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## UNESCO Bangkok Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

### *UNESCO Bangkok Press Release*

#### **'Inclusive, Quality, Lifelong Learning for All': Asia-Pacific Ministers Outline Priorities for Region's Education in 'Bangkok Statement'**

*High-level officials speak as one in joint communique setting priority action areas for education beyond 2015 at close of Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference*

**BANGKOK, 8 AUGUST, 2014** – Ensuring inclusive, lifelong learning for all, and improving the quality of education are among the top priority action areas identified by Asia-Pacific education ministers to guide the region's learning sector over the next 15 years.

Nearly 20 education ministers and their representatives from 37 countries in the Asia-Pacific region endorsed the **Draft Asia-Pacific Statement on Education Beyond 2015** on 8 August, 2014, at the conclusion of the three-day Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference hosted by UNESCO in Bangkok, Thailand.

The document represents one of the main regional inputs going into the World Education Forum next year, which will in turn inform the UN Summit in September 2015, where the final international development agenda for the next 15 years will be declared. The Bangkok Statement represents the culmination of the Ministerial Forum which concluded APREC as well as extensive consultations UNESCO has conducted with stakeholders since 2012.

UNESCO Assistant Director-General of Education Qian Tang emphasized this importance, saying that APREC as well as the other regional conferences that will follow are crucial to ensuring that education's place on the global development agenda is prominent and responsive to countries' needs.

"The global education agenda is meant to drive development globally and nationally, and to inspire action in areas which are considered key for education. Therefore, it is crucial that all countries participate in the process of the development of this global agenda in order to ensure that it contributes to the realization of their own vision and ambitions for education," Mr Tang said. "Member states are in the driver's seat for the development of the post-2015 education agenda."

UNESCO Bangkok Director Gwang-Jo Kim said APREC gave the region a strong and unified voice regarding the future of the global education agenda.

"The Asia-Pacific region is rich with experience and we should take advantage of this, as we, as part of the international community, move towards finalizing the post-2015 development agenda," Mr Kim said. "The formulation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals is a work in progress and we should join hands to work together to ensure that our voices are heard at the highest level. Our role in influencing the new education agenda is critical. And we should be confident, that our collective efforts will be well featured in the future agenda of education."

The Preamble to the **Bangkok Statement** declares the overarching goal of the region is to, "ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030".

"Since the birth of the EFA movement 25 years ago in Jomtien, Thailand, the Asia-Pacific region has made remarkable progress towards achieving the EFA goals," the statement

continues. “At the same time we recognize that the agenda remains unfinished. This is the impetus for an expanded vision of Education for All and for meeting persisting and emerging challenges, including demographic changes, migration, climate change, environmental degradation and the technological divide.”

The Bangkok Statement outlines six **Regional Priority Action Areas** for Asia Pacific:

1. **Lifelong learning for all:** Equitable and inclusive access to quality learning for people of all ages and at all levels of learning, from early childhood care and education to tertiary education in formal and non-formal settings. A goal of 12 years of free and compulsory education for all by 2030 is strongly recommended.
2. **Equity and equality:** A commitment to addressing all forms of marginalization as well as disparities and inequalities, including gender inequality, in access to education.
3. **Skills and competencies for life and work:** Education should provide youth and adults with the skills they need to pursue decent work and other opportunities amid challenging times brought on by socioeconomic and demographic transformations. There should also be an emphasis on learning methods that encourage young people to be creative, innovative and to think critically.
4. **Quality and teachers:** Efforts must be made at all levels and in all educational settings to ensure that all learners are taught by professionally-trained, motivated and well-supported teachers. A key element in this regard is recognizing the importance and proven success of mother-tongue based multilingual education.
5. **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for education:** ICTs must be fully utilized to achieve the post-2015 education agenda to improve access to education, particularly in remote areas, as well as to support teaching and learning and strengthen education management.
6. **Governance and financing:** A commitment to establishing legal and policy frameworks that promote accountability and transparency in education and actively involve all stakeholders. Public investment in education should reach the internationally recognized benchmarks of 6% of GDP or 20% of total public expenditure devoted to education. Resources should be distributed equitably across education sub-sectors and geographic locations, with specific attention paid to marginalized groups.

The Bangkok Statement concludes by requesting that UNESCO, along with UNICEF and with the support of other international partners, continue to spearhead the development of the global education agenda going into the United Nations Summit in September 2015 and beyond.

UNESCO Bangkok organized APREC in collaboration with Thailand’s Ministry of Education and with the support of Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Republic of Korea’s Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

Presentations made at APREC are available here:

<http://www.unescobkk.org/education/conference/asia-pacific-regional-education-conference-aprec/presentation-files/>

More information on APREC and the Bangkok Statement in full (pending):

<http://www.unescobkk.org/education/conference/asia-pacific-regional-education-conference-aprec%20%20>