

**Intervention by Zimbabwe during the 6<sup>th</sup> Special session of the Executive Board held virtually on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

Thank you, Chairman, for allowing me to take the floor.

**Mr. Chairman**, on behalf of my delegation, allow me to express to you personally, and to the Director General and the entire Secretariat, our appreciation of your efforts to ensure that the work of UNESCO continues during this period of a global health crisis. Your convening of this 6<sup>th</sup> Special session of the Executive Board bears testimony of these efforts. The awkward situation that the world finds itself in due to COVID-19 requires us to do things differently to respond to the special circumstances. The agenda that you have set for this special meeting gives us an opportunity to consider and decide on the most appropriate working methods of the Executive Board under confinement and to appreciate the impact of COVID-19 on UNESCO programmes and activities so far.

**Mr. Chairman**, No one ever anticipated after the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference, that less than 2 months later we were going to face this serious global pandemic which has had devastating impacts on all aspects of our daily lives. As such, the working methods that we are going to adopt should not be seen as setting precedence to disregarding the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board but rather as a necessary response to an extraordinary situation whose end is yet unpredictable due to lack of a cure or vaccine for the disease.

His Excellency President Emmerson Mnangagwa, declared Zimbabwe's first 21 days of lockdown on 30 March to tackle COVID-19. Schools and all learning institutions and cultural activities came to a halt since then. **Mr. Chairman**, the past 2 months that we have existed under COVID-19 lockdown have exposed the structural weaknesses and inequalities that exist in our education systems at country level. Such is the case also in most developing countries. As we continue to monitor the trends of COVID-19, the Government of Zimbabwe has resolved to ensure that education continues through the application of creativity and innovation while observing the advice and guidelines from the international experts of the United Nations . In that process no teachers or learners should be left behind. We are cautiously reopening schools in June to allow examinations for this year to proceed.

As we discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of UNESCO programmes and activities, it is our hope that we will pave the way for long- term solutions to the challenges that developing countries are facing in addressing existing inequalities in education.

I thank you.