



Statement by Hon. Manasseh Damukana Sogavare, MP

Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

at the ‘Transforming Education Summit Leaders Roundtable,’

Economic and Social Council Chambers

19th September 2022

United Nations Secretary General, Your Excellency Mr António
Guterres,

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen

Greetings from Solomon Islands.

Secretary General Guterres, I join other delegations to commend you and the office of the United Nations Secretary General for your vision and wisdom in convening this ‘Transforming Education Summit’ during the seventy-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The timing of the Summit is impeccable. It enables nations to focus their attention to addressing the devastating impacts the COVID-19 pandemic made the education systems and delivery of education to students throughout the world.

Your Excellency

Solomon Islands agrees with the late Nelson Mandela when he said, and I quote ... “**Education** is the most powerful weapon which **you can use to change the world**. Education is the key to **eliminating gender inequality**, to **reducing poverty**, to **creating a sustainable planet**, to **preventing needless deaths and illness**, and to **fostering peace**. **Hence the importance of the theme of this summit ‘to transform education.’**

Your Excellency

Like other countries, the delivery of education to students in Solomon Islands was severely undermined by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Solomon Islands government was able to reduce the period of closure of all our schools during the pandemic, and our Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development continued its efforts to deliver a ‘skeleton education program’ during the pandemic through ‘sporadic education broadcasts’ during the period of closure.

Solomon Islands returned to full interactive classroom education at all levels of education in June of 2022, less than one year after the compulsory closure of education institutions in the country.

Your Excellency

The delivery of education in Solomon Islands **has been transformed through an all-encompassing’ vision espoused in our ‘Education Strategic Framework 2016 to 2030’ which states...**

“Our vision is that all Solomon Islanders will develop as individuals and possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to earn a living and to live in harmony with others and their environment. We envisage a united and progressive society in which all can live in peace and harmony with fair and equitable opportunities for a better life. Parents and members of the community develop a sense of ownership of all educational institutions.”

Our long-term strategic education framework is delivered through respective five-year ‘National Education Action Plans’ which each have a strong focus on ensuring a **better education management system, access, and inclusion in education for all children.** It also focuses on supporting teachers with the resources and training needed to provide quality and relevant learning support to children.

Your Excellency

Solomon Islands practices an ‘education for all’ policy. **Non-participation of students in education is more a function of the limited number of spaces available in education institutions rather than exclusion by policy.** The government is working to gradually increase education spaces in our institutions to ensure our rapidly growing young population can access quality education.

The Solomon Island government is also working to address the challenge of ‘students that drop out of the formal education system at young age through technical and vocational education and training which is ***focused on equipping these young citizens with life-skills that will equip them with ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to earn a living and to live in harmony with others and their environment’.***

Our curricular and pedagogies are continually being reformed to ensure students are equipped with appropriate ‘life skills’ at any level they leave the education system. Our teacher training is also being reformed to enable teachers deliver on our vision for education articulated earlier.

Your Excellency

Early this year, the Solomon Islands government approved a digital transformation policy that aims **‘to transform opportunities for all Solomon Islanders and empower them with the ability to reduce**

the digital divide and participate in digital transformation through universal access to reliable, accessible, affordable, and timely information’. This policy will empower our education and health institutions to reach all students and all people in the rural and remote areas of Solomon Islands.

Your Excellency

With the digital transformation policy now in place and coordinated through a digital transformation authority, our challenge is on its roll-out and implementation. The Solomon Islands government welcomes development partner support to help it expand the reach of digital transformation opportunities to all our students in all our education institutions throughout Solomon Islands within the next five to ten years.

Your Excellency

The Solomon Islands government invests between 20 – 30 percent of its national budget in education annually. However, to fully realize the aspirations espoused in MDG 4, the government of Solomon Islands welcomes support from our partners, so that *‘together we can uplift the future of our children through education to brighten their futures and transform what has often been seen as ‘scars of education systems into stars of the future’.*

Your Excellency

To conclude, in Solomon Islands, we believe that *‘education is not simply and time of interaction between students and teachers, rather it is a period in which we equip our young generations with life skills they need, to engage and prosper in a knowledge economy, where education is the primary currency by which we can maintain future economic competitiveness and take our place to contribute to global prosperity’.*

Your Excellency

To put it simply, genuine, and durable investments in appropriate and empowering education is an investment that will empower and uplift a nation, and for Solomon Islands, that, is the vision and hope we aspire to achieve.

Thank you, your Excellency.