

ZIMBABWE STATEMENT DELIVERED TO THE 41ST UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE BY PROFESSOR dr. AMON MURWIRA, MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT ON 12 NOVEMBER 2021

Let me commence my delegation's statement by congratulating you Mr. President on your election as President of the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference. My delegation also extends its congratulations to Madam Audrey Azoulay on her appointment as Director General for a second term.

Exactly two years ago we assembled here to adopt the Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 (40 C/5) with the hope that we would accelerate our efforts towards attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG4. However, a month after the Conference we found ourselves confronted by the threat of Covid -19, forcing us to divert much of our attention and resources to fighting the virus. This posed as a threat to the gains we had made in the education of our youths, girls and women.

Madam Director General, we salute you and all your staff for your efforts and timely interventions, particularly at the onset of the pandemic, which saw UNESCO playing a central role in mobilizing global partners and doing its best to manage a potential generational catastrophe in education and ensuring that no one was left behind. The pandemic exposed the inequalities in our education systems. It also further increased the visibility of the digital divide and gender inequalities making it imperative and urgent for us to address them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the challenges we are facing now are global, hence they require global solutions. More than ever before, the call for the world to work together is getting louder and louder. Global cooperation is no longer an option but an imperative. From the lessons learnt so far from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that we cannot return to the world as it was before. Clearly, a new chapter has been ushered in for education and my delegation would like to

our communities. In this regard we are putting greater emphasis on science technology and innovation to drive our national education and development agenda as we aspire to modernise and industrialize Zimbabwe by 2030. On its part, Government has facilitated the setting up of innovation hubs and industrial parks across our institutions of higher learning. Innovation hubs in the higher education sector help to stimulate creativity and we are honoured to share with you that these initiatives are beginning to bear fruits, which we are proud of.

Mr. President, Madame Director General

As we adopt the wide use of technologies and artificial intelligence, we should bear in mind that these technologies have to move hand in hand with the training of teachers. My delegation therefore calls for greater capacitation of teachers to enable them to acquire the tools and skills for effective use towards the continuation of education at all times. Zimbabwe looks fo1.T00 g/c95.32rW*

