



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND  
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**Opening Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai**

**Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand**

**at the Transforming Education Summit (TES) Side Event  
on “Mental health promotion and prevention in schools and  
learning environments: an urgent call to action for world leaders  
and donors”**

**20 September 2022,  
UNICEF House, New York**

Your Majesty Queen Letizia,  
Distinguished guests,  
Good afternoon!

It is a privilege and a pleasure to join Her Majesty and leaders from UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO at this very vital event on how best to prioritize the well-being of children and young people in schools.

Growing up today is harder than ever for children and young individuals. A host of novel stressors that my generation cannot even attempt to understand are making mental health a prominent concern of the society. In a confusing, addictive, ubiquitous 24-hour online world, the isolation and disruption of normal socialization process caused by Covid-19 and economic uncertainties, and the emerging metaverse “reality” led to heightened mental and emotional challenges for our children. Depression, anxiety, emotional dissociation, and sense of alienation are becoming more and more common in children. Drugs are becoming more prevalent, available, and affordable. Young individuals need new tools and more support to build up their emotional immunity and mental strength to stay healthy, to persevere and to grow up whole and become well-balanced and productive members of their society.

First, over the course of their education, children spend more time in school than outside of it. Schools therefore can and should play an important role in promoting good emotional health and mental wellbeing, and must be competent in identifying early behavioral changes and signs of mental distress as well as answering to their silent cry for help.

With support from partners like UNICEF and Thai Health Promotion Foundation, the Royal Thai Government has worked on social campaigns such as the **School Health HERO**’ project to destigmatize mental health issues and develop tools to assist school teachers in screening and supporting children. Children are also encouraged to ask for help from teachers, family and friends, because **‘talking can save lives.’**

Second, schools can help deter **mental health problems**. The social and emotional skills, knowledge, and behaviours that young people learn in the classroom can help them remain engaged with school and achieve academic success,

as well as set the pattern for how they will manage their mental health throughout their lives. We must increase **students' resilience** to daily demands and challenges. We must promote their **self-confidence** through **goal-setting** and **mental health stability training**. Cultivating their **positive thinking** would also help them learn how to **see opportunities in challenges** and develop **the right mindset for changes**. Most of all, they must learn that they can develop skills to manage mental health issues.

Third, schools must provide **a creative and conducive learning environment for all**. This is imperative especially in the context of COVID-19 recovery where students need to be motivated to make up for their learning and socialization deficit during the pandemic. We are committed to promoting schools which focus on **balancing academic achievement and students' mental and emotional well-being**. **EQ (emotional quotient) is just as important or even more so than IQ**.

Excellencies,

Education is more than teaching academic contents. It has a distinct and tremendous power to prepare students for **a healthy and fulfilling life**. So, let us join hands in **transforming education** to be a '**booster dose of inspiration**' for all children. Let us continue to **invest in helping children grow and thrive**, and live a life of joy and positivity. On that note, I look forward to the Call for Action led by the Director General of WHO. The Royal Thai Government stands ready to render our support and champion the issue of children and young people's mental health and well-being as they are the future of our world.

I thank you.

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