

President of the Conference

Madam Director General of UNESCO

Distinguished delegates

Ladies & Gentlemen

My delegation and I wish to warmly congratulate you on your election as president of this 39th session of the General Conference. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Stanley Mutumba Simataa for his excellent leadership.

As Mrs. Irina Bokova's mandate as Director General of UNESCO draws to an end, I wish to express on behalf of the government of Seychelles, our heartfelt thanks for her remarkable stewardship of our Organisation in often difficult circumstances and for all that she has done to advance the causes particularly dear to Africa and Small Island Developing States.

We congratulate New Caledonia as a new Associate member of the Organisation.

Mr. President,

Seychelles applauds UNESCO's global efforts in the protection and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage. We were pleased to participate in the Regional Conference on strengthening synergies for cultural heritage protection, in Mauritius last June, organized by UNESCO's Regional office for Eastern Africa. The recommendations from the Conference provide a road map for strengthening both national and regional protection of cultural heritage in Eastern Africa and the adjacent Indian Ocean Island States.

Collecting cultural indicators to demonstrate the impact of culture on economic and sustainable development is of paramount importance to our country. Seychelles is currently revising its Cultural Policy, based on four main principles: the need for daily expression, the essential role of education and youth development, the acceptance and integration of new technologies, and the importance of inclusion.

Mr President,

A culture can only thrive if it embraces modernity, while remaining authentic and true to itself, hence the link between culture and technology, and the need to foster our Seychellois values. The

new Culture Policy upholds the notion that all can enjoy, learn, preserve and protect the multidimensional Seychellois Culture.

As our education system continues to evolve, greater responsibilities and accountability are being devolved to Education institutions through a new and improved model of governance.

We continue to maintain a high level of access and participation in education from Early Childhood to beyond secondary. However, ensuring a high quality education and training relevant to the lives of young people, remains one of the challenges in the Sector.

Seychelles is more than ever committed to providing meaningful education and training opportunities for the diversity of learners in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Sustaining relevant curriculum programmes to meet these needs requires innovative ways of thinking, resourcing and providing access to education. To this end with the assistance of IBE UNESCO, we are investing in the integration of Competency Based Approach (CBA) and the strengthening of digital competences in teaching and learning. Seychelles' recently adopted Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and Strategy will allow its transition from an economy-efficiency to an innovation-driven knowledge-based economy by 2025. Our challenge now, is to operationalize this policy through partnerships with other member states.

Mr President,

As an Island State, the role of the Ocean is of strategic importance to us. In championing the Blue Economy, Seychelles is aiming to provide economic diversification, food security and a healthy ocean for its people, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Amongst the innovative approaches to improve the management of its marine resources Seychelles is completing its first Marine spatial plan of its entire EEZ (Exclusive economic zone) of some 1.4 million km². We have also successfully negotiated our first Debt swap for climate change adaptation and conservation linked with the commitment of designating 30% of our EEZ as marine protected areas. All these efforts have been outlined internationally and were recently showcased at the "Our Oceans Conference" in Malta last September.

Challenges remain, namely in human resources, building skills, knowledge and innovation to support a climate resilient blue economy. These will require regional and global solutions and

cooperation. We are pleased that the Western region has agreed on a joint commitment and action towards achieving the SDG-14 Targets.

Monsieur le Président,

Le choix du 10^{ème} Forum de la Jeunesse "Repenser l'engagement des jeunes avec l'UNESCO" pour la 39 Conférence Générale est bien approprié. Notre pays souscrit à la nécessité pour que les jeunes s'engagent activement dans le développement économique tout en gardant les valeurs morales, les attitudes et les comportements favorables à une culture de paix et de non-violence.

Les Seychelles souhaitent que les efforts se poursuivent pour renforcer les relations entre le Secrétariat et les bureaux régionaux qui demeurent au centre du mandat de l'UNESCO. Nous sommes heureux que le Bureau régional pour l'Afrique de l'Est ait organisé des ateliers de renforcement des capacités dans les domaines prioritaires liés à la mise en œuvre des objectifs des ODD. Les Seychelles sont également honorées d'avoir été choisies comme Centre d'excellence pour les soins et l'éducation de la petite enfance (ECCE) par UNESCO-BIE pour le réseau des pays de la Région. Nous encourageons UNESCO à augmenter davantage son soutien aux petits états insulaires en développement dans l'exécution de leurs programmes.

Mon gouvernement voudrait exprimer sa gratitude pour le soutien et l'accompagnement de l'UNESCO dans les projets pour les différents secteurs.

Je renouvelle l'engagement du Gouvernement des Seychelles pour soutenir l'UNESCO pour la réalisation du mandat de cette Organisation au profit des générations présentes et futures.

Je vous remercie.