



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

**Opening remarks by the
President of the 35th session of
the General Conference of UNESCO**

Dr Davidson L. HEPBURN

**on the occasion of
the High-Level Review Meeting on the
Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy**

Interactive Dialogue on Regional Perspective

United Nations, New York, 25 September 2010

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the General Conference of UNESCO, I would wish to thank the organizers of this High Level Meeting for giving me the floor to share brief remarks on this very important topic before us.

Five years after the launch of the Mauritius Strategy, five years from the achievement date of the MDGs and the Education For All objectives, this meeting comes at a turning point in the global development agenda.

The most important words here are "implementation" and "sustainable".

This high-level review meeting clearly demonstrated the need for the UN system and international partners to consolidate and boost support for Small Island developing States. The reinforcement of financial assistance must be coupled with a more efficient and better coordinated use of the funding available, in line with SIDS-specific priorities and underpinned by targeted assistance to allow SIDS to make full use of the strengths and resilience that characterize islanders over the world.

Action must be designed to allow SIDS to respond to the growing global challenges, by relying on their cultures, at once unique and interconnected. In a time of growing vulnerability, the role of cultural heritage, local knowledge, societal structures and networks becomes ever more important. Culture is the foundation upon which small island societies must develop responses to address these unprecedented threats to their sustainability.

I would also like to emphasize **the central role of education and the sciences** in addressing the challenges faced by Small Island Developing States. Education is one of the most effective means to increase adaptation capacity of nations to climate change. It helps individuals to make informed decisions on how to adapt their lives and livelihoods to the effects of global warming and to prepare for disasters. UNESCO is currently developing a new Initiative which will support Member States (particularly SIDS) to provide quality climate change education to primary and secondary school students, encourage innovative approaches to teaching about climate change, and raise awareness through the media, networks and partnerships.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was heartened by the positive comments made by the high level representatives participating in this Meeting. Your comments augur well for the success of this venture.

As outlined in paragraph 33 of the draft Outcome Document, the Secretary-General is requested to put forward concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. The resolution further requests that this be prepared in consultation with Member States as well as relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and regional commissions. UNESCO – with its unique interdisciplinary expertise in education, sciences, culture and communication - stands ready to play an active role in this process.

It is now time to keep our promises to implement and sustain the Programme of Action in order that Small Island Developing States would be able to survive the vagaries of climate change, natural disasters, and the other challenges they face.

One of the best ways to assure success would be through the concept of Interdependence. In this regard, let me quote some relevant lines from Shakespeare's play "As you like it":

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and their entrances,
And each, in his turn, plays several parts.

Through our statements, we have all chosen the role we wish to play and an old adage says "the proof of the pudding is in the eating!"
The challenge is ours.

Thank you for your attention.