

**34<sup>rd</sup> UNESCO General Conference:**

**General Policy Debate**

**Statement of HE Pehin Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Taib,**

**Minister of Education, Brunei Darussalam,**

**20<sup>th</sup> October 2007, Paris**

Your Excellency, Mr. President, Ambassador Anastassopoulos

Your Excellency, Chairperson,

Your Excellency, Director General, Koichiro Matsuura

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join others before me in congratulating Your Excellency, Mr President on your election as President of the 34<sup>rd</sup> General Conference and to thank your predecessor His Excellency Dr. Musa bin Jaafar bin Hassan on his stewardship in steering a successful 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Conference and to Singapore and Montenegro on becoming our newest members. It is a pleasure to join you for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in this general conference since Brunei became the 191<sup>st</sup> member of this global organisation in March 2005. I am pleased to report that in the 2 years since I was here, we have carried out a

number of major activities as part of a broad aim in responding to UNESCO's core business.

I am please to say that the Brunei UNESCO National Commission was launched on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007 and we have met twice to discuss our plan and activities for the future.

In education, we implemented a national action plan to comply with the Dakar Framework and Jomtien Declaration on Education for All, including the implementation of our inclusive education policy and ICT strategy in education. We are making efforts towards building a knowledge society, an effort that UNESCO has been encouraging all countries to comply with, through quality education and a renewal of education systems. We are now engaged in the important process of transforming our education system, including the higher education sector, precisely to meet this requirement. We have endeavoured to improve the quality education system with the following initiatives:

- (1) We are reviewing our national education system and working towards implementing a new system by 2009.

This system will be broad-based, provide multi-pathways for our children to further and higher education, and should enable all learners to reach their full potential with skills to survive in a fast-changing world.

- (2) We are reviewing major policies so that we can give greater access for all children to our education system irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status.
- (3) We have and will continue to build more primary, secondary and vocational schools.
- (4) Introduced free compulsory education of 9 years for all children in government schools within an inclusive education system. This would include assistance for children from lower income families. However, the majority of our children are given the opportunity to complete at least 12 years of education.
- (5) We have established a second university to broaden access for students to higher education.
- (6) We now have better provision for greater numbers of in-service and retraining to improve the quality of our workforce.

- (7) Continuously improve the quality of our teachers and school leaders through various training programmes, including better remunerations and scheme of service for teachers.

In the Science Sector, we will work with our national partners regarding policy-making processes and develop strategies in our new education system for an effective science education that include the development of understanding among our young people of impact of human activities on their environment and sustainable development, water interactions, systems at risk and social changes, and ecological sciences. We hope, by working with governmental and non-governmental organisations at national and international levels; with better coordination of joint activities as a result of having a National Commission, we will be able to come up with effective strategies on environmental protection, sustainable development, cooperation in earth sciences and natural hazards reduction. But what is more important, however, is to bring our citizens at all levels of society to participate in and have a passion

for the sustainability of our natural environment for future generations.

In other fields, we have and will continue to work with our national partners, UNESCO and other regional bodies, in carrying out activities focused on cultural heritage, the protection of cultural diversity and the promotion of dialogue between cultures and civilisations, by meeting new demands in the area of standards setting, as well as safeguarding and revitalising our tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Communication and information have become major issues for most of the peoples and nations of our planet, not only as they affect development and peace, but also as they contribute to the construction of a more just society with stronger ties of solidarity. Emphasis is put on promoting equitable access to information and knowledge, especially in the public domain by:

- (i) formulating principles, policies and strategies to widen access to information and knowledge, and
- (ii) developing an infrastructure and building capacities for increased participation in the knowledge society.

These also support Brunei's obligation towards fulfilling the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG), of which Brunei is a signatory to that declaration. We are indeed proud of our achievement and in a 2004 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report this country was placed 33rd out of 177 nations in the UNDP's Human Development Index.

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We will, however, not rest on our laurels but continue to work harder in order to improve on that placing and to better meet the targets of the MDG in areas of education, health, social and economic development, poverty reduction, and the environment. In trying to reach a higher goal, we will indeed need to work closely with UNESCO, other agencies and organisations who have greater resources and experience.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to end by wishing all of you every success in your deliberations at this conference.