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ORAL REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION

Presented by

Mr Aleksi Kalenius (Finland)
(Vice-Chairperson)

at the thirteenth plenary meeting

Paris, 13 November 2015
UNESCO Headquarters

President of the General Conference,
Madam Director-General,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Education Commission of the 38th session of the General Conference has completed its proceedings and I have the privilege on behalf of the Chair and the Commission to submit to you the main conclusions of our three days of intensive and fruitful discussions, which successfully covered 13 agenda items.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates, let me start by recalling briefly the opening of the Commission on Thursday 5 November. In her opening remarks, the Chair invited the Commission to weigh the significance of this year and all what it represents for the international community, for Education and for UNESCO.

Significance because of the United Nations' and UNESCO's 70th birthday and our 70-year continued commitment to build peace in the minds of men and women along with the fundamental role of education in this process.

The Chair reminded the Commission of how 2015 had been a year calling for reflective and introspective assessments. It is the year where the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All Goals came to a close. We have assessed the successes – and the shortcomings – in reaching the targets.

But 2015 is the year when countries worked to shape and adopt a new development agenda, concretized in September with the adoption of the 17 sustainable development goals – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Education is central to this new sustainable development agenda, with Sustainable Development Goal 4 seeking to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Opening our deliberations, we had the benefit of the outcomes of the high-level meeting that took place on 4 November, where ministers discussed Education 2030 and adopted its framework for action.

The Chair called upon the Commission to not view education in isolation from other sustainable development goals, but encouraged us all to consider that the realization of SDG4 is essential for the success of all the others. The challenge ahead is both to give attention to the complex interrelationships between education and key development sectors and also to determine which education strategies, policies and programmes are most effectively linked to the economic, social, environmental and political priorities of the new sustainable development agenda as a whole.

Debates 1 and 4

Let me now turn to Debate 1 and Debate 4, which items linked to Education 2030, including the role of UNESCO in the implementation of Education 2030, as well as more programmatic dimensions related to the programme and budget of the Education Sector and the contribution of different stakeholders including youth. Four items were covered under these debates: item 3.4 – Preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 (39 C/5); Item 4.14 – UNESCO's role in the implementation of the Education 2030 agenda; Item 4.5 – Conclusions of the Youth Forum as regards education; and item 3.2 on the consideration and adoption of the draft budget for 2016-2017 for Major Programme I – Education.

In introducing these debates, the Assistant Director-General for Education praised the achievements realized during the past two years in charting the Education 2030 agenda. Recalling

the long and thorough consultation process and the concerted efforts by the Member States and the global education community to promote a single, renewed education agenda, Education 2030, recognizing the unfinished business of EFA, yet going beyond, with a universal and holistic approach, the Assistant Director-General for Education also warned us that looking ahead, the real work is just about to start – as the implementation of Education 2030 will be a massive undertaking requiring all stakeholders' investment and engagement, with UNESCO playing a key role in the leadership and coordination.

The Assistant Director-General for Education recalled how document 38 C/54 outlines three key roles for UNESCO in the implementation of SDG 4:

- (1) to lead coordination and partnership building;
- (2) to review/monitor and report progress towards the achievement of the education targets; and
- (3) to support the Member States in the implementation.

With regards to the Preparation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2018-2021 (39C/5), the Assistant Director-General for Education laid forth how the Organization will further capitalize on its multi-disciplinary expertise and enhance its intersectoral approach in the implementation of the SDGs.

Concerning the draft budget for 2016-2017 (38 C/5), the Assistant Director-General for Education reminded the Education Commission that, it was requested to adopt the budget allocation only for the next two years 2016-2017, with some minor programmatic changes taking into account recent developments in particular Education 2030 as the last General Conference has adopted the quadrennial programme for 2014-2017.

The Assistant Director-General for Education explained the few adjustments introduced to the Education programme with the view to ensure that the Sector is better “fit for purpose” to respond fully and effectively to Education 2030. He highlighted that these adjustments concern mainly Main Line of Action (MLA) 3, the title of which has been revised in the light of the 2030 agenda and now reads “Leading and coordinating the education 2030 agenda through partnerships, monitoring and research”.

A total of 38 Member States and 10 Observers participated in the first debate on draft document 39 C/5, Education 2030 and the Youth Forum, while 15 Member States took the floor to share their views during the fourth debate regarding draft budget of 38 C/5.

The Commission expressed its appreciation for the leadership of the Director-General in developing Education 2030 and its Framework for Action. Many delegates voiced their support to UNESCO's role as leader and coordinator of Education 2030. Delegates also supported the adoption of the draft budget and the review of the main line of action which they considered reflect well the high priority given to Education by the Organization and its role in leading and coordinating Education 2030. Furthermore, its role as standard-setter through its normative instruments in areas such as higher education and technical and vocational education and training was emphasized.

Many Member States also expressed their full commitment to the new education agenda. The fundamental responsibility of the Members States in the implementation of Education 2030 was reiterated by many Member States and Observers. They emphasized that UNESCO has a critical role in supporting the Member States in the implementation of the agenda.

The Education Commission urged the Director-General to clearly define how UNESCO will implement Education 2030, using the adopted Framework for Action as a reference for its programmes, and how it will contribute to the other sustainable development goals. In this context,

the Commission requested UNESCO to communicate to the Member States the new structure that would be put in place to implement Education 2030.

The Commission also encouraged the Organization to further pursue results-based management and highlighted the importance of monitoring and analysing the outputs of its programmes to assess their viability in the walk towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

In addition, the Education Commission strongly urged UNESCO to support the implementation of Education 2030 in close partnership with the existing UNESCO Networks such as category 1 institutes, category 2 centres, UNESCO National Commissions, Associated Schools Project Network, UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training and UNEVOC Network, University Twinning and Networking Programme, Global Network of Learning Cities, Goodwill Ambassadors and Special Envoys.

The comparative advantage of UNESCO in the field of monitoring and statistics related to education was also highlighted by many members of the Commission. The delegates urged UNESCO to collect relevant data with the view to inform decision-making. In this regard, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) was considered as a key player. The work of the *Global Monitoring Report*, now to be called *Global Education Monitoring Report* (GEMR) was also appreciated. Many delegates stressed that sufficient funds and human resources should be allocated to both UIS and GEMR.

In this context, the role of UNESCO in supporting the Member States in developing the capacity for collecting data, managing statistics and monitoring in the field of education was considered by the delegates of utmost importance. The Commission encouraged UNESCO to support the development of national education statistics services.

The importance of promoting lifelong learning and quality education was reiterated by many delegates. Education as a fundamental human right and the importance of bridging formal, non-formal and informal education were stressed by a number of delegates. Qualified teachers were considered of critical importance in delivering quality education. The Commission urged UNESCO to pay particular attention to technical and vocational education and training and to reinforce the relation between education and the world of work. Delegates called also to consider linkages between early childhood care and education including the implications on learners' performances. Information and communication technologies were mentioned by many delegates as drivers for promoting access and quality of education. The critical role of parents in participating in the education processes of children were highlighted by several observers.

UNESCO's work on Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development were also appreciated and the Commission urged UNESCO to continue its efforts and work to promote these areas. Promotion of cultural diversity in view of fostering global citizenship was considered to be one of the fields where UNESCO should contribute towards higher inter-sectoral cooperation.

Many members of the Education Commission stressed that the focus of Education 2030 should be on the vulnerable and the marginalized, girls and women, children and indigenous people. Several Member States commended the two Global Priorities of UNESCO: Priority Africa and Gender Equality. Delegates urged UNESCO to continue prioritizing countries in Africa and small island developing States. The importance of South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation in this regard were emphasized.

The importance of involving youth in the decision-making processes of UNESCO was highlighted. The contribution of youth through the UNESCO Youth Forum is well appreciated and the recommendations by the Youth Forum in encouraging schools to be seen as learning communities were welcomed. The Commission suggested that platforms be provided for young people to participate in Education 2030.

Finally, the central role of education in contributing to the implementation of several sustainable development goals was highlighted. UNESCO's unique mandate of working in the fields of education, culture, science and communications was considered to be an important comparative advantage. Many members urged UNESCO to improve its inter-sectoral cooperation with view to foster its contribution across the sustainable development goals, in particular in the areas of health, democracy, gender and climate change.

In his response, the Assistant Director-General for Education warmly thanked all the delegates for their comments and wide appreciation for UNESCO's work and support of its leadership and coordination role for the implementation of Education 2030. Taking careful note of their demands and visions during the debates, he referred to the summaries prepared by the Secretariats of each Commission to be submitted at the last joint meeting of Commissions on 18 November 2015, as the first phase of a series of consultations, which will lead to the formulation of the new Director-General's preliminary proposals concerning document 39 C/5.

He also responded to the concern expressed on how to start addressing the major challenges in implementing the new agenda by emphasizing how UNESCO, using its convening power, strategically positions itself as a platform, inviting Member States, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to be part of the "steering committee for Education 2030", the new mechanism for coordination, and by reaffirming the Education Sector's commitment to strengthen an intersectoral approach, together with other sectors, also taking advantage of the Organization's comparative advantage.

The proposed resolution on UNESCO's role in the implementation of Education 2030 was adopted with amendments proposed by some Member States.

The Commission adopted the draft resolutions related to Major Programme I and its seven category 1 institutes, contained in Volume I of document 38 C/5 as amended by 38 C/6, 38 C/6 Addendum and 38 C/6 Addendum 2, as well as orally by the Commission. The five draft resolutions submitted by Member States, as contained in document 38 C/8 regarding Major Programme I were all adopted by the Commission, some taking into account the Director-General's observations.

Debate 2

Following this adoption, the Commission moved to the **second debate** which included two items, namely item 6.3 related to the Preliminary report concerning the preparation of a global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications, and item 7.8 on the Consolidated Report on the Implementation of the 1993 Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education.

Twenty-seven Member States and one observer took the floor to address these two items.

Many Member States welcomed the preliminary report concerning the preparation of a global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications and its finding.

Strong support was expressed by almost all Member States taking the floor in favour of the development of such a global convention. In addition, a number of countries stated their readiness and desire to participate in the drafting Committee to be convened.

The need for such a global standard-setting instrument was highlighted by some States in the absence of any legally binding framework at the international level regulating the recognition of higher education qualifications. Furthermore, the initiative was recognized by many as more relevant than ever, given the current context of the migrant crisis and rising number of refugees. The future instrument's potential to support and accompany academic and professional mobility was praised.

The envisaged process was commended for how it would contribute to increase transparency, quality, equity and reciprocity by many States. Quality assurance is one of the key principles which was underlined, so as to ensure that recognition mechanisms are reliable and trusted. In improving quality assurance systems, the instrument would also become a tool against fraud.

The diversity of national education systems as well as other local specificities, such as national government structures, led several Member States to call for a flexible approach, emphasizing common values but allowing to take regional and national differences into consideration.

One of the dominant and recurrent views expressed was that of the importance of the regional conventions. Their implementation needs to be further strengthened and their revision processes continued. Many agreed that the development of a global convention should take into consideration the already existing regional ones and build upon them, identifying common principles but also examining the specificities, given the importance of not having contradiction between the regional and global conventions.

Member States called upon UNESCO to strengthen the capacity-building offered to further develop the higher education systems at national level but also for the functioning of the regional conventions.

The consultative process underlined in the report received broad support.

Some Member States expressed concerns for the costs implied by both the development but all the more the implementation of such a global convention.

In his response, the representative of the Director-General thanked Member States for their broad support for the work on the global instrument and took due note of the reserves expressed by Member States, and in particular the need for general principles allowing the accommodation of local specificities, as well as the importance of continuing supporting the ongoing process of revising the regional conventions. Responding to the concerns regarding the funding – a preoccupation for the Secretariat also – he recalled that the implementation of a global instrument would rely on the existing structures put in place for the regional instruments, but did also express his hope that Member States would be attentive to the additional funding needs.

The draft resolution concerning the preparation of a global convention was adopted with amendments by several Member States, and the draft resolution concerning the consolidated report on the Implementation of the 1993 Recommendation was adopted with the amendments made by the Legal Committee as well as by an additional amendment proposed by one Member State.

Debate 3

Ladies and gentlemen, let me now turn to the **third debate** which addressed the Implementation of 37 C/Resolution 67 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories. The proposed resolution on this item was adopted without debate. Six Member States made statements on this item after the adoption of the resolution.

Debate 5

Fellow delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As I already summarized debate four at the outset of this report, we shall now turn to **debate five** which included the examination of two revised normative instruments: the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education and the Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

The representative of the Director-General started to introduce the items by reminding the Commission of the consultation and drafting processes followed since the 37th General Conference where it was decided to undertake their revision.

Twenty-two Member States and five observers expressed their views on the items.

Broad support for the revision of both Recommendations was expressed, welcoming the suggested changes to their texts, which were deemed to accurately reflect the realities and challenges, as well as national priorities. Both were considered, as new international standards, crucial to accompany the implementation of Education 2030.

Member States expressed their satisfaction with the consultation processes and commended UNESCO and UIL for the synergies they enabled between the development of both texts, and the comprehensiveness, depth and innovativeness of the consultations.

Several delegates called upon all Member States to ensure that the provisions of the Recommendations would be interpreted into national legislations, policies, and be financed so as to not remain merely aspirational. Specificities of Member States and their local conditions were recalled to emphasize the need for flexibility in the implementation of the Recommendations.

The importance of developing lifelong learning, including through the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning, through the establishment of national qualifications framework and through the development of pathways and permeable systems was over and over again stressed by Member States, commending the Recommendations for their perspectives on this.

In light of how TVET and adult learning and education both fall within the remit of various sectors and require the engagement of various stakeholders, Member States commended the Recommendations for underlining the importance of intersectoral policies, of inter-ministerial work and of stakeholders' involvement.

The recognition of the diversity of forms of learning encompassed in both texts, as well as the promotion of the use of ICTs and online forms of education and learning were warmly welcomed.

Specific importance was given to the development of teaching and training staff, as well as to ensure TVET and adult learning and education truly include all, including marginalized and vulnerable people, particularly girls and women.

The establishment of an informal group called Friends of TVET, with the purpose to share experience in the area, was mentioned and invitation was extended to all Member States to support the group. The work accomplished by the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training was also appreciated and deemed as essential for supporting the Member States in the implementation of the Recommendation.

In their responses, the representatives of the Director-General thanked Member States for their appreciation of both the consultations processes and outcomes. With regards to the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, the representative of the Director-General indicated how its monitoring and promotion will be a part of the monitoring of the Belem Framework for Action. The Recommendation concerning TVET will be given due attention in the development of a new TVET Strategy, which will identify new approaches and avenues to implement and monitor the Recommendation.

The two draft resolutions were adopted, each as amended by one Member State.

Debate 6

Fellow delegates,

I would now like to turn to **Debate 6**, which covered items relating to the management of the education-related category 1 institutes, and the establishment of two new category 2 institutes and centres.

Presentations of reports on the 2014-2015 activities were given by the Chairpersons or the representative of the governing boards of six UNESCO category 1 institutes in education, namely:

UNESCO International Bureau of Education,

UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning,

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning,

UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education,

UNESCO Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa, and

Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development.

The report of UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was presented by the Director of the Institute.

The institutes' presentations were followed by a presentation by the Director of the UNESCO Santiago Office on the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean.

When introducing the items under debate, the Assistant Director-General for Education recalled some background elements, namely the comprehensive review of the then six education-related category 1 institutes jointly undertaken by the Education Sector and UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service (IOS) with a view to identify ways to improve their management, as well as the report by the External Auditor on the governance and financial reporting of the institutes. He then explained how the Education Sector has duly taken into consideration the recommendations of IOS and the External Auditor, by accomplishing steady progress in improving the management of the education-related category 1 institutes in three key areas namely: (1) programme management and coordination, (2) the financial and budget management and (3) the human resources management.

Twenty Member States took the floor for the debate and the discussions that ensued showed the overall appreciation of Member States for the Institutes work.

Tribute was paid to the work done to make management more transparent and UNESCO was encouraged to continue implementing the Recommendations of IOS and the External Auditor. A call was made to clarify the mandates so as to avoid duplications and foster each Institute's specific role in contributing to Education 2030 in complementary ways.

The importance of IESALC as the only category 1 institute in higher education was recalled by many Member States, especially those from the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

The representative of the Director-General for Education took due note of the importance to make sure there would be no duplication in the implementation of Education 2030, in which the Institutes have an important role to play. He mentioned the six year strategic plan developed for IESALC with the view to ensure sustainable core funding. He also welcomed, for IITE, the willingness by the host country to provide further core funding.

The draft resolution on the management of the education-related category 1 institutes, including the revisions of the Statutes of the IBE and of the IITE were approved with the amendment of one Member State.

The second agenda item under this debate dealt with the proposals for the establishment of two category 2 centres, one in Bangladesh – namely the **International Mother Language Institute** – and the other in China – namely the **International Centre for Higher Education Innovation**. The proposals to establish the centres were supported by several Member States and the item was adopted without debate.

Debate 7

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to our **seventh and last debate**, which covered item 4.18 concerning the proclamation of 5 November as “World Day of Romani Language”. One Member State and one observer expressed support for the draft resolution, which was adopted without amendments.

Distinguished delegates,

I have now completed my presentation on the work of the Education Commission. Allow me to conclude my presentation by congratulating the members of the Commission for a very participatory meeting with intense and constructive debates, which, I believe, will now allow the Education Sector to move forward as it embarks on the demanding journey towards 2030. I would also like to thank the representative of the Director-General, the Assistant Director-General for Education, Mr Qian Tang for the useful clarifications he provided to the Commission, which allowed it to carry out its work. Let me also thank the secretariat of the ED Commission for their dedication and professionalism.

I thank you for your attention.