

**National Statement of Bangladesh by H.E. Kazi Imtiaz Hossain
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Bangladesh to UNESCO
Representing Bangladesh to UNESCO Executive Board**

**At the Sixth Special Session of the Executive Board,
8-9 June 2020.**

Plenary Debate: Paris, 8 June 2020

**Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General,
Excellencies, dear Colleagues**

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the floor. I congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of the Executive Board. I am confident that with your knowledge, experience and wisdom you will steer the work of the Board to a success conclusion. I would also like to commend our Director General Madam Audrey Azoulay for steering our organization effectively during this critical period of Covid-19 pandemic. I assure both of you of Bangladesh's full support in carrying out your mandated responsibilities.

2. My delegation is very happy that the Special Session of the Executive Board is finally taking place and would like to thank the Secretariat for making it possible to hold the session virtually despite many technical limitations. It is of paramount importance we make all efforts to ensure that the Executive Board continues to carry out its oversight and decision-making mandate, particularly at this critical juncture in the history of humankind.

Mr. Chairperson,

3. Who will not agree that we are passing through an extraordinary time? Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a catastrophic health crisis not witnessed in over a century. But it is not limited only to health challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect and every dimensions of our lives - economic-social-psychological. It is threatening to tear apart the core values human rights and human dignity. It is threatening the social cohesion and impacting individual's behavior. **Increasing incidents of discrimination, intolerance and stigmatization towards people of different races and ethnicities are matters of great concern.**

(The role Global Citizenship Education in countering hate, discrimination and stigmatization assumes greater importance and significance in this situation. Bangladesh has joined the

Group of Friends on Solidarity and Inclusion with GCED, formed last month here at UNESCO).

4. It threatens to shake the foundation of the socio-economic development of our nations. Some 1.2 billion students and youths are affected by school and university closures. 60 million teachers are no longer in classrooms. 90 percent museums are closed. Economic activities have been severely disrupted across the world. Millions have lost their jobs. The poorest and most vulnerable in our societies are the hardest hit. The crisis threatens to reverse hard-won development gains and hamper progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Chair,

5. As is the case for many countries, Bangladesh is also trying to absorb the shock of COVID-19. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has declared undertaken several stimuli and recovery packages amounting to a total U\$ 11.7 billion which is nearly 3.6% of country's GDP in response to the crisis.

6. In Bangladesh, over 41 million students are out of their classrooms. Ministry of Education is making best possible efforts to provide support for remote learning and distance education. Universities are also providing on-line courses. But there are many challenges including access to and cost of internet connectivity, personal computer or tab for students in rolling out a robust, equitable and inclusive distance learning programme.

7. The ***Bangladesh COVID-19 Response Plan*** for Education Sector launched this May provides a framework of strategies and interventions for the school education system to cope with the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. This will be a living document with subsequent elaborations incorporating responses and best practices from within the country and outside as the implementation progresses.

8. We will need strong support of UNESCO and the international community to supplement our national efforts. And I speak also for the other developing countries and vulnerable people in seeking this support.

Mr. Chair,

(Methods of work of the Executive Board under confinement)

9. With regard to the agenda items 6X/EX/2 and 6X/EX/3, I would like to commend Ambassador Samir Addahre of Morocco and Ambassador Martin Michelet of Switzerland for their sincere and untiring efforts in securing consensus on the two draft decisions. We are disappointed that consensus could not be reached on the draft decisions before this Special Session.

10. Covid-19 pandemic is not mere a health crisis - its **is a human crisis and truly a global crisis**. No one country is able to deal with it alone. In this interconnected world, it is in everybody's interest that we unite to face this challenge together. This is the time for global solidarity and sincere cooperation.

11. We have two days at our disposal. In this defining moment, we need to join our efforts and cooperate with a sense of urgency, with solidarity and commitment to enable UNESCO deliver on its mandate. We must remember, history will judge us for the decision we take today and may not be kind if we fail deliver on the promises we have made as members of the Board.

12. We remain confident that the Members of the Board will eventually demonstrate much needed flexibility to reach consensus on the texts. My optimism is based on our past experience. We have seen members rising above self-interest and individual country position to be creative to find workable solution even in the most desperate of situation.

13. I assure that Bangladesh will do its part in full earnest and sincerity to reach consensus on the two decisions.

14. Thank you.