



Remarks delivered by

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at the

**Regional Capacity Development Workshop for National Coordinators of the
Associated Schools Network in Sub-Saharan Africa**

and

International Orientation Session for new ASPnet Coordinators

HOTEL SAFARI

Windhoek, Namibia

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Director of Ceremonies,

Ms Soo-Hyang Choi, Director of the Division of Peace and Sustainable Development, together with her staff:

Ms Sabine Detzel (International UNESCO Associated Schools Network) and

Ms Fouzia Belhami (Unit for ASPnet);

Dr Jean-Pierre Ilboudo, Head of UNESCO Windhoek Office;

UNESCO staff from the Regional Offices: Nairobi, Kenya; Abuja, Nigeria and Harare, Zimbabwe; Windhoek, Namibia;

Secretaries-General of National Commissions for UNESCO;

National Coordinators;

Media

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning!

It is a great honour for me to be in your presence today and to address you at such an important meeting, considering the importance of the Associated Schools Network within UNESCO's mandate and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

You are aware that heads of states have committed themselves to the Sustainable Development Agenda, Agenda 2030. You are further knowledgeable about the demands set before us to achieve this ambitious agenda, Goal 4, especially in our context, Target 4.7.

To give you a glimpse of the challenge, let me relate that many times the *Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ)*, to cite but one, reports about the little learning in Sub-Saharan Africa. These reports, however, say very little about the skills, knowledge and values our learners need to advance good lifestyles and to live in peace. Not only this, collectively we face, for example, also issues like climate change, intolerance, xenophobia, incidences of extremism and violence. These problems are not confined to the Sub-Saharan Africa, but they are indeed global.

And such a situation calls on us to have the will, through ASPnet, to build new frameworks to fight these challenges. I firmly believe that the ASPnet can spread the messages of peace, intercultural learning, education for sustainable development and global citizenship education.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In this regard, allow me to put the critical work of the ASPnet in context of Namibia's Development Agenda. Firstly, Namibia recognises the more ambitious universal education agenda (Education 2030). Secondly, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, has quality, inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning at the heart of its vision. Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia is built on unity, justice and peace and embraces the right to education, human rights, and the protection of the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, two of our pillars in the fifth National Development Plan are “Environmental sustainability” and Good governance (to build and maintain peace). His Excellency, the President of Namibia, Dr Hage Geingob, states in the NDP 5, (and I give a few quotes) “The Namibian House is founded on the principles of unity, liberty and justice.... We shall cultivate a sense of caring for the less fortunate in our society..... Unity, liberty and justice will bring peace, and peace will contribute to prosperity for our people... Namibia is a child of international solidarity and a proud member of the international community, a friend to all and enemy to none.” (Unquote).

These quotes, ladies and gentlemen, positions the ASPnet in Namibia very well, to drive the agenda of Namibia and that of UNESCO, namely towards peace, education for sustainable development and global citizenship. I am convinced that your countries are driven towards these noble values as well, so that our disturbed world could be at peace and not war.

The ASPnet in Namibia which started in 1992 with 3 schools, and today we have 27 of them, also through their activities drive Namibia’s Agenda of quality education, the promotion of ESD, GCED and intercultural learning and appreciation of cultural diversity.

In Namibia, we are making many efforts to reflect our concern for these values. One of our best practices is our annual ASPnet Camp which centres around themes such as *“Education as driver for sustainable development”* and *“World heritage in young hands”*. These camps teach the learners and teachers that ASPnet is not only about the academy, but, as Delors describe, the pillars of ‘LEARNING TO DO’, ‘LEARNING TO BE’ and “LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER”.

I want to recall my happiness that 10 schools in Namibia ASPnet has been part of the Whole-institution approach to climate change”. I would here like to announce a new initiative by Namibia, to collaborate with the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) Chair on the Green School Concept in the ten (10) schools. We hope that this initiative will not only expand the focus on climate change, but also environmental awareness.

Besides ESD being in our curriculum under environmental education, ASPnet has, together with our partners such as the Namibia Desert and Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET,) humbly tried to further promote ESD.

Nine (9) ASPnet schools have international exchange programmes with ten (10) schools in Europe to advance GCED, and thus receive exposure to intercultural learning and appreciation of cultural heritage and diversity. It is my wish that, during the workshop, modalities for Sub-Saharan twinning and exchange could also be strengthened. I further propose that clear principles for twinning, in order to evade mere travelling, should be agreed upon, if possible.

In Namibia we have seen that bullying is one of the critical factors affecting academic performance and we have started with a Safe School Framework; something that the ASPnet could further advance, as bullying is a problem across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Our partnership strategy has also borne fruit with GIZ and FIFA towards an initiative at two (2) ASPnet schools where sport will be used to drive peace, gender equality, and values such as understanding and tolerance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are, however, some challenges that need to be overcome by ASPnet, and they are:

- the need to strengthen innovative practices to enhance quality education;
- capacity development for school coordinators to take up their voluntary tasks to advance the objectives of ASPnet;
- strengthened collaboration and building of partnership to fill the financial gap; and
- overcoming the obstacle of little ICT access (not good and reliable internet connection).

Regarding the latter, I would like to thank the ASPnet Unit at Headquarters who embarked upon an ICT survey among the ASPnet schools involved in the Whole-institution approach to climate change.

I want to encourage you, National Coordinators and Secretaries-General to inspire our biggest asset, namely, our young people in Sub-Saharan Africa, to have the confidence to take positive action to solve global issues; beginning with ESD, GCED, and Quality Education. I am convinced that you all are doing great work in your respective countries and that the little done at times gives a mosaic of great work.

I thank all the staff at Headquarters in Paris, the UNESCO Windhoek Office, and National Commission for UNESCO for these collaborative efforts, together with the Hainan Provincial Government, People's republic of China, for having chosen Namibia for this regional capacity building meeting. I hope the school visits will bring you an insight into what we do in Namibia.

Lastly, I expect that this meeting will be very fruitful. I am of the firm conviction that the great work of Headquarters will be seen through you in your various countries and that the results will be shared widely in the international community and further advance ASPnet around the world.

May you enjoy the tranquility of Namibia and your time during the meeting.

With these few words, I have the pleasure to officially declare the meeting open.

I thank you.