

**Philippines National Statement of Commitment
Transforming Education Summit
September 2022**

Introduction

In response to the call of Secretary-General Guterres, the Philippine National Statement of Commitment embodies the principles laid out by the United Nations in organizing the TES: it is country-led, inclusive, youth-inspired, and builds on existing efforts. We thank Secretary General Guterres for calling the Philippines and all countries of the world to envision a transformation of education for our post-pandemic age. Our preparations for this summit could not have come at a better time. Our stakeholders' contributions are especially important as our country prepares a new six-year economic plan and transitions into a post-pandemic age.

Reaffirming national and international commitments

The pandemic has inflicted serious damage on our education system which serves around 30 million learners. In addition, the Philippines continues to weather several natural and human-made emergencies every year. Following these events we have observed significant declines in learning among our learners, and even worse deterioration among our society's most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

We recognize that despite our official guarantees, persistent inequalities and disparities of various kinds continue to impede access to quality learning. And as we come out of the pandemic, it is more important than ever that the Philippines, guided by its Constitution, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Sustainable Development Goals, reaffirm its commitment to education as a basic human right.

Our reaffirmation means two things: first, we must strengthen our current interventions and introduce new ones to address both recurrent and emerging threats to our learners. And second, we must act boldly and ambitiously if our education system is to fully recover from the pandemic and prepare for an increasingly uncertain future.

Introduction of Action Points

The Philippines commits to seven action points that each consist of a package of policy interventions.

Action Point 1: Prepare learners for the future

Subject to vetting and approval of the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines

A transformed education system should prepare our children for leadership, build resilience, and harness their creativity through schools and communities that allow everyone - regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic class - to participate fully and freely as productive citizens of their local, national, and global communities. Our 2030 basic education plan states it clearly: we want Filipino learners to be holistically developed, having acquired the 21st century skills to manage oneself, build connections, inquire, innovate, stay nimble, and serve beyond self. They must take pride in their national identity and nationhood and aspire to flourish in a competitive, rapidly changing world.

Action Point 2: Reopen education institutions

But before our learners can acquire these 21st century skills, they must have fully developed their foundational skills and recovered the learning they have lost. For these processes to begin we must allow our learners to physically come together and interact with their teachers and peers again. This is why firstly, the Philippines shall commit to safely reopen in-person classes. These include schools, community learning centers, early childhood development centers, and higher and technical education institutions. Simultaneous to the reopening, we shall scale up innovations and best practices introduced through creative minds of teachers that allowed pockets of learning gains to happen during the full distance learning. We once again pledge to take on the task of transforming schools into safe, secure, and empowering environments for learning, as no learner can return safely if their schools are unable to look after their physical and mental health. Only when our learners feel safe, secure, and empowered in their schools once again can they overcome learning loss and resume building the foundational and socio-emotional skills they need to live fulfilling and productive lives.

Action Point 3: Ensure inclusion and equity

But even as education recovers, we must acknowledge that any recovery will be more difficult for some groups that have been more gravely affected by the pandemic. The Philippines must exert targeted effort to ensure inclusion and equity for the vulnerable and marginalized. In a highly diverse country such as ours, we must strengthen cultural sensitivity in curriculum and learning delivery. We must also reinforce the policies that keep our learning institutions free of violence, stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. We are going to expand alternative learning pathways to cover learners who are not adequately served. We shall intensify our efforts to serve learners with disabilities. We shall also accelerate the expansion of access to early childhood development for those groups who have not had sufficient opportunities in their earliest and most crucial years

of learning. These actions shall make clear that a transformative education should not leave others behind.

Action Point 4: Foster digital learning and citizenship

The internet and other information technologies place more information at one's fingertips than any other that has come before. It is essential that our education systems equip learners with the digital learning and citizenship skills that allow them to engage with these new technologies critically and productively. To achieve this, the Philippines shall accelerate its construction of an ecosystem that provides inclusive, equitable, and gender-responsive digital learning for all.

This starts by securing regular access to electricity, high-speed internet, and appropriate digital devices for learners and teachers. On top of this infrastructure, we shall provide them digital platforms that adapt easily to learning as well as the demands of day-to-day living. To protect our learners from disinformation and other harmful content, we shall adopt technological and institutional safeguards that minimize exposure and mitigate as much of their effects as possible..

These digital solutions must adapt to various conditions and ensure the full and equal participation of all our stakeholders, which is why we shall build new coalitions that bring allies within and across borders together to make them possible. Working together, we can ensure that our learners harness these new technologies for the betterment of their societies. .

Action Point 5: Expand and empower the teacher force

Critical to the successful transformation of education is an empowered and competent teacher force. We shall commit to training more teachers in programs and subject areas where they are needed most: in special education, science and technology, and the early stages of learning, especially early childhood development. We shall provide greater incentives for trades practitioners and professionals to impart their experience as senior high school teachers. In the same way, we must ensure that our child development workers move towards professionalization. We must not stop at getting teachers into classrooms, but we must maximize the time that they spend with learners. To achieve this, we shall hire more non-teaching personnel in each school to handle administrative and non-academic tasks.

Once they face their learners, they need to make every second of learning count. This entails the provision of quality learning materials, comprehensive pre-service and in-service training, and competency-based career progression. We shall also put in place

interventions that foster the wellbeing and welfare of teachers. Beyond these, we shall provide them a reasonable wage and benefits. Our commitments provide teachers with the workplaces they need, so that they can provide learners the transformative education that they deserve.

Action Point 6: Reimagine governance

Crucial to enacting and sustaining this transformation is reimagining governance which begins with the people, and especially our learners. Our policies, plans, and programs shall be designed with learners and for learners, incorporating their full participation during design and implementation while turning them into permanent partners for change.

We shall also develop closer integration between industry and government when it comes to curriculum design and implementation, and make use of labor market information to make education more responsive to constantly shifting economic conditions.

We shall revisit the institutional structures of our education system to ensure that they work in synergy and facilitate smooth transition from early childhood education, basic education, to technical-vocational and higher education, that allows learners to achieve their full potential. We shall redesign our institutions to be more resilient so that we may recover from shocks swiftly. We pledge to cooperate with experts and communities on the production and use of evidence so that our innovations are grounded in sound and ethical science. We shall work with our partners in the rest of the human development sector to emphasize our shared responsibility for our learners' holistic welfare and ensure that the government as a whole remains responsive to social change.

Action Point 7: Ensure adequate funding

And finally, we commit to ensure that education priorities are adequately funded. This includes working towards a total education expenditure as 6% of GDP and 20% of the national budget by 2030. Likewise, the Philippine government shall commit to the necessary institutional reforms to ensure that these growing budgets are spent optimally. We shall engage communities and governments, locally and globally, in forging a new and stronger consensus around the urgency of investing more in education and the future of our learners now, rather than later.

Conclusion

The world has called us all to action, and the Philippines shall respond in bold and dynamic strokes. Let it be known that we will act with new vigor and vision in facing the most urgent education challenges of our time.

Education is a shared responsibility; no teachers, no school, no government can do it alone. It is not enough to trust that a rising tide shall lift all boats. We call on everyone to listen to our learners so that we can deliver to them a truly transformed education system that empowers them to realize their full potential.

They deserve no less.