



Government of Samoa

Intervention of the Honourable
Minister of Education,
Sports and Culture
Afioga Loau Solamalemalo Keneti
Sio,
of the Independent State of Samoa
to the General Policy Debate – 39th
session
of the General Conference of
UNESCO, Paris, France

Madame President
Distinguished Heads of State and Government Delegations
Madame, Director General of UNESCO
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Talofa lava and warm greetings to you all from the heart of the Pacific,
SAMOA.

Madam President, our heartiest congratulations to you on your election as President of the 39th session of the General Conference. I commend also the diligence and commitment of your predecessor and the outgoing Director General. May God bless you all.

It is a pleasure to present at this very important conference.

I wish to extend to UNESCO our sincere appreciation for the continuing assistance to education in many parts of the world including the Pacific. Your contribution to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue, with education as one of the key pillars to achieve this aim needs reiterating - this is why Samoa is committed to UNESCO and I assure you that we will continue to be proactive in our efforts to gain forward steps in achieving our collective vision and fundamental duty for a better world.

At the 38th Conference, you were informed of some achievements made by Samoa. These include the signing of the Instrument of Accession for the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

In March this year, we held a Science Technology and Innovation dialogue in Apia and signed the Apia Ministerial Communique for the

Pacific. The aim was to encourage the Pacific member states to use UNESCO's technical capacity in cooperation with the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific towards:

- Enhancing Science Technology Education and Maths education
- Establishing science advice mechanisms
- Promoting indigenous knowledge systems, and
- Building capacity in ST&I policy areas and research

On 26 & 27 September 2017, the Government of Samoa, with technical and financial support from UNESCO, held the "Workshop to Develop a Science, Technology and Innovation Policy for Samoa". The workshop provided an opportunity to raise awareness on the importance of ST&I as an enabler of sustainable development across all sectors.

An ST&I policy can and should assist Samoa to achieve its priorities as informed by the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Samoa (2016/17-2019/20) (SDS) and its commitments under the UN Agenda 2030, otherwise known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Samoa is now working on the development of a National Strategy for ST&I.

Our collective actions towards ST&I as well as the Kazan Action Plan are crucial and should be recognized during this forum for more concrete actions for the way forward.

Madame President, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is something we have taken on board seriously and we are confident that for a small country like Samoa, the innovative approaches we have adopted will no doubt contribute to positive developments for education in Samoa.

In terms of policy development, we have developed policies for Early Childhood Development, Child Protection, School Governance and Leadership, Minimum Service Standards for all levels and Inclusive Education to address better opportunities for education for students with disabilities.

As part of our Ministry's program for improved student learning outcomes, we have strengthened our focus on literacy and numeracy to include science. The development of students' critical thinking and problem solving through innovation and application of their daily experiences to learning needs are taken to the next level. Like last year, we ran a program on 8th September to celebrate UNESCO's International Day for Literacy.

We do not want our students to be left behind - thus we have taken forward steps to ensure IT tools such as tablets are made more accessible to our schools to provide an aid for learning for teachers and students.

Strengthening pathways for young students has been targeted through the development of a TVET Strategy for secondary schools. The implementation of this strategy will address the issues around drop-outs, linkages of curriculum to the industry needs and encourage female participation in TVET course. Young people are not just the future but they are key drivers of change and can make a huge difference if their role is taken to another level.

I commend the UNESCO initiatives for youth around the world, and appeal for more opportunities for our young people. They can bring fresh ideas, enthusiasm and vitality which can lead to more innovative developments to benefit society and the world at large.

It goes without saying that small island states of the Pacific are experiencing the impacts of climate change more than the big countries and the risks posed are a threat we live with on a daily basis. The adverse

effects of climate change are real, and as leaders of our global community, the time to act is now.

The Pacific island countries acknowledge the dedicated efforts made by the UNESCO Secretariat – in particular the UNESCO Apia Office to assist our various initiatives for education.

Madam President, the challenges will not go away but with concerted efforts taken to address these challenges, we will be able to make a difference.

May God Bless You All

Soifua.