

**OPEN STATEMENT BY H.E. TRUONG TAN SANG,
PRESIDENT OF VIETNAM
at the 47th SEAMEO Council Conference, Hanoi, on 20 March 2013**

*Your Excellency Education Ministers, Head of SEAMEO Delegation,
Associate Members;*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to attend and deliver the opening remark at the 47th Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Council (SEAMEC 47) which Vietnam is honored to host for the second time. Your presence at this Conference expresses your interests to the development of education and training cooperation among countries in the region. On behalf of the Party, the State, the Vietnamese Government and the Vietnamese people, I would like to express my warmest welcome to the Ministers, heads of delegation, participants and distinguished guests attending the SEAMEC 47 held in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Southeast Asian's geographical-political location plays an important role in the Asia and world's development. The promotion of the collaboration among the countries in the region with "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" always gets the special attention of state members' leaders. Education and training is recognized as one of the focus in cooperation strategy of Southeast Asian countries.

We are glad to notice that since its establishment in 1965, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), with the mission clearly stated in SEAMEO Charter to "promote cooperation among the Southeast Asian nations through education, science and culture", has been developed and attained great achievement and become the largest organization in Southeast Asia with 11 state members, 8 associate members, 3 affiliate members and 20 SEAMEO regional centres. After 47 years of operation, SEAMEO has proved its importance to contribute to the human resources development in countries, and has been recognized as the driving force behind the cooperation among state members, between SEAMEO and other organizations and countries in the world. SEAMEO always directs its activities toward its vision which is "*being the leading organization for enhancing regional understanding and cooperation in education, science and culture for a better quality of life in Southeast Asia*". The SEAMEO vision draws the attention of country

members, associate members and affiliate members towards the organization. Today, in this Conference, it is a great pleasure for us to witness the Admission Ceremony of United Kingdom as the 8th Associate Member to SEAMEO. I would like to congratulate United Kingdom on the occasion and I am confident that your participation will effectively and practically contribute to the development of SEAMEO in the following time.

I am also excited as being informed that for the past 20 years, since the day Vietnam participated and became a state member of SEAMEO in 1992, it has strictly and responsibly fulfilled its commitments, and has been an active member contributing to the development of education, science and culture of the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the context that many countries head to knowledge-intensive learning economy, education and training play important roles in the development of each country. Fifty-four years ago, President Ho Chi Minh stated that: “*For the sake of ten years, plant trees; for the sake of hundreds years, educate people*”. Accordingly, in Vietnam, education and training, has become a high priority of the Party, the State and people. Along with science and technology, education and training is a nation’s top policy with an aim to “improve people's general knowledge, train quality human resources and nurturing and fostering talent”. In the past years, Vietnam’s Government has mobilized various resources and suggested many mechanisms and policies to develop education and training. Vietnam is considered a country which has attained outstanding achievements in education and training compared to other countries with the same level of per capita income. The achievements include the completion of the national education system, wider educational scale especially in higher education and vocational education, better education quality, and improved social justice and gender equality in education. In 2000, Vietnam completed the eradication of illiteracy and universal elementary education. Until December 2010, 63/63 provinces and cities in Vietnam reach the secondary education standards.

In the coming time, Vietnam aims at renovating the educational system fundamentally and comprehensively, and by 2020, it will have an advance education system that is able to meet the need of industrialization, modernization in the context of deeply international integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Conference is held at a very critical time. All country members are making effort towards One ASEAN Community by 2015.

I warmly welcome and appreciate that the 47th SEAMEC has selected “Lifelong Learning: Policy and Vision” as the theme for Policy Forum. This is a practical and important theme, expressing the commitment of each country in education and training development and human resources enhancement. I hope that in this Conference, education ministers and experts will discuss and share new initiatives as well as find ways to promote the collaboration among countries in the fields of lifelong learning and building a learning society. These will contribute to the development of lifelong learning strategy of each country and the promotion of education cooperation among country members; actively contribute to improving people’s general knowledge, developing and improving human resource of each nation.

As you may know, the SEAMEO 10-year Strategic Plan (2011-2020) was approved in the 46th SEAMEO Council Conference with an aim to enhance SEAMEO’s position to the higher level. In this SEAMEC 47 in Vietnam, participants will continue to discuss and approve decisions and solutions to implement this crucial Plan.

As the President of the SEAMEO Council, I myself will make effort to fulfill responsibilities and commitments to promote education cooperation in the region for the development and prosperity of each nation, peace, stability, collaboration and development for Southeast Asia region and the world.

On this auspicious occasion, on behalf of the Party, the State, the Vietnamese Government, and the Vietnamese people, I would like to express my sincere thanks and hope that SEAMEO country members and international community will continue to support and cooperative with our country so that Vietnam can fulfill its tasks of SEAMEO Council Chairmanship, and successfully attain its education and training development goals.

I would like to declare the 47th SEAMEO Council Conference officially launched. I wish the Conference a great success!

I wish you all good health and happiness.

Thank you very much.