November 2, 2020

Honorable Ms. Tsedevsuren Lkhagva
Minister of Education and Science
Mongolia

Subject: Endorsement of Mongolia’s Education Sector Mid-Term Development Plan 2021-2030

Dear Honorable Minister Tsedevsuren:

In the Embassy of Japan’s role as Coordinating Agency of Mongolia’s engagement with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), we are pleased to write to you on behalf of the Local Education Group (LEG) to express the LEG’s endorsement of Mongolia’s Education Sector Mid-Term Development Plan (ESMTDP) for the 2021-2030 timeframe.

The LEG recognizes the leadership of the Government and that of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in articulating the sector directions and priorities as set forth in the ESMTDP. We, members of the LEG, are proud that we were intensively engaged through the consultations, analysis and development of the ESMTDP. In addition to the LEG, the consultation process involved a wide range of stakeholders including other line Ministries, practitioners at decentralized levels, the private sector and academic institutions. We believe the inclusive nature of the process will translate into reliable implementation of the ESMTDP.

The ESMTDP focuses on improving the quality of education through the development of a system of open and flexible learning pathways that ensures the education quality and relevance at all levels with shared responsibility, sustainable governance and management. We strongly support the emphasis and priorities of the ESMTDP. With a firm analytical grounding, the plan focuses on key challenges within the education system that, if addressed, could serve as the drivers of change towards a more efficient, accountable and results-oriented system.

Undertaken in April 2020, the independent appraisal process was key to helping the LEG assess the soundness, feasibility and content of the ESMTDP. We concur with the appraisal report findings, in particular on the key strengths of the plan, which include its comprehensive sector-wide nature, the strong leadership and national ownership and that the strategic policies and plan priorities are aligned with empirical evidence presented in the sector analysis reports.

As intended, the appraisal report recommendations provided the impetus for further improvements to the plan. We note and appreciate the significant efforts which have been put forward by the Ministry to address the appraisal report recommendations. Key enhancements which were undertaken based on the appraisal include; (i) the multi-year action plan has been strengthened to include associated activities,
detailed outcomes and costing; (ii) the financial framework has been elaborated; and (iii) the results framework and Key Performance Indicators have been elaborated.

While most of the key appraisal recommendations have been addressed, it may be well to point out salient aspects which require continued attention as the ESMMDP is being implemented. A key concern is the sizeable funding gap of approximately 22.5% in the first three years between the education sector cost projection and the estimated Government’s expenditure, which is unlikely to be covered. Given the gap, we encourage effective programming in order to align the utilization of resources towards the key priorities of the ESMMDP. We note the complexity, as synchronization across a range of related parts is required in order to ensure coherence and prioritization within available resources.

As noted above, the ambitious nature of the ESMMDP coupled with the constrained resource environment, requires greater management capacity. To that end, establishing a conducive governance and management environment, and a structure aimed at professionalizing the sector should be a key priority of MES. As such, we support the ESMMDP’s aim to enhance system capacity for effective implementation.

The results of the ESMMDP can only be assured with adequate financing. Mongolia’s commitment to education is reflected by its spending on public education. Total education expenditure relative to GDP is projected at over 5% for the ESMMDP period, which is equal to other countries at similar levels of GDP per capita. Furthermore, public spending on education is set to increase from 15.44% in 2021 to 17.32% by 2025 with the intent of reaching the GPE benchmark of 20% by 2030. While there is a strong commitment from the Government to finance the sector, we hope that the Government will ensure that the public allocation to the education sector will meet the requirements for GPE funding.

We recognize that the Government and the education system faces financial pressure, including the pressure stemming COVID-19 which will result in budgets being further constrained. However, it is encouraging that within the education sector, there are in built mechanisms to address system responsiveness and adjustments. The extent to which the mechanisms are employed will enhance the utility of the ESMMDP and its associated action plan as living documents. It is our hope that the ESMMDP and action plan adjustments will be informed by evaluations and reviews, including through the establishment of annual Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) and the proposed mid-term review which is scheduled to take place in 2025.

Having noted the value of effective collaboration and consultation, we hope that the consultative nature of the ESMMDP development process will be maintained during the ESMMDP implementation period. In particular, we hope that the LEG consultative mechanism will continue to function as recommended in the independent appraisal report. Whilst the ESMMDP speaks to this understanding, we believe that defining the scope of the LEG through the development of a more formalized LEG Terms of Reference would optimize the potential of sector dialogue and coordination.

The ESMMDP represents Mongolia’s Vision 2050 aspirations. We, members of the LEG, are pleased to endorse the ESMMDP and ready to align our support in accordance with the directions and priorities of the ESMMDP. However, this
endorsement does not constitute a legal obligation or binding agreement or effect an obligation of funds by any cooperating partner. Such commitments, if any, will be subject to separate arrangements and the availability of funds.

Sincerely,

The Embassy of Japan in Mongolia