‘What Education for the Future? 
Beyond 2015 – Rethinking Learning in a Changing World’

Bangkok, 26 - 28 November 2012

Mr Gwang-Jo Kim
Director, UNESCO Bangkok

Excellences, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today to this important meeting on the future of education and learning. This event, “Beyond 2015 - Rethinking Learning in a Changing World Education”, builds on our first meeting “Towards 2015 and Beyond: Shaping a New Vision for Education” held during May 2012 here in Bangkok and I’m delighted to see some familiar faces from this previous meeting with us here again today.

For those who are new to this forum, welcome! We are very pleased to have you involved in our regional discussions around developing a new vision for education, an important part of our work here at UNESCO Bangkok.

At this previous meeting, high-level experts reviewed progress made to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals, reflected on economic, demographic and socio-cultural changes and their implications for education and put forward their ideas on what the future of education in the Asia-Pacific should look like.

And their findings? The experts of the May meeting collectively highlighted the fact that learning should be of core focus in shaping future education goals and strategies. As such, this follow up meeting, “Beyond 2015 – Rethinking Learning in a Changing World” provides us with an opportunity to extend our reflections on learning.

This is a most important and most timely discussion. For one, we have the great opportunity to collectively shape the future of education and learning in the Asia-Pacific region through our discussions and deliberations over the next three days. Our reflections are also part of a
much broader international debate on the global development agenda post 2015, a debate that will ultimately shape the lives of so many, for so many years to come.

On this note, let me express my sincere gratitude to the Japanese Government through the Japan Funds in Trust for supporting this event. Without your support, this event would not have been possible.

Allow me to also welcome our participants, our distinguished guests, whose experience, wisdom and commitment will contribute to our deliberations: eminent experts, researchers and practitioners representing education research think tanks, universities from both within and outside the Asia-Pacific region, government representatives, sister UN agencies, international and regional institutions and also UNESCO National Commissions.

Before closing, I would like to also acknowledge the great diversity of professional skills and academic backgrounds of our participants here today. When you combine different skills, different ways of thinking, different perspectives, you might expect some degree of disagreement and debate. But I believe the combination of multiple perspectives also creates the perfect recipe for creativity and the generation of new ideas on the future of learning here in the Asia-Pacific.

With the combined expertise of educationalists, neuroscientists, economists, and information communication specialists, I therefore believe it is our duty over the next three days to really go beyond the rhetoric and identify what sort of learning will provide for productive, happy and meaningful lives for all in the 21st Century.

I look forward to the ideas yet to stem forward, informing current discussion on the future of education here in the Asia-Pacific and I thank you all for your participation in this most important event, “Beyond 2015 – Rethinking Learning in a Changing World.”

Thank you.