

Statement

at the 34th Session of the UNESCO General Conference October 23, 2007, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

**Mr. Chairman,
Representative of Director-General of UNESCO,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the Honorable George Anastassopoulos, on your election as President of the 2007 General Conference. I am confident that under your leadership, the Conference will yield productive outcome. May I also take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of Montenegro and the Republic of Singapore on their joining the UNESCO family and particularly for Singapore, a neighboring country of Thailand, on their return to the organization. We hope that upon their rejoining with UNESCO will add vitality to the Asia and the Pacific community.

Mr. President,

This session of the General Conference is of particular significance since we are about to begin our next Medium Term Strategy. It is a good moment, therefore, to consider how we can maximize the resources of the organization to benefit Member States while providing timely responses to emerging challenges. In this regard, Thailand supports the Director General's proposal of a budget scenario for the next biennium with a ceiling of 631 million US dollars. Despite the decreased amount of budget from the previous scenario, I am confident that with a well-managed plan of the Director-General in responsive to the General Conference, it is still possible to achieve the goals and meet expectations of Member States.

Mr. President,

Thailand continues to give high priority to Education for All since we believe that human development is fundamental for social and economic improvements worldwide. If we consider the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, it is reasonable to say that progress, has been made in quantity. However, regarding quality of education, it is clear that there are serious gaps to be bridged. Vast inequalities can still be seen between different groups of people, particularly between urban and rural areas. UNESCO should, therefore, in the remaining years to 2015, focus on the improvement of quality and lead the way to increase relevance of education to ensure linkage between what is taught in school and the real world.

Mr. President,

During the past decade, we have witnessed the rapid deterioration of the environment. Climate change has become the problem that causes the most serious concern. There has been increased in the occurrence and the severeness of natural disasters in many parts of the world. As an agency dealing with education, science and culture, I would like to support UNESCO's full effort in raising awareness of the entire population, especially the future generations about their roles and responsibilities to save the environment in order to heal our planet.

Environmental education is an area focused in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In addition, emphasis must also be given to the introduction of peace education, human rights education, and life skills which can contribute to sustainability. At this point, I am pleased to share with you that Thailand will launch the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in November this year to commemorate the 80th birthday anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulyadej. This is because sustainable development coincides with the Sufficiency Economy Theory, a development philosophy initiated by His Majesty the King. Its key principles, which emphasize moderation, responsible consumption, and resilience to external shocks, are of great relevance to communities in every locality. Mr. President, attention was drawn to the global significance of Sufficiency Economy, just last year when His Majesty was presented with the United Nation's first ever Lifetime Achievement Award.

As a part of the sustainable development agenda, we must also continue to work towards realizing the goals of UNESCO International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence of the World. Interfaith dialogue is a way to provide better understanding among people. It is important to understand different cultures, since understanding is essential for creating compassion. If we are to live together in peace, we must learn to accept and respect those who have different cultures and beliefs. As a main line of action, therefore, UNESCO should give high priority to the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

With regard to culture, we would like to acknowledge the important work of the World Heritage Center. The sites registered on the World Heritage List are all unique and should be well reserved and promoted as a part of education content. In this regard, I would encourage UNESCO to play a key role in disseminating the information through the development of teaching materials and kits. These materials and kits should be available in several languages and developed appropriate to the level of learners.

In conclusion, all these major programmes clearly indicate significant role of UNESCO in supporting global, regional, and national initiatives. However, the increased visibility of UNESCO depends on effective communications. We strongly urge UNESCO to be more active in public relations campaign through mass media and all types of communication to increase public awareness of UNESCO's noble mission and contribution to peace and well-being of humankind for six decades.

Mr. President,

Thailand, as a pioneer member of UNESCO still as ever, has full confidence on the capabilities of UNESCO to fulfill its mandate. Here at the 2007 General Conference, we would like to reaffirm our close cooperation with UNESCO and our full support to the organization.

Thank you for your kind attention.