

Statement by Dr Teerakiat Jareonsettasin, Minister of Education, Thailand at the 39th General Conference, November 2017

Just over three score years ago, UNESCO was founded. Its original intent was to establish the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” and, in so doing, prevent the outbreak of another world war. Since then, we have seen at least the intended outcome- no world war - but we have yet seen the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind. Instead, we have seen multitudes of conflicting beliefs, dogmas and doctrines, some of which have resulted in wars around the globe.

We are gathered here to make statements that will soon be published somewhere but forgotten somehow. Statements after statements have been made in this august assembly. This assembly does not need another statement from Thailand just announcing her successes and her plans. Rather we should be reminded of how far we have gone in establishing the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”. Fortunately for Thailand our late King, His Majesty King Bhumibol – whose cremation the world just witnessed only a few days ago – has contributed his ideas to intellectual and moral solidarity, enshrined in the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), which is the foundation for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). His ideas will not be cremated. Indeed Thailand advocates SEP for SDGs.

What is Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)? Literature abounds on the subject. Our late king believes that education must not be merely for living but also for life. And the end of education is character. SEP helps us attain the goals of good living, good life and good character. In a nutshell, it is a practical way to cultivate self in the service of nature and culture. Isn't that what UNESCO stands for?

Dear friends, colleagues of all member states, I would like to end by urging all of us to keep looking at the original intent of UNESCO: to establish intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind. We must do what we can to fulfil this timeless vision. We must ensure that our policies and programmes are aligned with this selfless aspiration. We must have the will to stop any actions that go against this noble resolution. Solidarity will not be secured through ego-centric mindsets but through world-centric single-mindedness of all member states.

Thank you.