

Philippine Policy Statement
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Synopsis: In facing major challenges such as extreme poverty and inequality, climate change, poverty, and destruction of cultural heritage, UNESCO must address the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through concerted efforts in the spheres of lifelong learning, quality education, protection of heritage, and conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity. The Philippines has achieved milestones in terms of human development policies and programs that are aligned with the SDG framework, and reaffirms its solidarity with the United Nations in revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

[Greetings] Mr. President of the General Conference, Madame Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

This year, the international community renews its commitment to work together in solidarity to achieve a collective objective: the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These goals are framed within the context of total human development that seeks to uproot poverty and ensures the attainment of inclusive growth and progress --- where no one is left behind.

Education & Social Development For All

The Philippine government has invested in human capital by purposively allocating the single biggest portion of its national budget to education and integrated social protection programs in health, nutrition and livelihood. Significant strides in universal primary education have been the key in terms of bringing back to school marginalized children through formal schooling and alternative learning.

The World Bank has recently commended the expanded Conditional Cash Transfer Program that supports the poorest families in ensuring that their children remain in school as one of the best social protection programs.

The Philippines commits itself to the guiding principles of the Incheon Declaration adopted in the World Education Forum upon which is based Sustainable Development Goal number 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

The country's flagship education reform program, K to 12 (or compulsory Kindergarten, followed by grades 1 to 12) builds the foundation for lifelong learning. This program provides the basic tools for critical thinking and innovation, and creates multiple pathways through four learning tracks --- academic, technical-vocational, arts and design, and sports. The Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) harmonizes the country's education system by establishing national standards for the competencies and outcomes required at each educational level, allowing greater career and occupational mobility by providing more options on when to enter and exit the educational ladder and the job market, thus encouraging lifelong learning. The K to 12 Program thus enables learners to constantly adapt to ever-changing work and life environments.

Our country hosted the Education Category 2 Centres' Biennial Meeting on 25-27 May 2015, through the South East Asia Center of Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development (SEA-CLLSD). Best practices and plans for further collaboration to support Education 2030 were discussed.

The Philippines joins the international community in pushing for Global Citizenship Education, recognizing the softening of state borders and the movement of people from the global South to the global North. Local actions have global impact, and global developments can influence even the smallest or remotest communities.

We affirm of the post-2015 education agenda, particularly the vital role of the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training in promoting a culture of peace and non-violence.

Committing further to human rights-based governance, the Philippines has created a senior-level Committee on Extra-Legal Killings, Enforced Disappearances, Torture and other Grave Violations of the Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Persons.

Freedom of Speech

Through closer coordination, the executive and judicial branches of government are exerting maximum efforts to expedite the arrest and conviction of those involved in political violence. Monitoring mechanisms have also been put in place to support the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

This is in consonance with the Philippines' own policy on freedom of speech: We respect, protect and ensure the rights of journalists to practice their profession unhampered by prior restraint and given full protection by applicable laws.

Environmental Protection, Heritage Conservation & Climate Change Resiliency

While the onslaught of climate change continues to challenge the global community, we celebrate the fact that in many parts of the world, there has also been a significant increase in protected terrestrial and marine areas.

The Philippines has more than 200 key biodiversity areas (KBAs) covering around 10 million hectares of land with high diversity. KBAs benefit from official safeguard status, having been formally established as protected areas; included among these is the Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary in Davao Oriental that was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2014. These sites also provide building blocks for conservation planning and maintaining effective ecological networks that prevent loss of biodiversity.

Two consecutive natural disasters tested the resiliency of our people: Typhoon Haiyan and a massive 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck central Philippines in late 2013. Through our friends and colleagues in UNESCO, we wish to thank all the governments, as well as humanitarian agencies that extended their generous assistance and support to our country's massive rebuilding and rehabilitation efforts.

Striving for a world that is disaster-resilient, responsive and accountable, we have launched the Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards, or Project NOAH. We are also implementing a unified Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) framework in basic education to ensure that "students learn in a child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and motivating environment."

In February 2015, the Philippines and France adopted the Manila Call to Action on Climate Change to rally the international community toward active engagement and participation in the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) which will take place here in Paris next month. The call for climate action underlines the reality that "while the developing countries have contributed least to climate change, they are the ones that suffer most from the impact of climate change."

Strengthening UNESCO bodies such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission responds to the call for effective and equitable Climate Action and Cooperation especially between Developed and Developing Countries.

The wisdom and prescience of our forefathers form the foundation of today's Knowledge Society. The Philippines supports initiatives to preserve and promote universal access to the world's documentary heritage through the UNESCO-Memory of the World Programme. Access to information has increased tenfold in recent years, enabling peoples to learn from the global network. Given the exponential rise in

information consumption, there is an urgent need to preserve documents across diverse and evolving technologies while ensuring access to digital heritage knowledge banks.

World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, and Geoparks provide learning laboratories for conservation and sustainability, especially at the community level. These facets of knowledge-building create knowledge societies. The sciences provide essential inputs at all levels of policy making by contributing research-based findings in addressing real-time issues.

As a member of the World Heritage Committee, the Philippines reiterates its call for conservation of Sites with Outstanding Universal Value by recognizing their contributions to poverty alleviation and inclusive growth, and underscoring the contribution of culture to sustainable development. We also call for a more representative and credible World Heritage List by building capacities of developing countries and expanding South-South cooperation. We strongly condemn the destruction of cultural heritage by extremist groups, and underscore the necessity of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as well. The Philippines seeks the support of UNESCO Member States for its candidature to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee in 2016.

Summary & Call to Action

In summary, we have aligned our priorities and focused our energies on actively propagating the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those pertaining to the following:

- Goal # 1 on ending poverty;
- Goal # 4 on achieving inclusive and equitable quality education through lifelong learning opportunities;
- Goal # 11 on building inclusive, safe, and resilient cities and communities;
- Goal # 13 taking action on climate change and its global impacts;
- Goal # 14 on conserving and using oceans, seas and marine resources;
- Goal # 15 on promoting, restoring and using terrestrial ecosystems;
- Goal #16 on providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and building inclusive institutions at all levels; and, finally
- Goal # 17 on strengthening the means for implementation of all the Global Goals or SDGs and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

President Benigno S. Aquino III, who was elected in 2010 on a platform of good governance, will complete his 6-year term in June 2016. He extends his appreciation to UNESCO for being the Philippines' constant and steadfast partner in pursuing shared goals in education, science and technology, culture, and communication.

For the past five years, the Filipino people have witnessed and demonstrated how effective, transparent, and accountable governance can effectively bring about inclusive growth thereby enabling those living in the periphery to swim in the mainstream of social opportunity.

We humbly share the Philippine experience of the dividends from following the straight path as a source of tangible lessons on how good governance brings about far-reaching benefits in terms of fulfilling the dreams and aspirations of our people.

Mr. President, Madame Director General, Distinguished Delegates ---

Thank you and good day! Long live UNESCO!