Fifth plenary meeting of the 41st session of the General Conference

Thursday 11 November 2021 at 10.10 a.m.

President: **Mr Irazabal Mourão** (Brazil)

General policy debate (*continued*)

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Somos muy conscientes de que ello no ha sido así en todas partes. Tenemos el firme compromiso de trabajar para superar esta situación y para alcanzar la igualdad de oportunidades en materia de educación en todos los países.

4.4 Por lo que se refiere al mundo de la cultura, tanto los creadores como los consumidores han sufrido una de sus peores crisis. Ello merece una reflexión sosegada que tenga en cuenta las vulnerabilidades de estos sectores, sus fortalezas y sus debilidades, las de la creación y las del acceso a la cultura como un derecho de todos.

4.5 Señor Presidente, señora Directora General, la Conferencia General de este año es especialmente importante. Contamos con adoptar la nueva estrategia de la UNESCO para los próximos ocho años. Su orden del día incluye iniciativas muy relevantes para el futuro, como la recomendación sobre la ética de la inteligencia artificial, que será un instrumento muy útil en el desarrollo de esta tecnología clave en los próximos años.

4.6 Quiero destacar en particular, nuestro apoyo a dos ejes básicos de la actuación en UNESCO la prioridad “África” y “la igualdad de género”. Respecto de África, consideramos urgente prestar una atención singularizado al continente que permita dar respuesta a sus especificidades en materia de patrimonio, de formación técnica, de educación y, por supuesto, de cooperación científica y de apoyo en el reto de vacunación contra la COVID-19. La igualdad de género es asimismo una de las prioridades de España, tanto en nuestras políticas internas como en nuestra acción exterior. Trabajaremos activamente dentro de la Organización para desarrollar programas que permitan alcanzar este objetivo en todos los países.

4.7 Esta Conferencia General coincide con el inicio de un nuevo mandato en la Dirección de esta Organización. Tras la pandemia nos enfrentamos al reto de recuperar el tiempo perdido, renovar estructuras, agilizar nuestro funcionamiento y ofrecer soluciones al diagnóstico que nos deja la realidad actual. Señora Directora General, puede contar con España en el desempeño de su relevante tarea al frente de la Organización para hacer frente a estos desafíos.

4.8 A nivel nacional, trabajamos con el fin de que los valores y principios de la UNESCO, sus actividades y sus mensajes permeen en la sociedad española. No lo hacemos solo desde el Gobierno, numerosas instituciones privadas y públicas son muy activas en este campo. Hace unos días, la Federación Española de Asociaciones, Centros y Clubs de la UNESCO organizó un acto de conmemoración de este 75º aniversario de la UNESCO que fue un gran éxito en España. La sociedad civil española se siente cada vez más identificada con los programas de la UNESCO. Por número de inscripciones, somos el cuarto país en la lista de Patrimonio Mundial, el quinto en la lista de Patrimonio Inmaterial, el segundo en el número de parques mundiales y el primero tanto en el número de reservas de la biosfera como en cátedras UNESCO. Los españoles somos, por tanto, embajadores globales del mensaje de la UNESCO y estamos muy orgullosos de ello.

4.9 Señor Presidente, señora Directora General, estamos convencidos que esta 41ª Conferencia General será un éxito. La UNESCO cuenta en España con una base muy sólida, el firme compromiso del Gobierno de España y el de una vasta red de actores implicados en los distintos ámbitos de trabajo. Muchas gracias.

5. **The President**:

I call now His Excellency Mr Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan. You have the floor, Excellency.

6.1 **Mr Muhriddin** (Tajikistan):

Mr President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. At the outset, I should like to congratulate the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay and the President of the General Conference, Mr Santiago Mourão, on their election to high positions. I welcome this opportunity to express my gratitude for the excellent arrangement of today’s Conference to its organizers.

6.2 Tajikistan, as an active Member of UNESCO, develops and promotes various projects in the fields of culture, science and education and makes a valuable contribution to the protection and promotion of the world heritage and culture. It is worth mentioning that one of the historical sites of Tajikistan, which is inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List is the ancient town of Sarazm. Particularly, I would like to highlight that the exhibition of historical items entitled “Tajikistan The Land of Golden Rivers”, also presents the findings of the ancient town of Sarazm. Last month, this exhibition was inaugurated at the Musée Guimet, the museum of Asian art in Paris with the participation of the Presidents of Tajikistan and France. About 300 artifacts from antiquity, the history of the Tajik people and valuable items on the history of our ancestors, from the British Museum known as the Amu Darya treasure are displayed at the exhibition. Along with this, with

13. **The President**:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. I call now His Excellency Mr Mahmut Özer Minister of National Education of Turkey. We will watch a pre-recorded video. You have the floor, Excellency.

14.1 **Mr Özer** (Turkey):

(*address delivered in Turkish*; *English text provided by the delegation*):

Dear colleagues, Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, distinguished guests, it is indeed a distinct honour and pleasure for me to address you today at the 41st session of the General Confere1Co (ur)17 (s(l)-0.7

22.5 The Republic of Angola, therefore, supports initiatives, programmes and projects that benefit African countries, and here we would like to highlight UNESCO's operational strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029, as it reflects the aspirations of the African Union's 2063 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda. We also consider the need to add efforts to register new African sites on the World Heritage List, as well as the preservation of the sites already registered through scientific, technological cooperation and the mobilization of funds for the further development of actions carried out by the Africa World Heritage Fund.

22.6 Excellencies, the Republic of Angola has submitted its application to the Executive Board, so we request the Member States and in particular the African Group, to support our intention. This year Angola and UNESCO hold the second edition of the Luanda Biennial Pan-African Forum for Peace Culture, in a hybrid format, with thematic forums of interest, so the participation of all is welcome. On this occasion of UNESCO celebration of its 75th anniversary of its existence, we join our voice to the other members congratulating the Organization on its work in favour of education, science and culture expressing on behalf of my country the interest of strengthening our partnership for the common good and sustainable development, local and regional. Thank you so much for your attention.

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24.9 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Bangladesh's tenure in the Executive Board has come to an end. We sincerely thank the Member States for the trust we received and for giving us the opportunity to serve UNESCO. Believing in the principle of rotation, taking a gap of two years Bangladesh has presented its candidature to serve on the Executive Board for the period of 2023-2027. We hope to receive your all-out support to serve the Executive Board again at the 42nd session of the General Conference.

24.10 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, as UNESCO deals with common goods of humanity rising above narrow political interests, we must act right here at UNESCO. At this critical juncture, I hope UNESCO will make a positive impact on the lives of people around the world. I assure you that Bangladesh will continue to fulfil its obligations and do even more to strengthen the Organization effectively, efficiently and meaningfully. I thank you. *Joy Bangla, Joy Ubuntu*.

25. **The President**:

Thank you, Your Excellency for your speech. Now, I call His Excellency Honourable Shri Dharmendra Pradhan Minister of Education of India. We will watch a pre-recorded video. You have the floor, Sir.

26.1 **Mr Pradhan** (India):

Madam Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, distinguished representatives, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honour for me to address the 41st session of UNESCO's General Conference. On behalf of the people of India I take this opportunity to congratulate the UNESCO family on completing 75 remarkable years of partnering development across the world. As a founding Member of UNESCO, India has had a deep and productive engagement with this multilateral platform that is defined by a common commitment for peace, solidarity and attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. The year is also significant for India as we celebrate *Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav* to commemorate 75 years of our country's independence. The event is an embodiment of the progressive spirit of India, a celebration of our glorious history and an articulation of our ideas and *Atmanirbhar Bharat* or self-reliant India.

26.2 Excellencies, while the COVID-19 pandemic has brought untold misery to the world, we must respectfully acknowledge the indomitable spirit of people and governments across the globe to stand still and fight unitedly against the onslaught. The world has rapidly devised and adjusted to the new, technologically and digitally driven norms. India carried out the world's largest and fastest vaccination drive under the able guidance of our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Two million made-in-India vaccines were rolled out in just 11 months of the first infection. One billion vaccines have since been administered in just nine months. More than 60 million vaccines have been provided to 95 countries under our Vaccine Maitri or Vaccine Friendship Initiative.

26.3 Excellencies, India has actively promoted the use of technological and digital solutions in areas concerned with achievement of its digital goals, especially for delivery of education. E-learning is being facilitated through platforms like Diksha or digital infrastructure for school education, which are to house of 3,500 plus energized textbooks and over 16-million-page hits daily from massive online open course portal with enrolment of over 22 million, the National Digital Library, which has more than 38 million digital resources and more than 5.2 million students registered, virtual labs and several others. The PME media programme provides multi-modal delivery of education through online TV, radio and mobile modes. For areas with limited access to online modes, TV channels through Imperva and radio, including community radio. The PME media programme benefits nearly 250,000 schoolchildren. Specialized sturdy material is being provided for the differently-abled students through digitally accessible information system and in sign language. Moreover, the open initiative provides psychological support to students, teachers and families. India is also working to eliminate the digital divide by strengthening digital infrastructure and enhancing access to digital devices.

26.4 Excellencies, I am happy to share that several initiatives have already been implemented under our national education policy announced in 2020 that will accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by enhancing access to education and improving quality of teacher learning. Some of these initiatives include the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with understanding and numeracy and sign language as regular subjects, teaching engineering in an Indian language, formation of an academic u7 (de)1 0 Td(5.3 (ai)-0.,)3, form6 (t)15oa3 (der.6 (G)8.7.7 (l)18oal)12.7 /187 0 Td( )0.7 (

27. **The President**:

Thank you very much Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency the honourable Ms Agnes Nyalonje Minister of Education of Malawi. Excellency, you have the floor.

28.1 **Ms Nyalonje** (Malawi):

Mr President of the General Conference, Director-General of UNESCO, Madam Audrey Azoulay, fellow distinguished delegates. Mr President, allow me to add my delegation's sincere congratulations on your accession to the presidency of this 41st session of the General Conference. I have trust in your wisdom and able leadership. Allow me also to join the rest of the delegations in congratulating Madam Azoulay for being resoundingly re-elected and appointed Director-General of UNESCO. Congratulations, Madam. I bring fraternal congratulations and greetings from His Excellency Dr Lazarus Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi. He wishes all the delegates to this Conference fruitful deliberations.

28.2 Mr President, this 41st session of the General Conference is taking place at a time the world is slowly returning to normalcy in this COVID-19 era. As UNESCO is closing the Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021 and entering the new Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029, this session offers us an opportunity to reflect on the achievements that have been made and the challenges that have been encountered. Malawi appreciates the work done by UNESCO amidst the challenges brought about by COVID-19. Notably, UNESCO has ably fulfilled its functions as a laboratory of ideas, a clearinghouse, a standard setter, a catalyst and monitor for international cooperation and a capacity builder, as well as peacebuilder.

28.3 Malawi supports the Organization's maintenance and integration of two key global priorities in the Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and programmes, that is, priority Africa and priority gender equality. This is very much appreciated in Malawi and elsewhere among Member States. And we urge that we all do our best to ensure progress. Continuous maintenance of these two priority areas over the years may be an indication that there are serious challenges that hamper progress which need to be addressed in a business unusual approach.

28.4 Mr President, Malawi is committed to adopting national priorities against regional and global benchmarks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union, Agenda 2063 and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) development agenda. Malawi's own development blueprint, the Malawi 2063 Vision, responds to that commitment. In education, Mr President, Malawi appreciates initiatives by UNESCO in the establishment of the Global Partnership on Education and the UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank consortium programme set up to help countries to adopt evidence-based strategies and measures in response to COVID-19.

28.5 We are also appreciative of the UNESCO Norwegian Teacher Initiative, which is supporting the development of our policy on teachers and teacher promotion and also the professional development of teachers. We also appreciate the support provided by UNESCO and partners such as the European Union towards Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which has supported the articulation of a TVET policy and improved funding towards this very important area of my government's work.

28.6 Mr President, I would like to acknowledge and thank in a very special way the role played by the National Commissions for UNESCO and their respective governments in Germany and South Korea. These UNESCO Commissions have collaborated with our National Commission in promoting UNESCO's mandate and its added value. Such collaboration has demonstrated that within the architecture of UNESCO, National Commissions continue to constitute capable actors that appropriately position UNESCO to respond to the challenges of today's world, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The work of these National Commissions has responded very well to UNESCO's mandate. Malawi looks forward to the continuation and creation of more such partnerships in the spirit of multilateralism, and calls upon the National Commissions and their respective governments to continue with this mode of collaboration or cooperation.

28.7 Mr President in science, I wish to thank UNESCO for the work done on the Man and Biosphere programme and for the support being provided towards the strengthening of science, technology and innovation. In the social and human sciences programme, Malawi appreciates the efforts being made in strengthening the programme through initiatives such as the establishment of the Malawi Anti-Doping Agency and the National Commission for [illegible]

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UNESCO for offering young media professionals training on fact checking to combat misinformation and disinformation. We have no doubt that this will reinforce our democracy and the prevention of violence and hate speech during the upcoming presidential election in Gambia.

38.7 Ladies and gentlemen, our Government recognizes gender and women's empowerment as a critical enabler in the attainment of sustained and progressive development. I am pleased to inform you that we have upgraded the Women's Bureau to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, which has prioritized a series of inclusive legislative and policy reviews. Gambia is devoted to addressing equality, social justice and the further mainstreaming of women and children in its overall development process.

38.8 Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we acknowledge the fact that youths are the driving force for our socioeconomic development. They are contributions towards socioeconomic and political reforms in the context of rapid global changes cannot be overemphasized. Thus, we have initiated a shift in the youth development paradigm to emphasizing the recognition of them as the single most important and valuable natural resource that Gambia has. We are committed to putting in place the necessary government machinery and other available national support to ensure that systematic frameworks in institutionalized settings are established and used to empower the youth. We thank UNESCO for supporting the development of the first sector wide policy on TVET in Gambia.

38.9 Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Gambia commends UNESCO for its leading role during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly all the efforts made in combating and alleviating the negative impact of the pandemic. We are confident that we will continue to work with UNESCO to devise and implement policies and programmes that will collectively make our

41. **The President**:
I thank you Your Excellency. Now I call Her Excellency Ms Glenys Hanna-Martin, Minister of Education, Technical and Vocational Training of Bahamas. You have the floor Your Excellency.

42.1 **Ms Hanna-Martin** (Bahamas):
Mr President, Madam Director-General, colleague Ministers, representatives of the various delegations, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. It is an honour and esteemed privilege to have this opportunity to address this 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO as the Minister of Education and Technical and Vocational Training for the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. I bring greetings on behalf of our Governor General His Excellency the Most Honourable Sir Cornelius A. Smith and the Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister, and indeed the people of Bahamas.

42.2 We congratulate Madam Director-General on her re-election. We also congratulate UNESCO on the celebration of its 75th anniversary. We are proud that the Bahamas has been a full Member of this august body for 40 of those 75 years. We are gratified that over these decades we have participated fully and engaged in wide-ranging collaboration and cooperation.

42.3 The world has changed very much over these years and today we face emerging challenges which threaten our planet and all of its inhabitants collectively. One such issue is climate change and global warming.

national identity of our people, commemorative of our historical journey and in urgent need of safeguarding for generations yet unborn and for enrichment of world cultures.

42.10 Despite our acute vulnerabilities and ongoing challenges, we have dug deep and determined that we will create a new day for our people, that we will bring about the necessary adaptation and implement pragmatic change to secure the future progress of our people. In this regard we are re-envisioning virtual learning for our archipelagic State, developing policies that are data-driven, actively reviewing the curriculum, facilitating life-long learning and professional development for our educators and establishing universal pre-primary education. In recognition of the substantive and qualitative relationship with my nation, the Bahamas reaffirms its pledge and commitment to fully honour the goals, as articulated by UNESCO, and to declare our full partnership in the development of this work, to the benefit of all people. Finally, we are offering ourselves for membership on the Executive Board. We are hopeful that members will see the value of our experiences, our unique insight and our dogged commitment to the ideals as articulated by UNESCO as valuable inputs to the higher participation of decision-making. I thank you.

43. **The President**:

I thank you Your Excellency. Now I call His Excellency Mr Professor Ansu Sonii, Minister of Education of Liberia. You have the floor Your Excellency.

44.1 **Mr Sonii** (Liberia):

Mr President of the General Conference, Madam Director-General, Mr Chairperson of the Executive Board, colleagues, delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I join other Member States in expressing our profound congratulations to UNESCO on the 75th anniversary of its founding, of which convention Liberia is a signatory. It cannot be emphasized even more that because of UNESCO and its mission and programmes that the world has become a better place over the past 75 years and that we can begin to breathe peace throughout the world and all nations.

44.2 Liberia also wishes to congratulate you, Mr President, for the election to chair this 41st session of the General Conference. And accordingly, we pledge our support. Similarly, we express our appreciation again for the work of the Director-General over the past four years and congratulate her for being re-elected to the post of Director-General of UNESCO. Again, you have our support.

44.3 Seventy-five years ago, history tells that UNESCO became an entity in the architecture of United Nations systems. Liberia stands proud to have been present 75 years ago as a founding member nation whose signatory endorsed the philosophy of this enterprising embodiment of the concept of a United Nations, particularly after the aftermath of a destructive calamity presented upon mankind such as wars. In celebration of these 75 years, Liberia's President, His Excellency George Weah, among other Excellencies of his standing, has accepted an invitation to grace the occasion and lends his representation in confirming support for the UNESCO agenda for the years to come.

44.4 Our long-standing membership with UNESCO and other international organizations is testament to Liberia's firm commitment to the principle of multilateralism and the protection of women, the promotion of girls' education across our landscape. Nothing else does it better. Ladies and gentlemen, education draws on the transformation of the lives of men and women, culture in all of its glory – science with all of its inventions, when taken together, have a single purpose to ensure peace and stability the world over. For these reasons, all nations developed and developing, big and small have taken education as the principal recipe, prerequisite upon which development agendas are set. Everything else depends on the success of this agenda item, Education for All, without exception.hen t7 ()2 ( )13anthp(m1)-0og-2.7 (i)

name was also long before the city was named. What more history can be defined as this? This is the history that Liberia has requested before, a request again today to be considered as a World Heritage Site. Indeed, it does qualify in all of this context. Unfortunately, as of now, the consideration is still on hold. Providence Island Dozoa is the epicentre of the Liberian story founded with bravery in the midst of colonialism and land grabs all across Africa during the century, the nation which championed most of the ambitions that led to the wave of independence and self-determination across the African continent in the 1900s. Just as Liberia is a small country with nearly five million people but with an influential history, so also is Providence Island, a small piece of land engulfed by water becoming the embryo of a Liberia, the only independent black African State surrounded by powerful colonial powers for more than a century.

44.8 Mr President, esteemed colleagues, what better justification can we give to further credential Liberia's long-

Solidarity Inclusion with Global Citizenship Education will continue to speak out against any act denying the equality of all human beings.

48.8 We believe international cooperation in science is the key to narrowing the gap among nations and promoting joint response to transboundary problems. We will continue our efforts in making further achievements in such fields as hydrology, ocean science and biodiversity.

48.9 We believe international cooperation in science is the key to narrowing the gap among nations and promoting joint response to transboundary problems. We will continue our efforts in making further achievements in such fields as hydrology, ocean science and biodiversity. The joint inscription of traditional wrestling “ssirum/ssireum” as intangible cultural heritage in 2018 presents a valuable step towards establishing lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. We hope that the demilitarized zone, a very symbol of the division of the two Koreas, can be a world heritage site in the future marking another significant initiative for peace on the Korean Peninsula. We will continue to contribute to protection of world heritage through various capacity building projects.

48.10 Mr President, dear colleagues, in closing, in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, solidarity and inclusion across borders are more precious than ever. It is imperative to continue our efforts to build invincible defences of peace. The Republic of Korea is committed to the abiding collaboration with UNESCO to realize noble ideals it aspires to. Thank you for your kind attention.

49. **The President**:
Thank you very much, ambassador. Thank you for your kind words. Now I call His Excellency Mr Makram Queisi, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Jordan to UNESCO.

50.1 **M. Queisi** (Jordanie) :
Monsieur le Président, Madame la Directrice générale de l’

behaviour of the South Korean authorities is none other than a mockery to the international community. If the United States of America and South Korea authorities truly want peace and reunification, reconciliation and cooperation, they should first renounce their prejudiced viewpoints, unjust double-dealing attitudes and hostile stand and policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Thank you.

56. **The President**:

Thank you for your statement. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your statements and inspiring words. The plenary will reconvene at 3 p.m. sharp. I would kindly request you to be very punctual and be in your seats, please by at least 2.55 p.m. as we will have the privilege of receiving the official visit of Her Excellency Madam Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh at 3 p.m. I count on your presence and of course, a full room to welcome the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. *Bon appetit* at this time and the meeting is adjourned .

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.