2\textsuperscript{nd} Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030  
(APMED2030)  
16-18 November 2016  
Radisson Blu Plaza Bangkok  
Bangkok, Thailand

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WELCOME REMARKS  
Opening Session, 16 November 2016 at 9:00 – 9:45 am, Grand Ballroom, 4\textsuperscript{th} Fl.

Excellencies  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning and welcome to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030.

First, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education of our host country, Thailand.

Thank you also to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan for their continued support.

Thank you to UNICEF for their continued support and collaboration.

Today, we have over 200 participants from 35 countries in this region, including national SDG 4 coordinators from over 25 countries, CSOs, research institutes and academia, SDG 4 co-convenors, UN agencies as well as colleagues from the field and UNESCO Institutes. I am also pleased that we have representatives from SAARC, SEAMEO, ASEAN and PIFS.
This meeting builds on the first Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 or APMED 2030 and the work countries and partners have carried out since then.

Much of this work aligns with the agreed actions noted in the Outcome Document of the first APMED2030.

This meeting is important because it brings our region a step forward in the pursuit of Education 2030 – our aim here is to agree on concrete actions to take for the next 14 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Education, as we know, is a fundamental human right.

Education is at the center of the development agenda and is crucial to the realization of other rights, and therefore, the realization of other SDGs.

SDG4-Education 2030 calls for a humanistic vision of education and development based on human rights, dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, diversity and shared responsibility and accountability.

When it comes to the 17 SDGs, we say that education is key because education is the solution.

This education agenda is holistic, comprehensive, ambitious and continues to address the challenges of EFA.
Education is cross-cutting and transnational.

As such, our solutions to education should be transnational, inclusive, quality-focused and take a lifelong perspective.

Additionally, we need cross-country collaboration to tackle the SDGs.

To date, I’m pleased that several countries have organized national consultations on the integration of the SDG 4 targets into national plans;

c Conducted data mapping exercises;

Reviewed, revived and formed coordination committees;

And translated key documents, including the Education 2030 Framework for Action, into local languages.

As we know, translating the SDG 4 targets into national priorities is an immense undertaking that requires the systematic integration of the targets into existing national education sector plans, financing and monitoring processes.

It will also require the localization of the entirety of SDG4-Education 2030 under the overall framework of countries’ sustainable development policies, plans and programmes.

All stakeholders – government, international development agencies, civil society, private sector and others – will need to be mobilized and engaged to contribute to its implementation.
As I’ve always emphasized, cooperation and collaboration at all levels – regional, sub-regional, national and subnational – are critical.

Coordination and partnership mechanisms must then be developed at the national and sub-national levels to support the implementation of SDG4-Education 2030.

Regional and national monitoring and reporting mechanisms are also critical alongside global monitoring.

In view of this, this meeting will aim to produce a regional implementation roadmap that will clarify key priorities, milestones and actions towards the achievement of SDG4-Education 2030 in Asia-Pacific.

This will also contribute to the development of implementation guidelines for SDG4-Education 2030.

This meeting will also serve as an opportunity to inaugurate a regional network of SDG4National Coordinators;

to share updates on the latest global and regional developments concerning SDG4-Education 2030;

to share experiences and identify challenges and opportunities at the country level;

and to discuss and agree on the region’s implementation strategy to achieve SDG4-Education 2030.
I would like to emphasize the importance of a regional network of National SDG4 Coordinators and their critical role over the next 14 years.

We will look to the National SDG4 Coordinators to work with national counterparts, line ministries and partners in their respective countries, as well as regional level counterparts, to implement and monitor SDG4-Education 2030.

The outputs of this meeting will also feed into the regional implementation guidelines that will be produced to support your work.

This regional roadmap is not merely a set of declared good intentions to be filed away and forgotten.

It will be the Asia-Pacific’s SDG4-Education 2030 implementation roadmap, which we will refer to repeatedly as it guides us over the next 14 years – until we reach our 2030 deadline.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our region, Asia-Pacific, is incredibly rich and diverse – not only in terms of cultural heritage, language, geography and resources, but this region also comprises countries with vastly different priorities and challenges.

We also, of course, have much in common, and most importantly, we share the same vision for education and are committed to achieve the same goal – SDG4.
This is an ambitious and potentially transformative goal, but we need to be realistic and ensure that our strategy to achieve it is actionable.

We also need to realize that such an ambitious vision cannot be achieved in isolation.

We must work together to achieve our common goal.

In closing, let me reiterate the sentiments of our Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova, who paid tribute to the legacy of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand.

As His Majesty once said, “Learning is a never-ending process. Those who wish to advance in their work must constantly seek more knowledge.”

To empower all learners with the ability to advance their work and to seek more knowledge, it is our duty to provide all learners with equal and equitable access to inclusive, quality and lifelong education.

Let us work together to make this a reality for all in our region.

Once again, welcome to the 2nd Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on Education 2030.

I look forward to our fruitful discussions and debates, and to working with you over the next two-and-a-half days as we prepare for the regional implementation of SDG4-Education 2030.

Thank you.