

Statement of H.E. Maria Theresa P. Lazaro  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Philippines

On the occasion of  
Assumption of Chairpersonship of the Group of 77 and China  
UNESCO, Paris Chapter  
17 February 2015

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H.E. Ahmed Sayyad, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Yemen,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

It is with a great sense of humility and honor that I assume this special responsibility as Chairperson of our Group of 77 and China. I wish to convey my heartfelt appreciation to all members of the G77 and China for your faith in the Philippines to take up this position.

Allow me to extend special thanks to Her Excellency Zhang Xiuqin, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of China and Chairperson of the Asia-Pacific Group, as well as to the esteemed members of the Asia-Pacific Group, for their valuable support and confidence in me to steer the G77 this year.

Let me also convey deepest thanks and congratulations to you, Ambassador Sayyad for being an exceptional Chair during 2014. The Group of 77 and China achieved many milestones under your leadership. In particular, the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup>-year anniversary of the Group of 77 and the inclusion of the role of culture in sustainable development are lasting contributions. The high standard that you set, Ambassador Sayyad, will be an inspiration that I and my delegation shall set as a benchmark as we seek to further build on the gains that our Group has made in UNESCO.

Let me also thank the Bureau members of the Group last year and the Secretariat for a job well done. The Philippines shall work closely with the Bureau this year and indeed all members and the Secretariat, as we strive in UNESCO to promote our common aspiration – that of a more inclusive, more equitable, and more peaceful and prosperous world for all women, men and children.

Excellencies,

2015 is a very important year for UNESCO and the international community as a whole. As UNESCO and the United Nations celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup>-year anniversaries, intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda are taking place in New York and shall be finalized later this year.

While significant progress has been made in attaining the Millennium Development Goals, we can observe that development across the world remains unbalanced and widespread disparities persist between states. In this regard, it is ever more crucial that the interests of developing countries be promoted in a comprehensive and effective manner in international fora.

At the Santa Cruz Summit last year, our Leaders underscored that the original rationale for the creation of the Group of 77 remains relevant in wake of current global challenges.

In UNESCO, through our Group, let us then together enhance the voice and solidarity of developing countries and help ensure that core programs for developing countries, especially least developing countries and vulnerable communities, are not eliminated in the prevailing atmosphere of cost savings and fiscal austerity. We can pursue this in discussions at the Executive Board and General Conference on the C/5 Programme and Budget.

Furthermore, as the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change shall take place here in Paris in December, the Group of 77 and China can together seek to highlight the adverse effects of climate change on developing countries, most of all on small island developing states, which disproportionately bear the brunt of climate change while being the least responsible for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

And while we sadly witness violent events around the globe increasing, which threaten peaceful coexistence and strike at the values of the United Nations, I believe our Group can play a constructive role in terms of firmly promoting a culture of peace, non-discrimination, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Having said this, Excellencies, my delegation shall depend very much on your collective wisdom and support. As Chair, I shall aim that the Group play an active and meaningful role in UNESCO, in cooperation with other Groups and the Secretariat.

Let me share with you some preliminary ideas which we will discuss in detail with the G-77 Bureau to develop an indicative work programme for the year:

1. We can convene regular meetings on thematic issues, inviting concerned representatives of the Secretariat to have a dialogue with them. We can do this for instance on the C/5 Programme and Budget, and also across the sectors of UNESCO. Meetings on issues of common interest, such as climate change and disaster risk reduction, can also be organized.
2. We would like to hold a G77 and China symposium on South-South cooperation in which good practices and programs for capacity-building and technical assistance between developing countries can be showcased. I believe our Group can champion this approach in UNESCO that can lead

to enhanced cooperation and practical benefits for member states and our peoples.

3. We can look into opportunities to prepare and issue joint statements at appropriate UNESCO events and meetings.

These are just some initial ideas, Excellencies, and we would highly appreciate receiving your suggestions to further strengthen our engagement in UNESCO.

In conclusion, Excellencies, let me once again express my deepest thanks for your support. Let us all stand together in solidarity and work in a spirit of common purpose for developing countries. I look forward to a fruitful year in your service.