

Statement
by
General Dapong Ratanasuwan
Minister of Education
and Chair of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO
at Plenary Session of UNESCO General Conference
on Wednesday, 4 November, 2015
at UNESCO's Headquarters,
Paris, France

President of UNESCO General Conference,
Chair of UNESCO Executive Board,
Director-General of UNESCO,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate UNESCO for its great success during the past two years in promoting sustainable development and accelerating reform initiatives in UNESCO priority areas. This reflects the leadership of the Director-General and I commend her achievements in managing the very challenging context of the organization.

Thailand is now in the process of reform in many aspects. Education, of course, is one of them. Thai Governments have continuously allocated over 20 percent of the national budget to education. *But why this current government is putting a high priority on educational reform, and why now, more than ever?* We sincerely believe that *education is a key tool to achieve security, prosperity, sustainability and resilient democracy.* I can say that this is in line with the original objective of UNESCO's founders. Indeed, it is evident that UNESCO has promoted education

as a key tool to build peace in the world during the past 70 years. I, therefore, do hope that UNESCO will continue to do so in the years to come. It is imperative that UNESCO maintain its role as a capacity builder in delivering inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Regarding this, I would like to encourage UNESCO to put the Education 2030 Agenda into concrete actions and integrate education into other areas of UNESCO's mandate. Education in this sense, should be "Education for a Sustainable Future", that can help build our ability to cope with borderless and interconnected challenges. This calls for extensive collaboration among governments, international organizations, the public sector and the private sector. The Sustainable Development Goals will be our guided framework to go towards the same direction.

To achieve the sustainable development goals, education has to be well-integrated with science, technology and innovation as well. We support UNESCO's role in working with other agencies to solve global issues, such as climate change and water security by using a "holistic approach".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thai people regard His Majesty the King as an exemplary teacher. In fact, many aspects of Thai education reform reflect His Majesty's principles and philosophy. His Majesty has urged teachers to love and dedicate themselves to their students, and to focus on developing their potential. Education must encourage and promote

ethics, mindfulness, thoughtfulness, and public benefit over self-interest. Students' sense of team spirit, harmony, and giving should be encouraged. In this regard, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has followed His Majesty the King's footsteps and has continuously promoted education and other human development initiatives in order to promote a better quality of life for all.

In the Thai context, we have been following His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which is very similar to the concept/ of sustainable development. I am proud to say that our Royal Family has been our role models and have led by examples in promoting education and conservation of environment and culture.

Not only Thais admire His Majesty the King's human development initiatives. Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented the United Nations first Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand/ in 2006. May I quote a part of his speech delivered during the award presentation? He said "Your Majesty has reached out to the poorest and the most vulnerable people of Thailand, and empowered them to take their lives in their own hands."

This is why Thailand has been focusing on empowering local people. Therefore, we fully support UNESCO's effort in promoting social transformations and inter-cultural dialogues in order to eradicate poverty, prevent violence, and promote social inclusion and sustainable peace. When they engage themselves in development,

they will be able to improve their livelihood, and retain the pride of their natural and cultural heritage.

On behalf of the Thai Government, I would like to thank UNESCO for its tireless effort in all priority areas. We certainly continue to pledge our commitment/ to working with UNESCO and the global community, for our better today and tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention.
