Mr Etienne Clément, Deputy Director, UNESCO Bangkok  
Closing

Distinguished guests, friends and colleagues,

I am very pleased to speak on the occasion of the closing of this important regional high-level expert meeting.

The great diversity of participants’ professional skills and academic backgrounds, such as government representatives, experts from universities and research institutions, international and regional, private sector and NGOs has allowed a combination of perspectives and the emerging of new ideas on teaching and learning for the future, especially on how to improve the quality of education in the 21st century.

On the first two days of the meeting, we were inspired by innovative pedagogical approaches through 11 country case studies. I believe these sessions have given useful opportunities to share lessons learned and best practices which could be of help to several countries in the region and to come up with recommendations aiming at a shift in country-level approaches to teaching and learning. I noted in particular that participants agreed that in order to develop a pedagogy which focuses on competences and skills for the future, governments, schools, teachers, parents and education organizations should work together and commit resources to transform the current pedagogical practices.

On the third day of the meeting, i.e., today, I am glad that useful ideas have been shared as regional contribution to the discussion on education for the future. The discussion confirmed that quality education and learning is an important priority area for policies in education for the post-2015 development agenda, as already identified at previous such regional high-level expert meetings and previous regional thematic consultation on education. Although the Education for All (EFA) Goal 6 aims at improving all aspects of the quality of education and achieving measurable learning outcomes, yet we must admit that the traditional focus on schooling has tended to neglect the importance of effective and relevant learning. It is therefore high time that the international community took further action to push for more emphasis on quality of education.

Quality is a complex concept that must be defined in relation to the context in which it is applied. I was told that today’s discussions were fruitful in identifying various factors which determine the quality of an educational process, such as curriculum, availability of qualified teachers, learning materials, relevance of education and learning conditions in school, at home and in the society.

As mentioned briefly yesterday at the dinner, the outcomes of this meeting will inform global deliberations on education, such as the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development to be held in Nagoya, Japan in November 2014, and the global conference on education to be held in the Republic of Korea in May 2015.
So I wish to thank each participant for your contributions on these topics, which will be duly reflected in the report which we are preparing for these global Conferences.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere gratitude to the Government of Japan through the Japan Funds-in-Trust and to the Korean National Commission for UNESCO for supporting this meeting.

I would also like to thank all the Institutions represented here and all my colleagues for working so hard in organizing such an important and timely meeting. May I take this opportunity to wish all of you a safe trip back home.

Thank you.