Tenth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

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Manila, Philippines

Welcome Remarks

Molly Lee

Dr. Nona Ricafort, Chairperson of the Tenth Regional Committee for the Regional Convention

Distinguished guests

Invited participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to you all.

A warm welcome to Manila and to the Tenth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. This Regional Convention was adopted in 1983 and since then 21 members states have ratified the convention and they are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Australia, China, DPR Korea, Holy See, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal,
Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Turkmenistan. I am glad to inform you that we have representatives from...... state parties and......observers from non-state parties in this meeting.

The Bureau of the Regional Committee was set up to monitor the promotion and implementation of the convention and it meets regularly every two years. In conjunction with every meeting we also organize a capacity building seminar or workshop. This year we had just completed a very successful regional workshop on the recognition of higher education qualifications which most of you have attended. Usually at the Regional Committee meeting we have representatives from state parties to present country reports on the progress made, and the obstacles encountered in the application of the regional convention in their respective countries. But this year we do not have the presentation of country reports for we shall spend the whole of today to go through the draft of the revised Regional Convention.

You may like to know that since the 8th Session held on 2005 in Kunming, we have set up a Working Group to review the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention. The Working Group consists of representatives from state parties and non-state parties as well as consultants. Since its establishment, the Working Group has conducted on-line discussion through APARNET and met face-to-face twice, in Seoul on 2007 and in Bangkok on 2008. As a result of these lengthy deliberations, the Working Group has prepared a draft of the revised Regional Convention. The purpose of this meeting is to finalize and endorse the draft of the new Convention.

You may wish to ask “What is the main difference between the old and new convention?” Well, basically the old convention states explicitly that state parties should recognize the certificates, diplomas and degrees granted by other state parties may it be for further studies or for professional practices. The essence of the old convention is “mutual recognition of qualifications” and if I may add “without much consideration on the quality of the qualifications”. It is this blanket recognition that makes quite a number of member states in the region reluctant to ratify this convention.
However, the revised convention does take into consideration the quality of a particular qualification before it is given due recognition. The new convention states that the holder of a piece of qualification from one state party shall have access for his/her qualification to be assessed by the authority of another state party in a timely manner. If there is no substantial difference between his/her qualification and the qualification from that state party where recognition is sought then that piece of qualification will be given due recognition. But recognition can be withheld if there is any substantial difference between the qualifications. In the new convention, it is the process of assessing the qualification that is foregrounded rather than the recognition of the qualification per se. I would not go into the details of the new convention right now for we shall have the opportunity to scrutinize the draft throughout the whole meeting.

Although I have been using the term revised convention, it is actually a new convention which means that once it has been adopted by member states, it has to be ratified all over again. I am very glad to inform you that the Executive Board of UNESCO has just approved the revision of both the Asia-Pacific and the African regional convention in the recently concluded Board meeting. It is very crucial that we finalize and endorse the draft in this meeting for then we can send the draft to our legal department to double check on the wordings and text of the convention. The next step in the process would be to hold a ministerial meeting to adopt the new convention, hopefully sometime in the next biennium, ie 2010-2011.

Last but not least, I wish to thank the Commission of Higher Education, Philippines; the Philippines National Commission for UNESCO, DEEWR Australia, and AusAID for your cooperation with APEID, UNESCO Bangkok, in making this important meeting happened. I wish all of us a successful and fruitful meeting and a pleasant stay in Manila.

Thank you for your kind attention.