

210TH SESSION OF UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD

POLICY STATEMENT BY DR. MATTHEW OPOKU PREMPEH, GHANA REPRESENTATIVE
AND LEADER OF DELEGATION TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Theme:

“Positioning UNESCO for the next decade as a specialised intellectual and cooperation agency of the UN System in the areas of Education, the Sciences, Culture and Communication”

Chairman of the Executive Board,
President of the General Conference,
Director-General of UNESCO,
Distinguished Representatives,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It has been half a decade since we committed ourselves to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Today, the 2030 development agenda is at crossroads as the UN monitoring report indicate that no country worldwide is on track to achieve all 17 SDGs by 2030. Certainly, this is not good news. We need a paradigm shift. We need to rethink our strategies and renew our commitments and approaches, if countries are to achieve the SDG targets by 2030.

Since its inception, UNESCO is well noted as the intellectual and moral conscience of the United Nations, due to its unique competencies and broad mandate. This is also UNESCO comparative advantage in the UN system. The Agenda 2030 thus, presents a good opportunity for the international community to fully harness and utilise these uniqueness in the coming decade. Indeed, UNESCO's multidisciplinary mandate is also an added value, given that it is able to address complex challenges in an interdisciplinary manner. In that context, Ghana fully supports a complete alignment of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy to the 2030 Agenda and further endorses the re-election of the Director-General to lead the Organisation in this regard.

While COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption in education systems the world over, it has also provided UNESCO with the opportunity to put in place strategies that support the educational systems in Member States to make them more resilient. UNESCO, as a global capacity-builder in education, has a unique opportunity in this era of pandemic, not only to support Member States integrate appropriate use of technologies in traditional teaching and learning, but also contribute to understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of the crisis including the post-pandemic reconstruction in education.

For us in Ghana, as part of measures to ensure education continuity, Government and private media houses rolled out distance learning programmes for all students at the pre-tertiary level during the school closures through online, television, and radio broadcast. The television programme considered children with special needs and incorporated sign language and subtitles to video lessons. Government has also distributed to all public basic schools learning materials to augment the radio programmes. The Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling is providing online access to Senior High School content on iBox and iCampus to all Senior High School students. Approximately 1.2 million learners have been registered on the iCampus system to allow them to do online and self-guided learning.

Climate Change has caught up with humanity. The world's resources continue to be at the mercy of the climate menace thereby, adversely impacting our collective efforts towards achieving the relevant targets in the SDGs for which responsibility UNESCO bears. Let us not forget, that, it is a shared responsibility to reverse the negative impact of climate change by doing things differently in today's world of technological revolution.

UNESCO has a unique role in the next decade through the Natural Sciences programmes to protect the environment and avert biodiversity loss, depletion of freshwater resources and promoting Ocean health. It is also important for UNESCO to demonstrate clear leadership by providing policy advice to Member States' on the basic and applied sciences, engineering and ICTs especially those related to Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and bioinformatics towards human resource capacity-building for the priority areas. UNESCO must further strengthen efforts towards Open Science and Open Educational Resources including increased accessibility to scientific research and data sharing.

In promoting a culture-engaged implementation of the 2030 Agenda, UNESCO must work closely with the Africa Union and align strategies with Agenda 2063. We must revamp the Culture of Peace programme and the Pedagogical Use of the General History of Africa, to foster mutual understanding, regional integration and peace.

Finally Mr. Chairman, the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that multilateralism and our collective inter-dependence are crucial to the survival of humankind. UNESCO can only fulfil its enlarging responsibilities if Member States act together.

UNESCO needs unity of purpose, international solidarity, inclusivity and respect for diversity, if we are to make meaningful progress on the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.