NATIONAL STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF DELEGATION, MINISTER OF HIGHER AND TERTIARY EDUCATION, INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE, PROFESSOR DR. AMON MURWIRA, AT THE 40TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO

18 NOVEMBER 2019
The President of the General Conference;

The Chairperson of the Executive Board;

The Director General;

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

1. Mr. President, I wish to start by congratulating H.E Ambassador Altay Cenziger on your election as President of this session. We wish you well in your assignment. My delegation also recognizes with great appreciation, the sterling work being done by the Director-General.

2. We are grateful for the support that UNESCO rendered to Zimbabwe and other sister nations throughout the current biennium. We welcome the...
preparations that the DG has embarked on in preparing for the next medium-term strategy.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

3. Mr. President, Zimbabwe is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals in order to promote and achieve socio-economic development in our country through the five sectors of the UNESCO mandate. Zimbabwe will promote the UNESCO mandate based on our strong belief and adherence to multilateralism and international law. In this case Zimbabwe could achieve more if and when illegal sanctions are lifted by those who imposed them on Zimbabwe.

4. That commitment to the achievement of the SDGs is demonstrated by having the Office of the President and Cabinet spearheading the implementation process of SDGs. As a nation, we have taken full cognisance of the SDG Agenda by aligning the SDGs to our economic blue print, the Transitional Stabilization Programme (TSP) (2018-2020) with a focus towards a prosperous and empowered Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030.

5. This Macro-Economic Framework (TSP) guides national development and budgeting processes and has integrated all the Sustainable Development Goals alongside development priorities. In this regard the Government has adopted a multi-stakeholder approach in SDGs implementation and the National 2030 Agenda.
6. My delegation notes with appreciation the progress report on the Strategic Transformation of the Organisation. We urge the Director General to ensure that Member States are appraised of developments at every stage in order to ensure ownership of the whole process by all concerned.

**Areas of UNESCO’s competence**

**Education**

7. Mr. President, Zimbabwe is determined to put education at the centre of its industrialisation and modernisation agenda. In the basic education we have adopted a competence-based curriculum that responds to the current and future needs of the economy. The process of rolling out this curriculum and implementing it requires resources for Teacher training and orientation, appropriate teaching technologies and materials, technical support and infrastructure at all levels of education and in both rural and urban settings.

8. In higher and tertiary education, the Education Design we have followed until recently in Zimbabwe, has been premised more on literacy and skills, focusing on (1) Teaching (2) Research and (3) Community service – **Education 3.0**. This has resulted in literacy levels of over 92.4% and productive skills levels of 38%.

9. We have since redesigned our Education system to **Education 5.0** where Innovation and Industrialisation are the 4th and 5th missions. This means we have taken our education to a level where it can cause industrialisation through the path of research and innovation. The driving philosophy of our
education system is the heritage philosophy, which refers to our plants, our animals and our people as sources of material for innovation and industrialisation.

**Natural Sciences**

10. In the Natural Sciences, Zimbabwe has been implementing the STEM initiative and shall continue to do so through the “Training of Science and Mathematics Secondary School Teachers’ Programme”. Under the UNESCO/Korea Funds – in – Trust project on ICTs in Education, we anticipate that schools and teacher education colleges will in future use ICTs in Education in all subjects.

11. Mr. President, Education 5.0 is providing the framework within which STEM Education will thrive. The emphasis on finding the right nexus between general/basic education and industrialisation notes that the critical skills needed to champion mining, agriculture, ICT and manufacturing industries development hinge on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education.

12. Through UNESCO’s initiatives on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Zimbabwe wants to co-operate with partners in order to harness the cutting-edge technologies for its industrial development.

**Social and Human Sciences**

13. In line with the aspirations of Africa stated in the AU Agenda 2063, which resonates very well with Zimbabwe’s Constitution (2013) as well as the 2030 Agenda, Zimbabwe is seeking to eradicate poverty through promoting well
educated and skilled citizens, underpinned by science technology and innovation.

14. Mr. President, Sir, support is therefore needed in the area of scientific research which can contribute to the development of modern infrastructure and modern agriculture for increased food production. Zimbabwe would want to collaborate with partners in the region on these aspects.

Culture

15. In the area of Culture and Heritage, Zimbabwe has a strong and diverse cultural base to provide for strong and competitive cultural industries.

16. In order to promote this diversity of cultural resources including our indigenous knowledge systems we have ratified 5 out of the 6 UNESCO cultural Conventions for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. We are also participating in the development and implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy for our World Heritage Sites with support from UNESCO and the African World Heritage Fund. However, there is still need for capacity development for the protection of cultural heritage to mitigate the effects of climate change on natural and cultural heritage.

Communication and Information

17. Information and communication are central to building knowledge societies. In view of the progress being made by Zimbabwe towards digitalization of television broadcasting services, support is required for content development and training of personnel in the use of new equipment.
18 Mr. President, as host of the UNESCO Sub-regional Office, the Zimbabwe Government will support this office so that it can deliver on its mandate. Zimbabwe would like to commend the Director General for ensuring that all the sectors are manned by competent Programme Specialists.

Conclusion

19 Mr. President, more collaboration efforts are required to strengthen UNESCO UNESCO’s capacity through exploring alternative resources and partnerships. UNESCO Filed Offices, in particular the one in Southern Africa is doing all it can to promote UNESCO activities and participation by Member States. In conclusion, Zimbabwe assures its unwavering support to the UNESCO mission. It is my delegation’s hope that the decision on the three proposals to amend the UNESCO Constitution will be based on consensus.

I thank you.