

SPEECH OF

THE HONORABLE DR. MASZLEE BIN MALIK

MINISTER OF EDUCATION MALAYSIA

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[Salutation]

President of the General Conference,

Chairperson of the Executive Board,

Madam Director-General,

Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Selamat Pagi, Bonjour, Good morning.

I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Ahmet Altay Cengizer on your appointment as the President of the General Conference. I am confident that with your experience, you will be able to contribute in strengthening this organization through closer cooperation among government bodies. I also would like to congratulate Madam Director-General for your wisdom and perseverance in guiding this organization for the past two years.

Honorable delegates,

Richard Paul Evans, in his book *A Step of Faith* observes that

“What a culture we live in, we are swimming in an ocean of information, and drowning in ignorance”.

This quote aptly points out the current state we are in.

Malaysian philosopher, Syed Hussein Alatas calls this phenomenon *“bebalism”*. *“Bebal”* in Malay refers to when society is comfortable at being ignorant. Therefore, *“bebalism”* in this context refers to the complacency and uncritical state of a developed and sophisticated society.

Our children are in the greatest danger of this epidemic of ignorance. They are the most susceptible to be swept in the current of information overload. If they are not trained to think, complacency may weigh down their minds and misdirect them to be comfortable with what they know, without questioning anything, without digging deeper into the abyss of data.

Aristotle states that education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity. It is my conviction that education is hope for humanity. The uncertain future can be secured through the values that are certain in education. This is our children's' door to a prosperous lives, and for their opportunity to make prosperous the lives of others. Education, more than the delivery of knowledge, should provide students with the adequate instruments build critical minds.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Malaysian laureate, Za'ba has remarked that we, the leaders of today, are responsible for moulding future individuals that are intellectually capable with virtuous characteristics. That is our pivotal role today—to concoct the best possible remedy for intellectual ailments and to safeguard the values we hold dearly.

As value-driven education system form the philosophical foundation of our agenda, I would like to bring forth the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our new national development blueprint, “Shared Prosperity Vision 2030” was designed in resonance with a national and global call for a fair and equitable distribution of sources and economic development.

Fellow humanists, humanitarians and educators.

It is true that multilateralism can be impeded by conflicts. Cooperation and interdependency can be challenged by loss of trust in the face of international or regional disputes. Yet, I have faith that at the heart of our existence, our goals are aligned. We are all concerned for the future of our children. We also share overlapping values on the ethical use of information and the preservation of the planet. This is our struggle—to keep these goals visible and attainable.

With that affirmation, I would like to end my keynote speech with the words of an 18th century Frenchman, Voltaire.

“There is only one morality, as there is only one geometry.”

Thank you.