the devastating impacts of it. Tuvalu's smallness and poor soil made us even more vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change. In fact, the effects of Climate Change affected our food security, and it also threatened the survival of our culture and identity.

Madame President, the triangular linkage between Tuvalu's Education, Culture and Climate Change is something that is needed to be explored more. As long as we understand fully of the importance of the inter-relationship or linkage between education, culture and climate change, surely we will be able to stand united to protect and save our small islands.

Madame President, I urge that Climate Change should be a priority issue in UNESCO's agenda because Climate Change has an impact on education, culture and livelihood of low-lying state members of UNESCO, such as Tuvalu. Nevertheless, it is our sincere hope that Tuvalu and UNESCO continue to work hand-in-hand to improve education, and to promote and maintain culture, so that Tuvaluans continue to live in harmony in their 26 square kilometer land.

Thank you & God Bless.