Distinguished participants,
Mr. Gwang-Jo Kim and his staff in UNESCO Bangkok office,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

It is my great honor to have this opportunity to make an opening remark on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan.

Education has been an engine of rapid economic growth in many countries, especially in Asia and the Pacific. It is one of the life domains that people in this region and around the world cherish the most, for their well-being and a better future life. This is evidenced by the rankings of priorities that people expressed in the Global Survey organized by the United Nations “My World” beyond 2015 (http://www.myworld2015.org/). Can you make a guess what item was chosen as the top priority in the survey?.....Yes, people placed top priority on “A good education”, followed by “Better job opportunities” and “Better healthcare”. It is very clear that people do want “a good education” in the 21st century, where we need to strive and live in ever rapidly changing world.
This global expectation, of people throughout the world, regardless of their age, their gender and the development status of the countries, invites us to reflect about a few questions. Why does “a good education” still remain a top concern for the people, despite a big investment that countries have put in education? Perhaps, they want more, not simply going to school, but also receiving an education of good quality. Then what is then “a good education”?

These questions, I believe, illuminate the importance and the timeliness of this meeting. MEXT is privileged to be a partner and give financial support to this event.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Huge progress has been made in terms of access to education, yet the quality of education and learning has not met the expectations of learners, in schools and beyond. As you know, UNSG’s High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda recommends in its report to “Provide quality education and lifelong learning” as one of the illustrative objectives.

The world has changed, and is going to change further. But we witness that our education systems and institutions did not cope with these changes to deliver the learning experiences and outcomes they want. The world society wants school graduates, as well as grown-ups, to be innovative, creative, adaptive and responsible citizens. Education is expected to train active change agents for a more just, inclusive, peaceful and eventually, sustainable society. We have to care more about quality of education.
Japan has been actively contributing to UNESCO’s activities on EFA and ESD in Asia-Pacific region by offering Funds-in-Trust. The activities include technical supports and workshops to improve literacy rates, meeting of Community Learning Centers (CLC) to strengthen its function of informal education, capacity-building workshops for teachers. I am grateful for UNESCO Bangkok’s effort in capitalizing the Fund-in-Trust effectively and efficiently.

However, in spite of UNESCO’s and each countries’ efforts, progress is insufficient to reach the goal of universally primary education in the Asia Pacific region, although the region enjoys high enrollment. We must know why. In this connection, I would like to inform you that Japan has proposed an agenda item of the latest UNESCO Executive Board. The item is on the post-2015 Perspective of EFA, and the Board has unanimously approved the decision requesting the Director General to report the assessment of EFA, and to clearly indicate the challenges envisaged in the Dakar Framework and the post 2015 perspective of EFA to the General Conference next month.
Let me turn to the ESD.

We are in the ninth year of the UNDESD. ESD illuminates sustainability and challenges to it in wider perspective. The challenges include climate change, threat to biodiversity and risk of natural disaster, to name a few. It is my strong conviction that ESD equip learners with competencies such as problem definition, critical thinking, problem solving, action and collaboration. It enables citizen to tackle those challenges from local and global points of view, to come up with solutions leading to new values and actions to make our society more sustainable.

Today, active discussions have been taking place at the global, regional and national levels to formulate post-2015 development agenda. Sustainable development is the most dominant issue there. From this perspective, ESD is an indispensable element for realizing a truly sustainable development in Asia-Pacific countries, as well as in other parts of the world. ESD would be one of the essential vehicles to materialize quality education in post-2015 period.
Now, momentum is gathering for ESD after 2014.

In the “Future We Want,” the outcome document of “Rio+20,” it is resolved “to promote ESD and to integrate sustainable development more actively into education beyond the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development”.

As the lead agency of the Decade, UNESCO has been developing a “Global Action Programme on ESD” as a follow-up framework to the Decade. This Programme aims to generate and scale-up action in order to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development. It was endorsed in its last Executive Board, and transmitted to its 37th General Conference.

In view of these developments, it is strongly expected that UNESCO play an active role in properly position ESD in the post-2015 development agenda process in NY and elsewhere.
As the initial proponent of ESD, Japan will host the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in Aichi-Nagoya and Okayama in November next year. This Conference will showcase the initiatives, actors, networks and ideas that are inspired by the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and review their impact, on the basis of lessons and evidence provided by stakeholders and collected by UNESCO. It will also address how ESD can help sustainable development policy and action move forward to meet diverse global, regional, and local needs.

As the host of the conference, Japan is looking forward to active inputs and participation from as many countries and stakeholders in this region as possible. It would be appreciated that outcome of the Conference be taken into account in the Global Education Conference in the Republic of Korea in May 2015.

Japan itself has been vigorously promoting ESD by integrating it into the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education and into the Courses of Study, and entrusting more than 600 ASPnet schools the role as the core institutes of implementation of ESD. Furthermore, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO has been working on how to further develop ESD in both formal and non-formal education, and develop network among ASPnet schools in this region.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this conference, you will discuss the question “What quality learning for the future?” Especially, you will cover the issue of transforming teaching and learning towards policy reform in the Asia-Pacific region. You will also discuss the goals and targets of educational development and cooperation in the post-2015 era.

I trust, this gathering of experts, would draw “innovative”, “creative” and “visionary” answers to these questions, to hint “A Good Education”

I believe the outcomes of your deliberations will not only benefit countries of this region, but also provide meaningful contribution to the discussion of the two global events on education that I have mentioned. Namely, the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Japan in November 2014, and the Global Conference on Education in the Republic of Korea in May 2015.

Thank you for your attention.