

National Statement
by His Excellency Mr. Chaturon Chaisang
Minister of Education
and Chair of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO
at the Plenary Session of 37th Session of UNESCO General Conference
7th November, 2013, at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

Mr. President of the UNESCO General Conference,
Madame Chair of the UNESCO Executive Board,
Madame Director-General of UNESCO,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by congratulating you, Mr. President on your election as President of this UNESCO General Conference. With your able leadership, I am confident that we will complete our deliberations smoothly. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend UNESCO Director-General, Madame Irina Bokova, in reforming UNESCO by managing the organization in a more cost-effective manner without losing its lead role in promoting a holistic and humanistic vision of quality education worldwide.

Thailand is one of many countries which started a global drive for EFA in 1990, and I reaffirm our on-going commitment to providing quality education for all to achieve an inclusive, innovative, sustainable and knowledgeable society. I am pleased to confirm that Thailand will host a high level EFA meeting of Asia-Pacific Member States in 2014 which will distil the lessons learnt from EFA in the region, and highlight priority issues and targets for post-2015 global education.

The Thai government remains committed to improving the quality of education, and accessibility, so that all Thais may have an equal opportunity to realize their full potential. Current education policy focuses on the equitable distribution of resources and use of improved technology to empower individuals, communities, the nation and the region. Accordingly, in 2014, 20.5 percent of the national budget, will be allocated to education. This will be the driving force for Thailand to produce a highly qualified workforce to complement Thailand's anticipated social and economic growth.

In my capacity as Minister of Education, therefore, I have announced a 'National Agenda for Education', and declared the year 2013 to be the year for a 'Joint Collaboration of Raising the Quality of Education'. In light of this, we are already in the process of reforming and integrating the education system to produce learners who can think, analyze, solve problems, and learn independently and continuously throughout their lives. One of the main goals of education reform in Thailand is to increase STEM literacy so that more students will have the opportunity to learn thoroughly and think critically in science, maths, engineering, and technology.

This paradigm shift from learning for degrees to learning for labour markets has also focused attention on vocational education and training to meet the country's manpower needs. At present, 60 percent of Thai students opt for general education and only 40 percent for vocational education and training. We would like to shift the balance to 50:50, and eventually to 40:60 in the future. With a better educated workforce we will be able to increase productivity, make better use of the country's natural resources, and be better able to meet the needs and demands of local and international markets. At the same time we are developing occupational competency standards, professional qualifications, vocational standards, and competency-based

curricular to create a coherent classification to facilitate transfer and progression both within and between areas of competence.

I also reaffirm Thailand's commitment to work with UNESCO in its various fields of competence. In response to Thailand's green growth policy, the promotion of green technologies, including renewable energy and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, should be reflected in the next agenda for global development. We will continue to work with UNESCO in focusing on the social and human sciences to facilitate social transformations and intercultural dialogue conducive to social inclusion, poverty eradication, violence prevention and sustainable peace. Finally, in relation to Communication and Information, I look forward to hosting the "Global Forum on Media and Gender" in Thailand in December this year.

Once again, I wish to affirm Thailand's support for UNESCO in working for a sustainable, equitable and peaceful future.

Thank you very much.