



Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030)
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OPENING REMARKS

Opening Session, 25 November 2015 at 9:00 – 9:40 a.m., Sathorn I

Excellencies

Ministers

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning and welcome to the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 or APMED2030.

I'm pleased to be here at this important meeting.

I would like to thank Thailand, the Ministry of Education, our host country.

Thank you also to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan for their continued support.

Thank you to UNICEF for their continued support and collaboration and also to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

At the outset, let us remind ourselves that the Education for All movement began in our region, and concluded in our region - Asia-Pacific - while setting a new vision of education for 2030.

This new vision is encapsulated in Incheon Declaration. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which was adopted along with 16 other SDGs at the UN Summit in New York this September, embraces the principles and thrusts of Incheon Declaration.

As you know, unlike the EFA and MDG era, the international community has decided to pursue one single global education goal.

As the world prepares to implement the SDGs, this is the first regional meeting to support the countries for the implementation of new education agenda or Education 2030.

Thus, convening this meeting is an imperative.

This meeting aims to build a common understanding among Member States of Education 2030, SDG 4 and its corresponding targets, and the Framework for Action.

This meeting will also orient Member States on the proposed thematic indicators and corresponding data needs.

The meeting will discuss regional and national coordination, partnerships, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for Education 2030, and will also review the current national education planning processes and discuss capacity development needs for the integration of Education 2030 in national education sector plans.

Towards the end of the meeting, an outcome document or a roadmap towards the implementation of Education 2030 will be produced.

We are at a critical point in time – as we move forward from EFA, towards a new vision for education. While we carry the burden of unfinished business from the earlier agenda, we have an ambitious agenda before us for the next 15 years.

But in my view, the unfinished business of EFA and the new education agenda should not be seen as mutually exclusive or stand-alone activities or issues.

What is still unfinished should be an integral part of the new agenda – of which, as captured by SDG 4, is to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” and its corresponding targets.

You will recall, the Bangkok Statement which was developed and endorsed at the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education Conference or APREC in 2014, which is a forward looking statement that captures the region’s priorities for education over the next 15 years, but also integrates elements of the unfinished agenda.

That being said, as we move towards implementing Education 2030, we should build on the achievements and lessons learned in the last 15 years and any unfinished tasks from the previous commitment should be seen as the core or primary mission of the new agenda to ensure that no one is left behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Asia-Pacific is a dynamic region with rapidly growing economies, rising democratic societies, rich cultural heritage, ethnic and linguistic diversity, large youth populations in some parts and aging populations in others, strong presence of civil society organizations, and vigorous societal desires for economic growth and social transformation.

However, on the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that this region faces challenges of serious economic disparities and inequalities, climate change and natural disasters, conflict, and migration.

The world today faces the rising wave of extremism and terrorism and we cannot feel secure and achieve our socio-economic goals while these threats persist. Education is the only hope that can save humanity from these challenges.

I should stress that no country can address these challenges alone. It requires collective efforts.

Evidently, education is no longer a national agenda, but rather, a transnational agenda. Nations should come together to address these transnational challenges.

Education is a fundamental human right.

Further examination will reveal education as the basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights, and thus, other SDGs

Therefore, education sits at the center of the development agenda.

Education is an essential condition for human fulfilment, peace, tolerance, sustainable development, economic growth, decent work, gender equality and responsible global citizenship. Education contributes to the reduction of inequalities and the eradication of poverty.

Education 2030 is inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development based on human rights and dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, diversity, and shared responsibility and accountability.

In this regard, the attainment of an ambitious agenda is not possible without cooperation.

Education is therefore, our collective responsibility.

While country actions are vital for the implementation of the new education agenda, regional actors can support this in many ways.

Regional and sub-regional cooperation is instrumental in supporting Member States to successfully achieve the education targets.

This cooperation should take place within the broader context of regional processes and mechanisms for coordinating and monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Hence, it is critical that we work closely with the UN system as a whole as well as the larger development community and civil society organizations.

In this vein, let us continue to promote sustainable development and active and effective global and local citizenship, contribute to strengthening democracy and peace, and foster respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

The new education agenda envisions a world which is inclusive, peaceful and sustainable.

Over the next three days, high-level officials of ministries of education, experts and representatives of CSOs, development partners, sub-regional intergovernmental organizations, and academia will become further oriented on the SDG 4 and its targets, the Framework for Action, monitoring Education 2030 and coordination and partnerships for Education 2030.

Discussions covering those areas will contribute to developing the roadmap for implementing SDG 4 in Asia-Pacific.

Key points raised and agreed will be documented in the form of an outcome document which will in turn, inform the region on its next steps towards the implementation of Education 2030.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, welcome to the Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on Education 2030.

I look forward to our fruitful discussions and debates, and to working with you over the next three days as we prepare for the implementation of Education 2030.

Thank you.