

**SPEECH**

**BY**

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***(6 minutes)***

President of the General Conference,  
Chairperson of the Executive Board,  
Madam Director-General,  
Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,  
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.  
*Selamat Pagi, Bonjour, Good morning.*

1. I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Ahmet Altay Cengizer on your appointment as the President of the General Conference. I also would like to congratulate Madam Director-General for your wisdom and perseverance in guiding this organization for the past two years.

Honorable delegates.

2. The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, once reminded us;

“Ignorance and prejudice are the handmaidens of propaganda. Our mission, therefore, is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance,

and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity. ”

3. This quote aptly points out the current state we are in.

The explosion of information has ironically brought about the rise of uncritical attitudes and mindsets in societies.

4. Now, we know more, but we appreciate each other less.

We read more on the internet and other devices, but we have become less wise in dealing with our environment.

As Richard Paul Evans, in his book *A Step of Faith* observes:

*“What a culture we live in, we are swimming in an ocean of information, and drowning in ignorance”.*

5. Our children are in the greatest danger of this epidemic of ignorance. They are the most susceptible to be swept in the current of information overload. If they are not trained to think, complacency may weigh down their minds to be comfortable with what they know, without

questioning anything, without digging deeper into the abyss of useless data.

6. It is my conviction that education is the hope for humanity. The uncertain future can be secured through the values that are infused in education.
7. Education, more than the delivery of knowledge, should provide students with the adequate instruments to develop critical and future-proof minds. Education too must equip our children to be more inclusive and mutually respecting each other.

Ladies and gentlemen.

8. Malaysian laureate, Za'ba remarked that “the leaders of today, are responsible for moulding future individuals that are intellectually capable with virtuous characteristics.” That is our pivotal role today—to formulate the best possible remedy for intellectual ailments and to safeguard the values we hold dearly.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. This year's General Conference's theme of (RE)generation strikes a chord with us Malaysians. We are shaping our nation's direction with help of our youth. Their voices, their opinions play a major part of who we are as a country. This is also one of the major pillar of our country's "Shared Prosperity Vision 2030".
  
10. Our people are our resources and our youth are our future, these are changemakers for whom we are tailoring our learning systems. In my speeches at home, I often speak of **Education for All** and **Education is everybody's responsibility**. It is sort of a call-to-action for all education stakeholders and literally everybody in Malaysia to help us to ensure that initiatives for access to quality, inclusive and equitable education is methodically implemented.
  
11. To pave the way for this, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia is **preparing an ecosystem that all our students, regardless of their abilities, locations, social**

**economic backgrounds can fully realise their potential.**

This is especially so for inclusive education, the poor with disability, indigenous community and other marginalised society.

12. Our stance towards inclusive education is aligned with our education policies and capacity-building efforts with the current Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR) agenda. All students from preschool to tertiary education should be equipped with The Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR) skills; **communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking.**
  
13. We must change our lenses to looking at education as part and parcel of an ongoing global efforts in educating and re-educating the young and old to be aware of the ignorance that can tear societies asunder.
  
14. To achieve this, we are also resorting to Big Data and AI to ensure our students choose the path suitable with their potential, ability and interest. The same tool is also used to avoid mismatching of future career.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. I have faith that at the heart of our existence, our goals are aligned. We are all concerned for the future of our children. We also share overlapping values on the ethical use of information and the preservation of the planet. In this world of multilateralism, we must work as one team or one family of humanity under the banner of UNESCO & Sustainable Development Goal to overcome our mutual global problems.

16. With that affirmation, I would like to quote the words of a Jean Piaget:

The principal goal of education is to create men (*I should include women*) who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done-men (*and women*) who are creative, inventive, and discovers. The second goal of education is to form minds which can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered.

17. Before I end my statement, I wish to thank UNESCO and the World Book Capital Advisory Committee for

conferring the 2020 World Book Capital to the city of Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur World Book Capital 2020 (KLWBC2020) will be an added attraction for visitors to Malaysia as 2020 will also be the Visit Malaysia Year 2020. I take this opportunity to invite all members to experience these events and I look forward to welcoming everyone in Malaysia.

Thank you. Terima Kasih.