Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the regional launch of the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report. I wish to thank all you who have taken the time to come to this event, in particular, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office Director Anupama Rao Singh; Khun Sivika Mektavatchaikul, Deputy Permanent Secretary, of the Ministry of Education, Thailand and the Secretary General of the Thailand National Commission for UNESCO; Assistant Professor M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh, Vice President of Chulalongkorn University; representatives from various Embassies, UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral organizations, members of the Thematic Working Group on EFA and colleagues from UNESCO.

I also wish to thank our panelists who have flown all the way to Bangkok for this event, in particular UNESCO Beijing Director, Abhimanyu Singh; World Bank lead economist, Harry Patrinos; and Albert Motivans, head of the Education Indicators and Data Analysis Section of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in Montreal.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Chulalongkorn University for hosting the venue of the launch. This is the first time that UNESCO is holding the launch of the Global Monitoring Report in a university and hopefully a start of getting the academia interested in the report.

This launch and the roundtable on education finance in the face of the global financial crisis that will take place this afternoon would also not be possible without the cooperation and support of the
Thailand Ministry of Education, in particular, the National Commission for UNESCO.

It is fitting that every year, UNESCO organizes the launch of the EFA Global Monitoring Report in Thailand. After all, there is a very strong historic link between Thailand and the global Education for All initiative.

EFA was first launched here in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990. EFA has six goals pertaining to early childhood care and education, universal primary education, life skills and lifelong learning, literacy, gender equality in education, and quality education. The commitment to provide quality education for all children, youth and adults was later renewed at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000.

I would like to emphasize that EFA is an international commitment made jointly by governments, UN agencies, INGOs, civil society groups, multilateral and bilateral partners and other development partners. Thus EFA is a shared commitment and goal and all of us have a shared responsibility to deliver quality education for all children, youth and adults by 2015.

Where does the world and countries in Asia-Pacific stand now in relation to the six EFA goals? What are the main challenges to achieving the goals? The EFA Global Monitoring Report aims to answer these questions and many others related to EFA.

I will be presenting the key findings and recommendations of the Report later this morning. My presentation will be followed by a panel discussion focusing on reaching the marginalized and minimizing the impact of the financial crisis on education. We are
fortunate to have Anupama Rao Singh of UNICEF, Albert Motivans of UIS, Abhimanyu Singh of UNESCO Beijing, and Harry Patrinos of World Bank as panelists. I’m sure this will be a very interesting and informative panel discussion.

I also wish to invite all of you to stay on for the roundtable on education finance this afternoon. The discussion will focus on the impact of the global financial crisis on education and also highlight the experience of Thailand. This is a very important topic particularly as the effects of the financial crisis are still continuing to unfold and all efforts must be done to safeguard the education sector, especially the most vulnerable groups.

But before I proceed any further, let me turn over the floor to Simon Ellis, our host for this launch, to call on the next speaker.

Thank you.