Address by Director for Overseas Cooperation Yoshiaki Sato
at opening of Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference
6 August 2014

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to UNESCO Bangkok Director Gwang-Jo Kim and his staff and to Ministry of Education of Thailand Acting Minister of Education Suthasri Wongsamarn and the officials there for their unstinting efforts in organizing this conference.

The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, was adopted at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, and it heads into its concluding year in 2015. We acknowledge that UNESCO, as the lead agency, will play a vital role for education beyond 2015.

UNESCO has taken the lead in reviewing the achievement of EFA goals and developed the post-2015 educational agenda in collaboration with Member States, education- and development-related international organizations, NGOs, experts, and others. One of UNESCO’s most recent and outstanding contributions is facilitating the proposing of new draft agenda for education included in the Muscat Agreement, which was issued at the Global EFA Meeting in Oman in May this year, as well as the EFA Steering Committee’s Joint Proposal. We in Japan very much appreciate the leading role UNESCO has played up to now. We also have high expectations for UNESCO’s efforts to lead in making coherence of the educational goals and targets and those of the post-2015 development agenda.

As made clear in the Overarching Goal, what needs to be firmly positioned in the post-2015 educational agenda and the post-2015 development agenda is ensuring the quality of education. For this, at this conference we hope the delegates will share their experiences from various perspectives and engage in positive discussion regarding their thinking on the quality of education in the Asia-Pacific region and how to ensure it and their recognition of learning outcomes. We also expect to consider a draft of the framework for action that will lead to the improvement and ensuring of the quality of education. The recommendation of the framework for action will then be
presented as the proposal from the Asia-Pacific region to the World Education Forum to be held in Incheon in the Republic of Korea in May next year.

The role played by Education for Sustainable Development is vital for the improvement and ensuring of the quality of education. ESD is incorporated in the Muscat Agreement and the Proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals of July this year. I believe ESD is a paramount concept for setting the direction of education in the future.

This year is the final year of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which was initiated through a proposal by Japan. In November, Japan will co-organize the UNESCO World Conference on ESD with UNESCO. At this conference, the delegates will review the DESD, and discuss measures for advancing ESD after 2015. I am greatly looking forward to having the opportunity to hold discussions with you all in Japan in November on these efforts for ESD, while we also consider the direction of education in the years beyond 2015.

Last but not least, I would like to thank again UNESCO Bangkok and the Ministry of Education of Thailand as well as to pay my highest respects to Mr. Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO, for his excellent leadership. I sincerely hope that through the efforts of the governments of the Asia-Pacific nations, this conference, which is the first of the regional conferences, will produce very fruitful outcomes and serve as a model for the upcoming conferences in other regions.

This conference is being supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Promotion of Education in Asia and the Pacific Region. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is very expectant about the outcomes of the conference, and Japan wishes to contribute as much as possible to its success.