It gives me great pleasure to be here today for the “3rd UNESCO-APEID Meeting on Entrepreneurship Education” and be given this opportunity to address such a distinguished audience.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate UNESCO Bangkok and the Entrepreneurship Unit, Ministry of Education Malaysia for their commendable effort in organizing this meeting. It is indeed a valuable platform for policy makers, practitioners, entrepreneurs and experts to share knowledge, ideas and experiences pertaining to the many issues on Entrepreneurship Education. It will also help us to enrich our understanding and insights on the issues and to move forward together, for the benefit of our present and future generations.

To international participants, I have great pleasure to bid you Selamat Datang to Malaysia. We are grateful for your presence and participation in this meaningful meeting. I am sure with your vast and diverse
experiences and expertise, we have a lot to learn and gain from each other.

The Challenges of the 21st Century
The world is currently facing many challenges with profound economic, social, political and structural changes. These changes are impacted by multiple and coinciding factors such as the shift to services, knowledge-based and innovative-led economies; globalization spread by fast changing technology; higher rates of product and technological advancement and obsolescence; greater opportunities for travel and migration; the impact of massive international capital flows; and competing emerging economies along with societal challenges; to name a few.

The world economic crisis that began in 2008 and the consequent slowdown in global demand have also engendered significant insecurity about the outlook of the world economy. Although the Asia and Pacific region has survived the financial crisis better than other regions in the world, the region still faces many challenges. It is home to more than 800 million people living in poverty, representing nearly two-thirds of the world’s poor, with 563 million undernourished people, and more than 1 billion workers in vulnerable employment having low wages, no benefits, no job security and difficult conditions of work, within its overall impressive economic growth compared to the rest of the world.

Based on the Global Employment Trends 2013 report by the International Labour Organisation, the global unemployment rate has been projected to
be more than 202 million in 2013, and is predicted to rise by another 3 million in 2014. The report also indicates that there are currently some 73.8 million of young people unemployed globally, and the slowdown in economic activity is likely to push more into unemployment by 2014. The issue on youth unemployment requires holistic and long-term measures. We need to have specific interventions relevant for youth employment, including increasing our efforts to enhance young people’s employability and encourage youth entrepreneurship.

**Entrepreneurship in Education**

Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a catalyst for economic growth, serving as a key driver in increasing the level of innovation, creativity and competitiveness of a country. During the last three decades, the scientific community has shown a growing interest in entrepreneurship that are inherently driven by commercialization, and boosted by the emergence of new business environments, new technologies and relentless globalization. Technology-based innovative entrepreneurship like that exemplified by Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, Google and Facebook has changed the world. Entrepreneurship is now considered as one of the pillars of support in time of economic crises and rapid globalization.

Parallel to this, there has been an increasing interest in many countries to foster entrepreneurship through education and training as it is widely believed that entrepreneurial activity can be spurred through the education system. Consequently, entrepreneurship has become one of the fastest-growing disciplines throughout the world. This is marked by the increasing number of entrepreneurship courses and programs offered
at the universities and other institutions of higher learning around the world. For faster growth and employment, we need to stimulate entrepreneurial mindsets and attributes of our young people, encourage innovative business start-ups, and foster a culture that is friendlier to entrepreneurship.

Studies have confirmed that Entrepreneurship Education can help promote entrepreneurial and innovative culture by changing mindsets and providing the necessary skills to students. Entrepreneurial programmes and modules offer students the tools to think creatively; to be effective problem solvers; to analyze business ideas objectively, and to communicate, network, lead and evaluate any given project.

However, we must recognize that the benefits of Entrepreneurship Education are not limited to boosting start-ups, innovative ventures and new jobs. It can also influence a young individual's motivation to strive for something that might otherwise seem impossible. Inspired, self-confident, talented entrepreneurial graduates are critical to national growth. They are more likely to start and lead dynamic new enterprises and social ventures as well as to have the capacity to transform the organization they lead and manage. While students might be our main concern, we also need to encourage the academics and researchers to take part in entrepreneurship; to be more enterprising in their research and approach to teaching and learning; and to engage more with local communities.
**Investment In Education**

The Government believes that quality education remains a key priority area for continuous improvement. Hence, a substantial portion of Malaysia’s budget has consistently been allocated for educational development and excellence. For example, the government is allocating a total of RM54.6 billion or 21% of the total allocation for the year 2014 to the education sector.

The Government also recognizes that education plays a significant role in developing the skills that generate entrepreneurial mindsets and leadership. As such, calls have been made for the Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia to come up with strategic efforts to nurture the entrepreneurial and innovative minds of the young generation in order to leapfrog the country’s economic transformation from a middle-income to a high income nation by the year 2020.

**Issues and Challenges in Entrepreneurship Education**

In addressing Entrepreneurship Education, we have to realize that we also have to face multiple challenges. These challenges may vary from country to country in intensity. One of the key issues is the content and pedagogy: what to teach and how to teach them. In this regard it is important for us to recognize that learning institutions such as schools, colleges and universities have different priorities, cultures, norms, knowledge and research emphasis and traditions. How can these institutions embed entrepreneurship element into their system?
Another consideration is whether our educators are properly trained to disseminate understanding of different ways and methods to develop and support entrepreneurial mindsets. This will also require effective cooperation between the education sector and industry. The debate on whether it is the role of universities to train for industry; or industry must themselves train for their specific needs continues. Nonetheless, in the context of Entrepreneurship Education both sectors must cooperate to equip our young people with the right entrepreneurial skills and attributes for them to contribute effectively to the world of work and business.

If all these issues can be addressed adequately, being an entrepreneur would seem to be a good career of choice. So the formal education sector would have to review how it prepares the young to accept the challenge of stepping out to become an entrepreneur instead of relying solely on traditional employment option.

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With those challenges and issues in mind, and the previous Meetings’ resolutions and commitment in this series, I would like to once again congratulate UNESCO Bangkok and the Ministry of Education for co-organizing this 3rd UNESCO-APEID Meeting on Entrepreneurship Education. This meeting is timely, as we need to move the Entrepreneurship Education Agenda forward in a more coordinated and systematic manner by leveraging on the network of the 47 UNESCO member countries in the Asia-Pacific region. I believe this meeting is the
right platform for sharing information, formulating multi-stakeholder collaboration and enhancing networking opportunities.

I was informed that the response for participation in this meeting is indeed overwhelming. The response illustrates support and relevancy of our meeting today. I am glad that UNESCO Bangkok has taken an initiative to establish a virtual network on Entrepreneurship Education, so as to give opportunities for more people to be actively involved in future activities concerning Entrepreneurship Education.

**Closing Note**
Entrepreneurship Education is indeed essential to build entrepreneurial human capital for both the present and future society. It has also been regarded as the main driver for social inclusion. It is in this context that we ought to strive for a major growth in Entrepreneurship Education and to make entrepreneurship central to the way education operates. This is a challenge to all Vice Chancellors and educators.

I believe the cordial discussions as well as the exchange of views on various issues pertaining to Entrepreneurship Education that might be raised during this meeting, will certainly further enhance our collaborative efforts toward a common stand in education for the benefit of the Asia-Pacific region. It is my sincere hope that this cooperation and friendly relations would be further strengthened in the future.

In the spirit of sharing experiences and openness to new ideas, and on the theme “Entrepreneurship Education for Global Prosperity’, I am
pleased to declare the 3rd UNESCO-APEID Meeting on Entrepreneurship Education open.

Thank you.