

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**  
**6<sup>th</sup> special session of the Executive Board**  
**8-9 June 2020**

Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,  
Mr President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director General,  
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank you, Mr Chairperson, for making this special session of the Executive Board possible; you can count on our full support in your task.

Mr. President, we all know that the COVID -19 pandemic has taught us, in UNESCO and Member states, many lessons for future unprecedented challenges. We are a resilient people; it is with this spirit that, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has acted swiftly to address the social, educational and economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, just as we did for all other natural disasters that we experienced.

Although COVID-19 pandemic continues to be high priority globally, the effects of climate change and the preservation of biodiversity still remain areas of concern in our region.

In education, the crisis has brought into sharp focus, the social inequalities and resulting digital divide mainly among the most vulnerable. There is the need to gather all the energies to promote international cooperation, as the Director General had said in her many interventions.

March 20, 2020 was the final day of schools in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Over thirty thousand students at all levels were affected.

The Government quickly developed and implemented new approaches for effective online school. Notwithstanding, many teachers were challenged, as they lacked the necessary training in ICTs to aid this process. As such, the Government has sought funding to purchase laptops for all, to ensure access to internet, requisite training programmes, and to develop new protocols to the delivery of education as a whole.

We thank the Director General, her team and UNESCO's field offices for the response provided to COVID-19 crisis and in raising visibility with outreach campaigns and initiatives.

My country is yet to experience any benefit from those initiatives launched; we look forward to be part of them in the Caribbean region.

My country and the region also must cope with the effects of post - pandemic issues, in the sectors of culture, tourism including, increased employment.

This will not be easy to accomplish without the necessary financial resources and solidarity.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, more than ever, we need to take into account the lessons learned to establish a long-term vision to face the many challenges ahead, On this basis, we need to reinforce the mandate of UNESCO in all its fields of competence, to ensure education for all, ICTs in education and quality education, to fulfil its ethical, scientific and cultural role and to continue to build knowledge societies for tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention.