

Statement by  
His Excellency Mr. Nataphol Teepsuwan,  
Minister of Education and  
Chair of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO  
at the 210<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Executive Board Meeting, Virtual Session  
December 3, 2020

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Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,  
President of the General Conference,  
Madam Director General,  
Distinguished Board Members,

I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Chair and Madam Director-General, for the efforts in convening this virtual Executive Board Meeting. Even though we are meeting virtually, I am confident that, under the Chair's leadership, we will be able to exchange and share our views to address global challenges. I would like to commend the Secretariat for its efforts in consulting Member States and all relevant stakeholders in preparing the documents 41 C/4 and 41 C/5 despite difficult circumstances.

Thailand supports the revision of the mission statement of the new C/4 document to include the reduction of inequalities. It clearly indicates the impact of the global pandemic crisis that has widened disparities in societies. It is now more than ever, the right time for UNESCO, as a global organization, to highlight the promotion of equality in all its future programmes. We also endorse the four comprehensive and integrated strategic objectives in the document

and encourage UNESCO to maintain its global leadership in the areas of its mandate where it has a comparative advantage. The mobilization of resources from different sectors in UNESCO to programmes implementation will enable a response to global issues. I am confident that cross-cutting themes and an inter-sectoral approach will help UNESCO effectively achieve the specified outcomes in the thematic areas in document 41 C/5.

Global crisis has changed our way of life in many aspects. This reminds us of the importance of education when it comes to responding to emergencies, reducing risks in our lives and livelihoods, and preparing for future challenges. In this regard, school closures were options to keep students and teachers safe during the outbreak. However, at the same time, it has carried high social and economic costs for people across communities. This impact is particularly severe among the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families. Many countries therefore have to revisit their education provision and systems. Thus, we strongly support UNESCO to maintain its lead role in achieving SDG4 as education is the ***priority of priorities*** in UNESCO's mandates. Education is also a key to achieving all of the SDGs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic globally. We also support for UNESCO to maintain Africa and Small Islands Developing States as global priorities.

Thailand appreciates the initiative on Futures of Education and the work of the International Commission on the Futures of Education. This initiative will have a deep impact on rethinking and reimagining how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet in the midst of complexity, uncertainty and fragility. We would also like to point out the excellent response to the crisis by this Commission by issuing a report on Education in a post-COVID world: Nine Ideas for Public Action and we look forward to the Report on Futures of Education: Learning to Become.

Thailand encourages UNESCO to work with other international organizations to fulfil its strategic objective 2 on the promotion of sustainable societies through scientific knowledge as this is in line with the comparative advantage in UNESCO's fields of competence. Intergovernmental programmes relating to environment preservation could contribute to the achievement of some sustainable development goals. The utilization of your rich expertise in these areas could provide transdisciplinary knowledge to reverse the negative trends in environmental and biodiversity degradation. Some actions include making more synergies within UNESCO's site designations namely UNESCO Global Geoparks, Man and Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites. This also engages the involvement of youth and communities to make these sites sustainable.

As for the future, our societies continue to evolve at a pace and in a direction that is truly transformative. Major advances in technology will create new challenges and opportunities for our way of life. Digital transformation is happening at a moment where inequalities and opportunities have increased in a profound way. In confronting these challenges, we support UNESCO to reinforce scientific cooperation and foster the expansion of Open Science so that scientific knowledge, data and expertise are universally and openly accessible and their benefits are equally shared.

Most importantly, we need to be mindful that technology can be of great service to humanity but it also has the potential to raise fundamental ethical concerns. In this regard, we will continue to support UNESCO's leading role in promoting ethic principles and to put ethical issues in science and technology on the global agenda.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm Thailand's support of UNESCO in working for a sustainable, equitable and peaceful future. We are looking forward to the next medium-term strategy that will provide a strategic transformative vision to enable our societies to meet the multiple challenges of our century.

Thank you.

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