Opening Remarks by Dr Utak Chung
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Toward 2015 EFA and Beyond
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Mr. Gwangjo Kim, Director of UNESCO Bangkok;
Distinguished guests, friends and colleagues;
Ladies and gentlemen;

It is my great honour to address you today to open this very timely and important meeting on the post-2015 education agenda. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO is pleased to cooperate closely with UNESCO Bangkok in organizing this meeting, which gathers together distinguished experts and officials in the field of education and development from the region and beyond.

KNCU’s partnership with UNESCO BKK & efforts for EFA:

UNESCO Bangkok, as the regional bureau of education, has been decisive in shaping the educational efforts in the region and influencing the global agenda. It is my National Commission’s great pleasure to have closely partnered with UNESCO Bangkok in many areas including education. Most recently, we have partnered in organizing the 12th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators last year in Seoul, which provided the foundation for today’s meeting. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO is very happy to extend our partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and other regional and international
organizations in promoting EFA.

In addition to our support for EFA advocacy and policy-formation, my National Commission also carries out programmes at the field level to directly increase the access and benefits of education for all. In Sub-Saharan Africa, we have launched a community-based non-formal literacy education programme called BRIDGE, sending youth volunteers to six African countries to establish Community Learning Centres (CLC) in rural areas. Moreover, this year, we are initiating a new EFA and literacy education promotion programme in the Asia-Pacific region called the Sejong Project with funding from our Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. We hope these small but meaningful efforts can help accelerate the progress to achieving the EFA goals by 2015, and we hope to closely work together with partnering organizations, experts and agencies towards this end.

**Progresses and Limitations of the EFA agenda:**

The six EFA goals formulated in Dakar have provided the overarching framework for educational development at the global level during the past decade and have been essential for member-states to set priorities in their development policies. With the adoption of the goals in 2000, the world has seen great achievements in expanding the access to quality education for all. However, there remain great disparities within and amongst countries and regions. Today, nearly 70 million children are denied a place at school and the number of out-of-school children continues to rise further rather than fall.

Furthermore, the expansion of international aid to education that increased in the beginning of the 21st century seems to have
plateaued in 2007. With the global financial crisis many donor countries have recently decided to cut their level of development aid, while developing countries have become hesitant to increase their commitment to educational development. These are worrisome trends for EFA, which should actually be accelerating its progress rather than reserving its trend.

Reflections of EFA and the Way Forward:

With some three years remaining to the EFA deadline, it is now apparent that the EFA goals are unlikely to be met by 2015. It is time to critically reflect on the successes and failures of the EFA agenda. There have been undeniable successes in many parts of the world including the Asia-Pacific where developing countries that started off at a very low level of education access have managed to achieve astonishing growth. However, these successes have not been effectively conveyed and communicated within the EFA framework. Also the EFA goals and mandate may have been too ambitious for some, while too narrowly focused for other countries and organizations. The international community should take note of these failures and criticisms in formulating the next educational agenda and development goals.

In addition, the world has seen major developments in education and technology since the 2000 Dakar conference. We now live in an era of hyper-globalization, urbanization, worldwide connectivity and mobile computation. Developments in ICT are changing our education landscape, and education must now adjust to new requirements and demands from our changed industrial, demographical and labour environments. These economic, social and technical changes must be incorporated in devising the next agenda for EFA beyond 2015.
Recognition of the Meeting Participates and Programme:

I am very inspired by the list of distinguished participants that are gathered here today to discuss this important subject. The Asia-Pacific region was the first to adopt Universal Primary Education as a major goal in the UNESCO meeting in Karachi in 1960. The region also led the EFA movement in 1990 with the Jomtein meeting held here in Thailand. It is now time for the region to once again provide the initiative towards discussing the new education agenda, and I firmly believe that this meeting can provide the stimulus with inspiring and thoughtful inputs drawing on the many expertise, creativity and experience convened here in this room.

The Korean National Commission for UNESCO is proud to contribute to this process and for having worked closely with Director Kim Gwangjo and his staff in organizing this gathering. I believe this will be the first of many exchanges and gathering on this subject. We ask for your continued support towards these efforts, and I promise you that Korea and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO will continue to be a strong partner in this process for EFA 2015 and beyond.

Thank you once again and I wish you a very productive and thought-provoking meeting.