

Philippine Statement

delivered by
Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro L. Locsin Jr.

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Excellencies, colleagues,

On its 75th anniversary, the Philippines strongly reaffirms our commitment to UNESCO's principles and its objective of laying the foundations of peace in the minds of men and women through education, the sciences and culture.

Since 1946, the Philippines has strived to strengthen UNESCO's engagement with its members and ensure impartiality, independence, and balance in UNESCO's work. As a member of the Executive Board, we fully support UNESCO's global priorities on Africa and gender equality, its programs for Small-Island Developing States, youth and indigenous peoples, and on addressing capacity-building needs of the most vulnerable.

UNESCO has achieved many gains. But the pandemic upended our efforts to promote human development in education, science, culture, and communication and information. Social inequalities and divides further deepened. The Philippines has felt these setbacks deeply; our solutions are predicated on the end of the pandemic which is nowhere in sight.

As one of the Group of Friends on Global Citizenship Education, we advance the transformative role of education for moral and material progress. We have no need to combat discrimination and hate speech. As a subject people, we all suffered discrimination. Our War of Independence at the turn of the 20th century was roundly defeated by the rising world hegemon — mercifully, because the Americans preached even if they did not always practice equality and free speech to prepare us for democratic independence.

We all started poor. World War II left us the most devastated capital second only to Warsaw.

We have no occasion to use hate speech since we are all without exception, rich and poor, of a mixed and colored race.

That is why, as UN Peacekeepers, Filipinos are loved by all the populations in which they are deployed.

There are attempts at misinformation; but they fail. Filipinos are an unfailingly kind but always skeptical people. Even at its best, government hardly gets its side heard, let alone believed. This is a healthy thing. The grave dangers lie with “netizens” as they call themselves; they always get the benefit of their doubtful if not malicious information. If it is just politics, it is the play of the vastly enhanced marketplace of misinformation or mistakes; but when it concerns public health and the economy, it can ruin countries which is their aim. We support the Berlin Declaration on Education on Sustainable Development, which aims at but rarely hits the target of environmental and climate action as core curriculum.

We have begun to revert to limited in-person classes. The isolation has hurt our children stuck at home — when they have a home. We are implementing “blended” education packages, using digital and new technologies along with traditional and lifelong learning, to provide educational materials to learners and teachers. We cannot have learning continuity and address learning loss without technology and innovation in education. The Philippine Innovation Act of 2018 anticipated the pandemic as a vital component of economic growth.

For culture and natural science, our experts work with UNESCO to manage and conserve our cultural and natural heritage. UNESCO’s project on Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda, optimizes the contributions of our diverse cultures in implementing the SDGs with less resistance. We familiarize progress.

As an archipelago in the path of typhoons of increasing ferocity as climate inexorably changes and as a country exposed to relentless manmade environmental degradation for profit, we support UNESCO initiatives in these areas. The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is critical to our future.

We support UNESCO's Management of Social Transformation program to strengthen the interface between research and policy, knowledge and action. We are living in a time of overwhelming changes. Without evidence-based policy making, we will be boxing in the dark.

UNESCO was born in the throes of a war, to prevent the outbreak of another war. If it is to continue to achieve this lofty goal, we must move away from empty talk and equivocation, and quite simply, act. Thank you.