

PHILIPPINES

**Statement of H.E. Maria Theresa P. Lazaro
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Philippines to UNESCO
Plenary session, 204th session of the UNESCO Executive Board
9 April 2018**

Mr. Chairperson,
Madame Director-General,
Madame President of the General Conference,
Distinguished colleagues,

1. Allow me, first of all, to reaffirm the commitment of the Philippines to the principles and objectives of UNESCO. As a member of the Executive Board, we aim to play an active and constructive role in strengthening UNESCO's engagement with Member States. Let me also extend our support to the Director-General, as she leads the Organization in these challenging times, filled also with opportunities, such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, that can help focus UNESCO's work for greater impact and efficiency.
2. As a reflection of the Philippines' growing cooperation with UNESCO, we hosted two meetings already this year: one was a regional policy forum with 15 countries in the Asia-Pacific on Using Open School Data to Improve Transparency and Accountability in Education, in partnership with the International Institute for Education Planning; and the other was a workshop organized by our Ministry of Defense for national stakeholders on the Darknet and measures to prevent violent extremism, with resource persons from the Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO Information for All Program and INTERPOL.
3. As conveyed by our Foreign Minister H.E. Alan Peter Cayetano to the Director-General, the Philippines has devoted the largest portion of its national budget to education. The Administration of President Rodrigo Duterte is indeed fully committed to promoting comprehensive human development. It has recently

passed a landmark bill providing free tuition at state universities and colleges. For these reasons, we are keenly interested in becoming a member of the Education 2030 Steering Committee.

4. With respect to this session's agenda, my delegation would like to emphasize an observation that recurred often during the Preparatory Group's discussions on the Analytical Programme Implementation Report (APIR). And that was the need for UNESCO to be able to better measure the concrete impacts of its programs and field offices on the ground. This would not only increase the effectiveness of its work, but also make the Organization more attractive to Member States and external partners. In this regard, having Member States provide their honest feedback and assessment of UNESCO's activities would add richness to the APIR. An open, systematic and transparent dialogue with Member States is recommended.
5. This is important in view of the strategic transformation of the Organization, as presented by the Director-General. It is a vision and initiative we appreciate. Nevertheless, at the launching of the process, it would be timely to recall a number of fundamental principles; namely, the intergovernmental nature of UNESCO, founded by Member States primarily for Member States; inclusivity; and equitable geographic representation at all levels of the Organization and its mechanisms, especially senior management.
6. In the current difficult financial climate, there is a risk of UNESCO relying too heavily on extra-budgetary contributions, which lead to imbalances in programme support and delivery. UNESCO should not be donor-driven, but needs-driven. Hence, the views and interests of Member States, especially the most vulnerable and developing countries, must have a primordial place in shaping the strategic transformation of this Organization. At the same time, all Member States have responsibilities to remain engaged and not set political conditions to their financial contributions.

Mr. Chairperson,

7. My delegation attaches great importance to the implementation of the recommendations of the Open-Ended Working Group on Governance endorsed by the General Conference. We request the Director-General and the Chairpersons of the General Conference and Executive Board to ensure a coherent and systematic follow-up of the Working Group's recommendations, by, among others, holding an information meeting for all delegations soonest and writing to all Intergovernmental and International Bodies of UNESCO, informing them of the need to continue work on follow-up. We also wish to see Governance outcomes figure prominently in the strategic transformation initiative, in particular, recommendations for greater coherence within the dispersed and complex UNESCO universe, with its multitude of governing bodies, councils, committees, institutes, and funds, all with their own statutes and rules of procedure.

8. Specifically for the Executive Board, we hope that we can work together to develop a more streamlined and user-friendly agenda. Having a simpler agenda, with less fragmentation of items, could lead to more predictability, efficiency and effectiveness and thus improve our collective decision-making processes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.