

**UNESCO Must Strengthen Its Role As EFA Advocate, Says Muhyiddin
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By Rubiah Mohamed**

PARIS, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- UNESCO needs to strengthen its coordinating role as Education For All advocate to know exactly the challenges it faces in supporting member countries which may be unable to meet the EFA policy deadline by 2015, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said.

Addressing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation executive board meeting here, the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister said that sub-regional, regional and global linkages to advance EFA advocacy and ownership had to be enhanced.

He said that it was critical for EFA convening agencies at country level to work with national agencies to maximise resources, cost effectiveness, capacity building and knowledge sharing.

"The proposal for regional representation in reformatting the global EFA meetings by end of 2011 must be strengthened to ensure the regional leadership has the capacity to mobilise and muster all EFA initiatives at regional level for reporting at the global level.

"This must not at all exclude the participation of smaller and at risk states, which are often the ones most vulnerable to failure and in need of support in meeting the EFA goals," he said.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said the reality was that some countries would not be able to meet the deadline, suggesting that Unesco would need to initiate work of the EFA beyond 2015.

He shared with the forum Malaysia's Government Transformation Programme, encompassing education as one of the National Key Results Areas.

"It's heartening to note that our first cohort of lower primary students has demonstrated improvements in literacy and numeracy rates, exceeding the achievement target set at 95 per cent," he said.

This was achieved by focusing on improving student outcomes and, at the same time, continuously motivating school management and teachers, he said.

The deputy prime minister said Malaysia took note of Unesco's concerns and challenges in integrating the concept of Education for Sustainable Development into school curricula and education systems.

Muhyiddin noted that ESD was an evolving concept covering not only the environment dimension but also human development and culture.

He said a sustainable future depended on providing children with the knowledge and skills for a transition from school to work.

"A sustainable future is also dependent on sustaining a culture of peace and, therefore, it is vital to sow the seeds of diversity in early schooling," he said, appealing to Unesco to ensure that curriculum renewal and pedagogical innovations incorporated moral and ethical values.

He said that Malaysia was preparing an education policy review and was looking forward to working with Unesco on this by year-end.

On Malaysia's tenure as a UNESCO board member which ends in October, Muhyiddin expressed the hope that the seat would be filled up by a member of Asean.

Muhyiddin told Malaysian journalists later that Malaysia expected inputs from UNESCO in preparing its education policy review.

He said that UNESCO might send two experts, one in technical education and the other on transformation.

Muhyiddin, who arrived here Monday for a two-day visit to attend the UNESCO executive board meeting, attended an Aidilfitri celebration hosted by Malaysian ambassador to France Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Zainal before returning home.

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