CLOSING SPEECH
by
YANG BERHORMAT DATO’ P. KAMALANATHAN
A/L
P. PANCHANATHAN
DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION I

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Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim, Director, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

Ms. Wivina Belmonte, Deputy Regional Director of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

Distinguished Ministers from Asia and Pacific countries

Excellencies, Delegates and Speakers

Honoured Guests

Members of the Media

1. I am honoured to be present at this closing of this forum jointly organised by UNESCO, UNICEF and ARNEC. I believe that this policy forum has provided opportunities for all
ministers, deputy ministers, delegations, educators and stakeholders to share their views, and the way forward related to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

2. This policy forum provided the platform to identify the strengths, challenges and recommendations of current programmes and initiatives that have been carried out since the first forum held in Seoul, in 2013. I hope that the discussions held have been informative and have given you insights into the latest approaches in improving the delivery and coordination of Early Childhood Care and Education across the Asia Pacific region.
3. Aligned with the theme of the forum, “The Transformative Power of Early Childhood: Innovations for Inclusivity and Quality”, four sub-themes were explored. Pertinent key areas of ECCE such as planning, delivering, monitoring, evaluation, financing, coordination and pedagogical innovations were also deliberated and debated upon. I believe that these sessions and discussions have paved the way forward for improving the effective delivery of Early Childhood Care and Education. This works towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 which stresses the importance of ensuring inclusive
and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all.

4. Today, more than ever, education must be seen as a fundamental dimension of any social, cultural, and economic design. Our curriculum must address the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions of a child to create a future generation of lifelong learners. These children should be equipped with knowledge, skills and dispositions that prepare them to face the challenges of this highly globalised world. This can be achieved through equitable and quality education which prepares our children for the needs of the 21st century.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. The aim of this policy forum aligns closely to the objectives of the Education Agenda 2030 pledged during the United Nations Summit in 2015. This agenda calls for the development of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all children, including the most marginalized. It recognises that early childhood development, care and education can help drive the transformation of young children’s holistic development and equip them with the foundation for future learning.
6. The Asia Pacific region has acknowledged education as a child’s fundamental right, as it provides a critical head start in life. Based on this understanding, this second policy forum needs to be grounded in our collective initiatives which accelerate towards achieving the vision and aspirations of the Education Agenda 2030 echoed in the Putrajaya Declaration. The success of the Putrajaya Declaration will be the driving force for Asia Pacific countries to move forward towards a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable development of ECCE.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. To us every child is a precious and valuable resource to the nation. We believe in empowering children at a young age for the progress and development of human capital for nation building. It is therefore pertinent that the Putrajaya Declaration spearheads innovations towards inclusivity and quality of Early Childhood Care and Education.

8. It is my firm conviction that we will uncover new ways and means to continue our work in this specialised area of early childhood education. Let us work together to strengthen
relationships and nurture an endeavor that is close to our hearts, in caring for our children and their education.

9. Thank you for your participation and invaluable input in this policy forum. I hope that all of you have had a wonderful and rewarding experience at the 2016 Asia-Pacific Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education. Do enjoy our Malaysian hospitality, sample our local cuisine and delights and visit some of our fabulous tourist spots in this country. To those leaving for home, have a safe and pleasant journey.

Thank you.