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Organización
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para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the conference “Creating Sustainable Society of Peace
- A legacy of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand”**

UNESCO, 26 September 2017

H.E. Sihasak Phuangketkeow, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of Thailand to the UNESCO,

H.E. Ambassador Michael Worbs, Chairperson of the Executive Board of the UNESCO,

Excellencies, Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

Last week, at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand recalled how His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej laid the groundwork throughout his exemplary life for a people-centred approach to development.

The late King put into practice a vision that gives us the keys to achieving the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and, in this spirit, I wish to thank the Permanent Delegation of Thailand to UNESCO and the *World Fellowship of Buddhists* for organizing this timely event.

Last month, I was honoured and deeply moved to lay a wreath in tribute to His Majesty at the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

My visit provided the opportunity to discuss with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Education Minister and others His Majesty's far-sighted Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, and its contribution to economic and social change today, not only in Thailand, but globally.

His Majesty marked the history of the twentieth century – but this vision – and wisdom – will mark the 21st century as well.

He advocated a holistic vision of human development to empower the most disadvantaged, to achieve greater social equity by challenging classic growth patterns.

This philosophical guidance resonates deeply with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in 2015, which sets an ambitious and bold blueprint to advance human dignity and protect our planet.

I commend the Government of Thailand for launching the *Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for SDGs Partnership*, to help craft the new models we need to advance human progress.

This is about equity, inclusion and green growth.

UNESCO took this philosophy on board early on.

In 2012, we organized a Future Lecture here at UNESCO on the *Sufficiency Economy Philosophy -- a new ethical paradigm for sustainability*, marking His Majesty the King's 84th birthday.

His vision of moderation, reasonableness and risk management resonates with UNESCO's ideals and priorities, and with the entire spirit of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

I believe the commitment of Thailand to the 2030 Agenda today reflects His Majesty's lifelong and ceaseless pursuit of knowledge and well-being for his people.

This starts with the importance paid by the country to education.

In the words of His Majesty, also called 'the Teacher of the Land':

“Education means guiding and promoting persons to progress in learning, thinking, and performing according to their own ability. The ultimate aim should be for each

individual to be able to make the best use of his or her potential, to benefit oneself and others in harmony and without conflict or harassment.”

These inspiring words are in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4, “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” which UNESCO did so much to shape.

Education cannot only be about learning to read, write and count.

Education must be about new forms of cultural literacy, providing young boys and girls the tools to make the most of diversity, to defend the value of equity and develop behaviours of solidarity and empathy.

Education must empower every learner to become a global citizen, participating in the lives of their country and open to the world.

This is how education can be transformative in the 21st century.

Thailand is leading by example.

The Education for All movement was born in the Jomtien Conference in 1990.

Thailand has never ceased to champion education, to take forward the new agenda, hosting three regional meetings since 2015.

I take this occasion also to renew UNESCO’s appreciation to the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting our Regional Office in Bangkok, an educational hub that is accompanying Member States, especially on SDG4.

Today, the government is taking forward the *Thailand 4.0 Strategy* to build a “values-based economy”, a knowledge-based society.

This calls for putting education and skills at the forefront of change, from early childhood care to inclusive education, from empowering girls and women to teacher training, from comprehensive sexuality education to higher education through the country’s 9,000 Community Learning Centres.

During my visit in August, I had the privilege to open the *International Symposium on Cracking the Code: Girls' Education in STEM*, to encourage more girls and young women to learn science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

This testifies to Thailand's vision that 'progress,' to be meaningful, must include every woman and man.

This also testifies to the importance of science, technology and higher education as keys to development in a new global economy driven by innovation, knowledge and research.

This strategic vision is inseparable from His Majesty the King Bhumibol Adulyadej's deep commitment to the rule of law, good governance and democratic practices.

Sustainable development is not only about infrastructure and growth rates.

It is about peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice for all and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

This is the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goal 16, which embraces the vision of His Majesty the King.

This also means safeguarding cultural heritage and diversity, as platforms for dialogue and reconciliation.

Let me mention that Thailand has five sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List – including the Historic Town of Sukhothai, the Historic City of Ayutthaya and the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex.

The vision of His Majesty the King is shared by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, whom UNESCO is honoured to have as *Goodwill Ambassador for the Empowerment of Minority Children through Education and Culture* since 2005.

With her support and our partnership with the Thai Government, UNESCO remains deeply committed to taking forward the precious legacy of King Bhumibol Adulyadej

-- to leave no one behind, to allow each person to contribute meaningfully, and to live in harmony with nature.

Thank you.