

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION MALAYSIA
THE HONOURABLE
DATO' SERI MAHDZIR KHALID
AT THE
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Mr. President of the 38th General Conference

Mr. Chair of the Executive Board

Madam Director-General of UNESCO

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am deeply honoured to be here today at the 38th Session of UNESCO General Conference to embrace the significance of mankind's efforts towards sustaining world peace. It is also a momentous occasion as we mark the 70th year of UNESCO's establishment in creating a better world based on compassion, tolerance, and goodwill. We have come a long way since the end of the world war and have worked hard to sustain this harmony. However recent events have shown a decline in this and it is therefore imperative that we reflect on our original purpose for existence.
2. The recently launched Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN has highlighted 17 global goals to achieve sustainable growth, development, and prosperity for both people and planet Earth. The introduction of SDGs is most appropriate considering the various insurgencies, civil war, terrorism, and armed conflicts that are currently taking place in many parts of the world. Malaysia has consistently been steadfast in its stance against violent extremism and this was recently reiterated during the *Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism* held at the

UN General Assembly where Malaysia announced its decision to join a Coalition of 60 countries to counter ISIL. The ruthlessness during times of war and desperation has brought upon destruction of world heritage sites and cities in front of our own eyes with irreversible consequences. To Malaysia, the preservation of heritage and culture is of utmost importance, and this can be reflected through its involvement as member of the World Heritage Committee (WHC).

3. In the last few months our attention has been focused on the migrant crisis faced by some of our Member States, which witnessed marginalized civilians fleeing their countries in massive numbers. In support of building a new life, UNESCO advocates for education to be made a priority and that refugee children should be accorded the basic education they deserve.
4. To achieve sustainable development, efforts must not only be focused on people but also invested towards sustaining the viability of our planet. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) provides a guide to foster better understanding on how people *can change their behaviours and consumption patterns in better managing* their carbon footprints. On our part, Malaysia has adopted the concept of sustainability science to examine and problem solve issues of development. Solutions are derived from a 'quadruple helix approach' to understand interactions between human, environment, and the engineering systems.

Malaysia has also pledged to promote green growth which includes the use of renewable energy. Solar has been identified as an important source of energy and Malaysia has set a target of 10 percent of its' total energy generation from solar technology by the year 2020. I myself had

the opportunity to conduct learning lessons on climate change with a group of Malaysian students as part of the World Largest Lesson (WLL) project initiated by the UN.

5. All in all, quality education is a vital foundation to empower youth worldwide towards sustainable development of people and our planet. The nurturing of positive values and the advancement in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) can be powerful tools to problem solve many of the issues described earlier. While huge progress has been achieved to provide equitable education worldwide through Education for All (EFA), there is still much to be done. The recent adoption of the Incheon Declaration will continue to provide guidelines on how to accomplish these goals. Malaysia has embarked on various initiatives targeted at disadvantaged community segments such as the 'Schools in Hospitals' programme for children who are medically impaired and the 'Sekolah Jalinan Bimbingan Kasih' programme for homeless and street children.
6. Since 2013, Malaysia has embarked on a transformational journey of its *relatively complex* education system to create a culture of life-long learning. We have introduced the Technical and Vocational Education and Training course (TVET) which aims to develop human capital and skilled labour - preparing graduates for the job market and ultimately contribute to boosting the economy. In support of this development, UNESCO together with the Malaysian government organised the Asia Pacific Conference Education and Training (ACET) recently in Kuala Lumpur - focusing on the theme of nurturing skills development and coming up with future commitments through the Kuala Lumpur Declaration. In upholding accountability throughout this transformational

journey, we have produced annual reports describing key successes and challenges and we will be more than happy to share further details with interested Member States.

7. Malaysia's commitment to UNESCO's aspirations is reflected by the execution of initiatives that promote cooperation amongst developing countries such as the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Programme (MUCP). The Malaysian Funds-in-Trust (MFIT) introduced under this Cooperation Programme has, to date, approved 20 projects worth USD 5.7 million, benefitting countries from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDs), and African countries. Malaysia is pleased to share our experience in implementing the Cooperation Programme with distinguished Member States through a Round Table Discussion here in UNESCO on the 9th of November 2015. The recent continuation of Malaysia as the host country for the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC) allows Malaysia to continue to bring benefits to developing countries and create a more sustainable ecosystem of creativity and innovation. Under one of the Funds-in-Trust projects, Malaysia has also assisted five Pacific Member States in delivering Climate Change Education by providing 6000 copies of resource materials to both primary and secondary schools.
8. Although relatively small in scale, we believe that our role in spearheading collaborative efforts among developing countries could be a source of inspiration for other Member States to replicate and further champion this cause. It is only through this collective movement that UNESCO's aspiration towards building lasting world peace be truly realised.