

2020 JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE CONFERENCE ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT ASEAN

Issued in Ha Noi, Viet Nam on 15 October 2020

WE, the Ministers of Education of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, convened the **Conference on the Digital Transformation of Education Systems throughout ASEAN** on 15 October 2020 online and in Ha Noi, Viet Nam;

HIGHLIGHTING the importance of the linkages between and among access to digital technologies, digital literacy, transferable skills, inclusion and equity, public-private sector partnerships, the role of children and young people, and the future of work in the digital transformation of education systems;

COGNIZANT of the varying degrees by which education has been digitalised among the ASEAN Member States and the need to further improve the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in education;

REITERATING the need for cohesion and responsiveness, in line with the theme of Viet Nam's 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship, to meet the opportunities and challenges presented by the rapidly transforming economic landscape, and, more conspicuously, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and future emergencies;

EXPRESSING deep sorrow at the unprecedented loss of lives and difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;

RECOGNISING that the ongoing pandemic has been disrupting the delivery of education in ASEAN, thereby exacerbating the various digital divides that exist between groups of children and young people in the region, owing to geographic location, disability status, wealth and income, level of education, digital literacy, and gender, among others;

NOTING with appreciation the commendable effort and progress made in integrating digital literacy and transferable skills into the education systems of ASEAN Member States particularly amidst COVID-19;

REITERATING that more work needs to be done in terms of boosting investments in human resources as well as soft and hard infrastructure, scaling up and mainstreaming existing initiatives, integrating critical transferable skills into the curricula, enhancing the capacity of teachers to deliver digitally-enabled curricula, tracking learning outcomes and needs, particularly for remote learners, and ensuring equity and inclusion to address the deepening digital divide that exists across ASEAN;

ECHOING the recognition by ASEAN's leaders that ICT is a key driver in ASEAN's economic and social transformation;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the ongoing development of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, which, among others, aims to accelerate ASEAN's inclusive digitalisation as the region emerges from the pandemic; and

RECALLING the ongoing implementation of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020, which has as one of its sub-goals “strengthening the use of ICT in education”;

HAVE AGREED TO:

1. **WORK TOWARDS** lifelong learning and the digital transformation of education systems in ASEAN by fostering digital literacy and developing transferable skills among all children and young people, with a view towards ensuring that education in ASEAN is equitable, inclusive, and fit for the future;
2. **PROMOTE** access to safe digital learning opportunities, in recognition of the critical role of education in equipping children with cyber safety knowledge and digital literacy skills that aim to minimise online risks and consequences, such as by supporting the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN;
3. **ENGAGE** the private sector in working together to come up with innovative digital literacy solutions, enabling access to digital technologies and connectivity especially for the most marginalised, and working together to provide relevant labour market skills, particularly through higher education and technical and vocational education and training, to help bridge the skills gap and prepare children and young people for the future of work;
4. **COLLABORATE** with relevant stakeholders, particularly children and young people, and ASEAN partners from across the globe, as well as those in related sectors, on areas such as open educational resources and open access learning, to help ensure the successful digital transformation of education systems throughout ASEAN;
5. **SUPPORT** the development of an ASEAN Declaration on the Digital Transformation of Education Systems in subsequent years to foster exchanges of experiences and good practices; and
6. **COMMIT** to the implementation of the abovementioned declaration and the integration of digital literacy in the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021–2025.