

**SPEECH BY THE ZAMBIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE 6TH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD. 8TH June 2020**

The Chairperson of the Executive Board

The President of the General Conference

Madam Director-General

Dear Board members

Excellencies

Dear colleagues

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for convening this special session of the Executive Board; coming at a unique juncture in the history of UNESCO but extremely necessary to allow discussion of key issues to ensure this Organisation does not lose its momentum given the social and economic ramifications of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Corona Virus knows no Borders!

Due to COVID-19, Zambia closed schools and institutions of Higher Learning, resulting in disruption of learning for more than 4.5 million children and a large number of adults.

Moving forward, the Ministry of General Education, in collaboration with partners and other stakeholders, developed and is implementing a two-phased COVID 19 response and recovery plan focusing on safeguarding continuous learning during and after the confinement period in addition to putting measures to support a sustainable safe school environment now or in the event of another emergency.

Mr Chairperson,

The dark cloud seems to be clearing and in as much as the world is moving into the new normal, UNESCO has to have the ability to absorb uncertainty and incorporate lessons into the operating model quickly.

COVID-19's destructive effects on budgets are impacting all organizations, regardless of size, status and location; Budgets and priorities are being shifted in the wake of vastly different economic conditions than they'd planned for as 2020 began. We would like to believe it is the case for UNESCO.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is our responsibility to ensure efficient and rational execution of the UNESCO programme as adopted by the General Conference and thus it is imperative that the 209th Executive Board session is held soon, this year to be well informed in very concrete terms how COVID -19 might be affecting the programme and budget approved by the General Conference.

Effective preparation for the 209th session largely depends on this meeting.

Zambia appreciates the work already being done by the Secretariat in supporting member countries' efforts in the context of its mandates and strategic framework as provided for in the current biennium during this confinement.

Let me end by thanking our two facilitators for the excellent work in the past few days. I believe they have laid the foundation for a successful special session and the forthcoming 209th Executive Board meeting.