Opening Address

Gwang-Jo Kim, Director, UNESCO Bangkok

Your Excellency, General Dapong Ratanasuwan, Minister of Education of Thailand
Professor Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore
Distinguished speakers and participants
Colleagues and friends

Good morning and welcome to the 18th UNESCO-APEID International Conference.

The late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand was a strong advocate for education. He once said, "Learning is a never-ending process. Those who wish to advance in their work must constantly seek more knowledge."

On behalf of UNESCO, I would like to dedicate this conference in memory of His Majesty's lifelong commitment to sustainable development, his ceaseless pursuit of knowledge and his advocacy for education. May his legacy continue to inspire us as we pursue quality education for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of the conference is very timely as we embark on our journey to transform the world by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 goals are ambitious but comprehensive, covering all areas of our lives.

We want to end poverty and hunger.
We want to achieve gender equality.
We want to have good health, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy.
We want decent work and economic growth.
We want world peace and many more.

The problems and challenges of the world today are cross-cutting and cross boundary. They are no longer confined to one sector of society, or one country, or even one region. Our perspectives of today’s issues will have to consider problems and events near and far.

For example:
• The destruction of lives in Syria has huge political, religious, social and economic implications across the world.
• Climate change has affected people and the environment in many ways, as witnessed in increasing frequencies and strength of hurricanes and typhoons across the region.

To make sense of an increasingly inter-connected world, we need new and innovative ways of thinking and actions. This requires quality education at all levels.
This point is a key message of the Global Education Monitoring Report released in September this year. Presenting a strong case for placing education at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, the report emphasized that education has a responsibility to foster the right type of skills, attitudes and behavior that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth.

This requires transformative education. We may call it by many names, including transversal education, 21st century learning, collaborative learning and so on. But ultimately we are talking about an education that will change ourselves and those around us.

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 or the Education 2030 Agenda was clearly formulated to capture this vision to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

There are substantial challenges ahead.

Based on current trends, we will achieve universal primary education only in 2042, universal lower secondary education in 2059 and universal upper secondary education in 2084. On this account, we will be 50 years late in meeting the 2030 targets. The OECD’s 2016 report on Education at a Glance also noted that high-quality, accessible education remains a challenge for all countries around the world. Clearly, greater efforts are needed to make headway in the education sector.

Policy makers, educators and parents are looking for answers and examples to improve the quality of education in their respective countries. UNESCO Bangkok has initiated several initiatives to reflect the holistic perspective of education for the 21st century, including research and projects on:

- Transversal Competencies
- Learning to Live Together
- Happy Schools
- Promoting a Culture of Peace in South-East Asia through Shared Histories
- Preparing Teachers for Global Citizenship Education

Over the years, the UNESCO-APEID Conferences have become a valuable forum for sharing knowledge, fostering collaboration and networking on various topics. Recognizing that many other organizations and individuals have also conducted studies and implemented projects in relation to quality education and quality learning, UNESCO Bangkok is very pleased to coordinate this event for eminent speakers and paper presenters to provide the latest information and findings about the:

- concept of quality education;
- innovative practices that can increase the quality of education;
- assessment and monitoring of the quality of education; and
- policies and strategies to attain quality education.

We have many returning participants who attend our conferences regularly. We are very pleased to see you again. Thank you very much for your continuous support.
We are equally happy to see new faces and welcome to the UNESCO family. Do participate actively. Be ready to share, challenge and encourage each other. Make the best use of your time over the next 3 days to network and find opportunities for collaboration.

I would like to thank all the speakers, paper presenters, participants and partners for contributing to the success of the 18th UNESCO-APEID International Conference.

Allow me to conclude with this quote from the *Great Learning* by Confucius:

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states.
Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families.
Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons.
Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts.
Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts.
Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge.
Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.
Things being investigated, knowledge became complete.
Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere.
Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified.
Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.
Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated.
Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed.
Their States being rightly governed, the entire world was at peace.