Your Excellency Ms Suthasri Wongsamarn, Acting Minister of Education of Thailand,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you here today in Thailand at this important event, which is the first of a series of regional conferences that will prepare the World Education Forum 2015, hosted by the Republic of Korea in Incheon, from 19 to 22 May 2015.

I would like to thank our generous host, the Ministry of Education of Thailand, for having made such excellent arrangements and receiving us in their beautiful country to hold the Asia and Pacific Regional Education Conference 2014.

I would also like to thank both Japan and the Republic of Korea for their generous contributions which have made this conference possible and their continued support to education and EFA in the past years in this region for which we are very grateful.

I would like to mention the very close and fruitful collaboration with UNICEF and civil society partners such as Education International and the Global Campaign for Education and their continuous support throughout the process globally, and in this region, for which we are grateful.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by stating once again the purpose of this Conference, which is three-fold: First, to review progress made in EFA in the region over the past 15 years; second, to reflect on the proposed post-2015 education agenda in the context of national and regional priorities and challenges and provide
comments and feedback, and third, to identify implementation requirements of the future education agenda.

In developing the education agenda for the future, we must identify and analyze what has been accomplished over the past 15 years and what gaps remain, including lessons learnt. We must also take into consideration emerging issues that impact on education and challenges, and identify priorities for the future. This region has a lot to share in this respect. Secondly, this Conference will discuss and review the proposed post-2015 global education goal and targets from the regional perspective in terms of education priorities and requirements.

Thirdly, the Conference must reflect on and debate implementation requirements for the future education agenda, taking into account each country’s specific context.

What is the purpose of a global education agenda?

While each country has its own education development strategy and a mid- and long-term plan, the purpose of a global education agenda is to define global, aspirational and transformative targets of universal relevance, and that propose a level of ambition with global indicators that can be measured and compared across countries and over time. The global education agenda is meant to drive development globally and nationally, and to inspire action in areas which are considered key for education. Therefore, it is crucial that all countries participate in the process of the development of this global agenda in order to ensure that it contributes to the realization of their own vision and ambitions for education. Of key importance is that the future education agenda be flexible, and that it reflects national priorities and contexts. Countries should thus link their national education strategy with the future global agenda, while setting country-specific targets and indicators. In other words, countries themselves are in the driver’s seat as concerns its development.

What have we done so far at global level? In order to facilitate this process, the UN has launched a multilayered and highly consultative process to develop a post-2015 development agenda.
As part of this process, UNESCO, in close collaboration with UNICEF, facilitated the debate on the post-2015 education agenda. In May of this year, the Global EFA Meeting 2014 was organized in Muscat, Oman, and hosted by the Sultanate of Oman. 42 Member States participated in the meeting, representing all geographic regions of the world, as well as civil society, UN and regional organizations and other key education stakeholders. The meeting adopted a Final Statement, known as the Muscat Agreement, which represents the current vision of key education stakeholders representing the education community on the post-2015 education agenda. It contains a proposed overarching goal for education and 7 targets.

At the same time, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goal, consisting of 30 Member States, and which was established by the UN General Assembly as a follow-up to Rio + 20, developed a Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals that contains 17 goals, one of which on education. The Muscat Agreement significantly impacted the discussions of the Open Working Group in New York on the education goal and targets within the broader post-2015 development agenda.

Both of these proposals represent important milestones in our work towards developing a post-2015 education agenda. However, more reflection and debate are required - and every country needs to take part in it - to further refine the proposed goal and targets in order to reach our common goal: an education agenda that is relevant to all countries, and which is aspirational and transformative, with feasible and measurable targets.

What are the next steps towards the development of the post-2015 education agenda? As I briefed the meeting yesterday, the UN Secretary-General will issue a synthesis report on post-2015 in autumn 2014 based on the OWG proposal. This will be followed by intergovernmental negotiations until September 2015 which will further debate the 17 Goals and targets of the OWG. It is essential for Member States to participate in this process. UNESCO and its partners will continue to provide advice and assistance to facilitate your participation in this process. UNESCO will also continue to facilitate the debate and consultations between Member States and other
education stakeholders and develop a Framework for Action for the implementation of the agenda at global, regional and country level.

A main challenge for the coming months is to ensure that the outcome of the WEF 2015 and the education goal and targets of the global development agenda to be adopted at the UN Summit in New York City in September 2015 are fully aligned.

As mentioned earlier, Member States are in the drivers’ seat for the development of the post-2015 education agenda. Therefore, continued strong engagement and support of all Member States throughout the process is required, and in particular communication between the ministry of education and the ministry of foreign affairs, which will discuss the future agenda at UN level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past two days, there have been rich discussions, whose outcomes will certainly contribute to the further development of the future education agenda.

I am very much looking forward to hearing your views, in particular during the ministerial roundtable on the future education agenda, based on your requirements and priorities.

Thank you.