Excellencies,

Dr. Tang Qian, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education,
Dr. Gwang-jo Kim, Director of UNESCO Bangkok,
Dr. Isiye Ndombi, Deputy Director of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my very great pleasure to welcome you all today to this Ministerial Forum on Education Beyond 2015. I am also most honoured to be able to address such a distinguished and diverse gathering of representatives from countries in the Asia-Pacific Region and international organizations.

This conference offers a unique opportunity to discuss and consider the major educational issues arising from the Education for All movement. The year 2015 will be a year to identify our educational achievements and to reflect on the lessons learned, and, of supreme importance, a year for shaping and deciding future policy imperatives and goals which will drive global education post 2015. This will take place at the World Education Forum at Incheon, in the Republic of
Korea. In anticipation of all this, this Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference in Bangkok has a two-fold purpose.

First, we are here to evaluate and reflect, from a regional perspective, on what progress has been made; on what has been achieved; on what has not been able to be achieved, and should constitute an unfinished education agenda; and on the overall lessons to be learned from pursuit of the EFA goals.

Second, I hope that this conference will generate the Asia-Pacific region’s regional recommendations for global education and development, and contribute to the formation of an international framework for action. This, in turn, will feed into the Incheon conference next year.

So, we need to work together, sharing our perspectives, experiences, and expertise to cope with emerging and anticipated future education challenges in our region. At the same time, we will look ahead to the future. We need to think about how the world has changed, and is changing, and how education must further evolve to match and meet the changing needs and aspirations of the different communities in our region.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just as we have been working together pursuing EFA goals, so, I believe, it will become even more important for individuals, national agencies and international organizations to continue to work
together in the future under the leadership, guidance and co-ordination of UNESCO.

The EFA movement was first launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. The Thai Ministry of Education, therefore, is very proud to have this opportunity to co-host this first regional education conference. Over the years, the Government of Thailand has made a major investment in education and has worked closely with UNESCO Bangkok. It recognizes that the well-being and future success of its citizens, and, of course, of people everywhere, depends on the quality of education they receive.

At present, Thailand is focusing on 6 major reform issues: reforming teachers; improving educational access; enhancing educational equity and opportunities; reforming school administration; strengthening competitiveness; and maximizing the use of ICT in education.

We place great emphasis on a student-centered approach to teaching and learning, and on equipping Thais with lifelong learning skills, analytical skills and critical thinking skills. We recognize the importance of preparing Thais to be good citizens, able to exercise self-discipline, and having high moral and ethical standards. We also encourage our citizens to preserve their Thai identity and traditional values and to live together with others in peace and harmony.

At the same time, we endorse the concept of global citizenship and recognize the importance of developing education to
meet citizens’ ever changing needs. Thai people need to be educated so as to keep pace with the fast changing world of which we are part.

We are pleased and proud to be part of this international effort to provide quality education for all. I hope and trust that we can all work together to achieve the objectives of this conference and thereby make a major and positive contribution to the World Education Forum at Incheon, in the Republic of Korea.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are most honoured to host the dinner reception and also share with you an experience of Thai culture. I hope you will enjoy our hospitality and cultural performances.

I now have a very great pleasure in declaring this conference open.

I wish you all a great evening.

Thank you.