

Final

(02/07/2020)

**Statement by the Delegation of Thailand
at the 209th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board
on 2 July, 2020
at Paris, France**

=====

Mr. Chair,
President of the General Conference,
Madam Director-General,
Distinguished Board Members,

It is my honour to represent His Excellency Nataphol Teepsuwan, Minister of Education of Thailand and Chair of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO. I wish to convey his warmest greetings and best wishes to all the delegates participating in the 209th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board today.

Let me start by expressing Thailand's appreciation to the Chair and the Secretariat for their great efforts in making this meeting possible in order to continue the work of the Executive Board, even during this difficult time when the world is challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thailand was one of the first countries to be affected and, since January, we have imposed strict measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As a result, as of today, Thailand has not recorded a single locally transmitted COVID-19 case nationwide in 38 days. COVID-19 restrictions are now gradually being relaxed, including the reopening of all schools yesterday. Although we are enjoying satisfactory success in containing this pandemic, Thailand will continue to closely monitor the situation and implement strict measures to

prevent the recurrence of disruptions, particularly the shutting down of schools again.

The pandemic has hit education hard, forcing closure of schools around the world and greatly impacting over a billion the students as well as teachers, parents and communities. But as the COVID-19 crisis helped us to realize the importance of ICT, including digital platforms and AI, it also brought to light the reality of a great digital divide in many countries. There is risk of a growing divide among the privileged and the underprivileged which must be urgently addressed.

Nevertheless, we should not waste the crisis and turn it into an opportunity to improve our education system. As for Thailand, we have put in great efforts in training our teachers to use new technologies and be more adaptive to their local contexts. In this new normal context, teachers as well as students have to cope with new ways of teaching and learning. And we are pleased to see that UNESCO has supported Governments in addressing the challenges from this pandemic in various areas such as distance learning, open science, knowledge and culture sharing as well as through initiatives of a COVID-19 response webpage, COVID-19 awareness campaign and a study to address the social and economic dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis. We look forward to UNESCO to intensify its efforts in this regard.

In response to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the role of UNESCO as the lead agency of SDG 4, we would like UNESCO to continue to contribute to quality and lifelong learning for all. We also would like to see more support given to its Member States in seeking for more alternative approaches to promote access to quality education. In this regard, Thailand would like to pledge our support to

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education as they obviously lead to **Learning to Become**.

Mr. Chair,

Currently, UNESCO's consultation meetings of C/4 and C/5 documents are taking place in every region. It is a good opportunity for UNESCO to adjust its strategic positioning and leadership role for the next strategic framework. We support that the views and recommendations coming from these consultations serve as valuable inputs for UNESCO to formulate the next Medium Term Strategy and set its future directions in response to the needs of its Member States.

Thailand also supports an enhanced role for the Regional Offices in the consultation process and in their contribution to UNESCO's multidisciplinary mandate in respective regions. We are pleased that UNESCO Regional Offices have continuously strengthened their ties with the respective National Commissions for UNESCO. And we would like to express our appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok in fulfilling UNESCO's mandates in Asia and the Pacific.

As the pandemic has given us a unique opportunity to advance UNESCO's strategic direction with Member States, we would like to see UNESCO focus more on inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral approaches in order to address cross-cutting areas of action. And we would like to see UNESCO pool together our under constraint resources and inject them directly into projects based on UNESCO's specific expertise and network. This would better optimize our resources.

In addition, Thailand has put emphasis on the role of youth in promoting UNESCO's values and ideals as well as strengthening engagement and nurturing partnerships among the young generations. In this regard, the ASPnet should be promoted to strengthen the engagement of the youth. For this reason, Thailand supports UNESCO to encourage its Member States to organize youth activities and develop the mechanism for youth to be involved in UNESCO activities. This mechanism will enable Member States to harness their creativity, innovation and potential to be mainstreamed across all programmes, fields, and competences of UNESCO.

Mr. Chair,

UNESCO has effectively promoted innovative policies and practices that operationalize values through cross-cutting areas. As a firm believer and supporter of multilateralism, Thailand commends UNESCO's important role in supporting the achievement of multiple targets of the SDGs. It is therefore my privilege to reaffirm Thailand's strong commitment to UNESCO's vision and missions towards the building of peace, prosperity and sustainability to mankind.

Lastly, Thailand would like to associate itself with the statement to be delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the ASPAC group.

Thank you for your kind attention.
