11th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators

18-20 November 2010, 29/Floor Plaza Athenee Hotel, Wireless Road, Bangkok

Gwang-Jo Kim, Director, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

CLOSING STATEMENT

~ Excellency, the Secretary of State of Cambodia,
   Mr. Nath Bunroen,

~ Esteemed Vice Minister of Education of Kyrgyzstan,
   Mr. Boris Kubaev,

~ Distinguished representatives from ministries of education of countries in the Asia-Pacific region

~ Representatives from NGOs, civil society organizations and members of the Regional Thematic Working Group on EFA,

~ Friends and colleagues from UNICEF and UNESCO, ladies and gentlemen,

Good Afternoon!

I am happy to be back here in time to witness the discussion and final endorsement by the group of the statement for the High Level Group on EFA Meeting in March next year.
Before I proceed, I am sorry that I could not be here for the whole meeting as I have to attend to other matters in the office. However, I am happy to note the outcomes of the meeting – you have not only identified progress so far in relation to the EFA goals but also discussed good practices in countries, and most importantly also touched on the theme of acceleration.

I would like to emphasize on this last point. With 5 years to 2015, we really need to focus on the remaining tasks ahead. We need to dash and sprint to the finish line, which is 2015, and business as usual will not get us there.

I hope that at this meeting, you all learned from each other’s experiences, in particular on how to address the barriers to achieving the EFA goals, including reaching the unreached and marginalized. Addressing this issue is key to speeding up progress in achieving EFA with equity.

We all recognize EFA as a universal mandate and a global commitment made by Governments, UN agencies, donors, NGOs and civil society groups. I also want to underscore the importance of having a holistic approach to EFA and to give equal emphasis to all the goals of early childhood care and education, universal primary education, life skills and lifelong learning, literacy, gender equality in education, and quality education. I know you have done so at this meeting and I hope this will continue when you go back to your countries.
You probably have heard several times in this meeting, that the next High Level Group on EFA Meeting will be held in Thailand in March 2011. The statement that you have just endorsed here will be presented at this meeting to attract due attention from high-level participants. Through this, we hope to get more high-level political commitment and even global focus on specific issues that this region faces.

But much of the success of EFA rests on you, the officials from the Ministries of Education who are key to the effective planning, implementation and financing of targeted policies and programmes that will accelerate progress to 2015.

Upon returning to your countries, I hope you will remember the things you have learned here and pursue with vigor any required follow-up, with a particular focus on the unreached and marginalized groups in education.

UNESCO and the Thematic Working Group on EFA partners are fully behind you, and will extend support and assistance to your efforts to accelerate progress in achieving EFA.

Before closing, I also wish to share with you a very positive development that has come out directly as a result of this meeting. Recognizing the role that education has played in its development, South Korea would like to contribute to the
process of EFA in the region and has kindly offered to host the next Regional Meeting of National EFA coordinators. This has been conveyed to us through the South Korea National Commission for UNESCO Deputy Secretary General Mr. Utak Chung. May I request a round of applause to South Korea for this generous offer.

I also wish to thank UNICEF, in particular the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Office for the support extended to this meeting. I thank our donors, in particular the Japanese-Funds-in-Trust for UNESCO and the Chinese Government for the funding support to this meeting.

Please also join me in thanking my staff who has worked hard in organizing this meeting, in particular UIS-AIMS staff Ann, Ngamnet, Malisa, Ichitaro, Ji-Eun, Roshan, Nyi Nyi and Leotes. I also thank Mr. Hakeem and Simon and other colleagues from UNESCO Bangkok’s APPEAL and EPR Units – Ichiro, Johan, Idit, Huong and Miki.

Lastly, I wish you all safe travels as you return back to your countries. Thank you and good afternoon!