

General Policy Debate

Address by H.E. Mrs. Ambika Devi Luintel, Head of the Delegation of Nepal to the 39th Session of the General Conference of the UNESCO

on
Thursday, 2nd November 2017

Excellencies;

Madame President of the General Conference;

Madame Director General;

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I express my sincere thanks to Director General, Madam Irina Bokova, for the excellent arrangement of the thirty-ninth General Conference of UNESCO. I convey the best wishes of the Government and the people of Nepal for its success.

UNESCO is uniquely placed in matters pertaining to education as its mandate covers all facets of education including science, culture, social science, information and communications. While appreciating the UNESCO's contributions to member states in these areas we would like to see the continuity of UNESCO's enhanced role specifically in the developing world. At the same time, let me reaffirm Nepal's firm commitment to the ideals of UNESCO, and to the furtherance of its role and activities.

Madam Chair

We recognise the importance of Man and Biosphere (MaB) and International Hydrological Program (IHP) of the UNESCO. In this context, it would be relevant to mention that International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. (ICIMOD) established in 1983 under the MaB programme following UNESCO Regional Meeting in Kathmandu in 1979 has been working in the environmental conservation of Hindu Kush Himalayas. I am pleased to bring to your notice that the MaB Committee in Nepal has recently initiated activities to design the first Biosphere Reserve in the country for advocacy and awareness raising on scientific, environmental, social and development issues in the Himalayan ecosystems.

As we are all aware that consequence of global warming has adversely been affecting the mountain regions. Melting of ice in the Himalayas may cause Glacial Lake Outburst Flood resulting in widespread damage to the biodiversity not only to Nepal but also to the entire South Asian Region. This phenomenon thus demands the need of accelerating appropriate programmes and measures like MaB, IHP and sustainable use of natural resources where UNESCO can play a pivotal role.

The IHP-Nepal in coordination with UNESCO IHP and other related agencies in Nepal is aiming at participating in river basin planning and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) training as a part of IHP VIII "Water education". Furthermore, the IHP-Nepal intends to establish a UNESCO category II Center, "Knowledge Centre on Water Resources and Climate Changes Adaptation" in Nepal with the support of UNESCO. Furthermore, as the rivers play an important role in the livelihood for all humankind, we would like to see UNESCO taking an initiation for a dedicated inter-sectoral program to link "life and rivers" and the implementation of water programs of UNESCO as a separate Main Line of Actions.

Madam President,

Nepal recognizes education as the very foundation to further promote universal values of compassion, tolerance, mutual respect, inclusion and sustainable development including gender and climate change. In addition, the Constitution of Nepal establishes education as a fundamental right: free and compulsory basic education, free secondary education and free higher education for the targeted group.

Over the years, Education sector in Nepal has made significant progress in terms of human development indicators including gender parity and cycle completion. Focus has also been given to ICT while designing curricular materials, teachers' training and providing computers to schools. Technical and Vocational Education has also been introduced in secondary education. Government recognizes the importance of Lifelong learning and non-formal education as an important tool for developing human capital.

In spite of these achievements, Nepal has still a long way to go in terms of equity, quality and efficiency. Ensuring education for out-of-school children, the construction of school buildings damaged by 2015 earthquake, development of skills for life and work for all age

groups and resource constraint are some other challenges. We urge UNESCO to enhance its contribution to address these challenges for the effective implementation of SDG so as to ensure that no child is deprived of education and other basic human rights.

With the completion of Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is on the way with a view to graduating Nepal to middle income country by 2030. Under the framework of Incheon Declaration of the World Education Forum 2015, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is being carried out as a successor to the Education for All in Nepal.

Distinguished Delegates,

The promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in September 2015 marks the culmination of the long and arduous efforts and sacrifices of the Nepali people over a period of seven decades. The new constitution guarantees liberty and fundamental freedoms of Nepali people and also ensures gender equality, justice, progress and prosperity of all

As per the provision enshrined in the Constitution, various policies have amply focused on media ethics, security and capacity building of the journalists, among others. This shows our commitment to ensure the safety of journalists with appropriate measures.

For the first time in our political history, Nepal has entered in federal republic set up. Under this, we recently completed the local level elections, in which an overwhelming majority of Nepali people exercised their voting rights. Similarly, provincial and federal level elections are going to be held in November and December this year. Thus with the implementation of the Constitution, democracy will be institutionalised which would pave the way for achieving economic growth, sustainable peace and development.

Madam President,

Recent years have witnessed significant increase in destruction of cultural heritage worldwide, either due to natural disasters or deliberately through barbaric attacks of violent extremism. In this regard, UNESCO's role for conservation and protection of these assets including those in Nepal is commendable. In the context, I would like to inform that the Government of Nepal has taken concrete steps towards post-earthquake conservation,

reconstruction and rehabilitation of World Heritage sites especially the Kathmandu Valley in line with the six-year Recovery Master Plan and post-earthquake conservation guidelines 2015.

Finally, I take the opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Madame Irina Bukova for her effective stewardship of UNESCO during her tenure and her support to Nepal. I wish all the best for her future endeavor.

Thank you for your attention!