

OPENING SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY
PEHIN ORANG KAYA SERI KERNA DATO SERI SETIA
HAJI AWANG ABU BAKAR BIN HAJI APONG
46th PRESIDENT OF
SOUTHEAST ASIA MINISTER OF EDUCATION COUNCIL
CUM MINISTER OF EDUCATION, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

OPENING CEREMONY
47th SEAMEO COUNCIL CONFERENCE

Grand Ballroom, Daewoo Hotel,
Hanoi, Vietnam

Wednesday, 8 Jamadilawal 1434/20 March 2013

9.00am

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Alamin Wassalatu Wassalamu 'ala
Asyrafil Anbia-i Wal-Mursalin Sayyidina Wa-Maulana
Muhammadin Wa-'ala Alihi Wa-sahbihi Ajma'een.*

- Your Excellency Truong Tan Sang
President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- Your Excellency Professor Dr Pham Vu Luan
Minister of Education and Training, Vietnam
- Distinguished Members of the SEAMEO Council
- Dr Witaya Jeradechakul
Director of SEAMEO Secretariat
- SEAMEO Regional Centre Directors
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

ملاسا مكيداً تمحرو الله and a very good morning

Introduction

1. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Truong Tan Sang, President of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, for his presence with us today. Your presence is an truly an honour and indeed meaningful to SEAMEO and the ASEAN spirit. Your Excellency's gracious presence to preside over our official opening today is a testament to the Vietnam government's commitment in placing education as the utmost priority – an emphasis we all share and believe in.
2. I would like to join the Ministry of Education & Training Vietnam in congratulating the United Kingdom as our Associate Member.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies & gentlemen

3. The past two years holding the chairmanship to SEAMEO was indeed a remarkable experience – much contributed to the visits and deliberations that I have had with respective

SEAMEO Council members and, I am particularly glad that I have been able to have a closer look at our regional centres and had fruitful exchanges with regional centre directors and their staff.

4. My regret and apology, however, for not being able to have a first hand look at the potentials that Timor Leste holds, due to inevitable circumstances.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

5. We are living in exciting times. Globalisation that was thrust upon us more than a decade ago through advances of technology continues to prod into our lives and we are left with little choice but to embrace technology that brings this about to allow us to swim in the ocean of changes. In tandem with this, is an ever changing landscape in the education world. With 20 SEAMEO Centres, we are continuously challenged to stay relevant and keep abreast with these changing times.

Need for financial sustainability

6. With the global economic outlook and challenges on the need for financial sustainability of our SEAMEO Centres, there is even greater need for us to exercise prudence. Current economic outlook presses us to review our Centres' source(s) of income and how best we can manage the contribution of member countries taking into account the expansion of centres operations.
7. Our focus should also be placed on how centres can generate income and be financially independent. Joint efforts and collaborations with strategic partners to gain fund resources are needed to generate quality training and research that is both competitive and sustainable.

Need for auditing of centre functions

8. However, our consideration should also extend beyond financial prudence. There is also a need to audit centres' functions and programmes, reviewing their enabling instruments and binding agreements to make them more lean – to look at how we can truly leverage on our centres' niche and further enhance their efficiency.

Significance after 47 years of SEAMEO

9. Since SEAMEO's inception in 1965, many challenges have been encountered and overcome. After 47 years, I believe SEAMEO's steadfastness has proven its worth as a stable organisation.
10. On the international front, SEAMEO Regional Centres need to strive and set themselves in world class training, research and consultation to fulfil the Golden SEAMEO vision targeted in 2020.

11. Many of our regional centres have, over the years, achieved reputable standing. We must capitalise on this and further develop our network beyond the Southeast Asian region so as to ensure our sustainability. We must continue to aspire for all our centres to achieve international benchmark and recognition. I strongly believe the expertise that we have in our 20 centres can greatly contribute to this aspiration.

12. Member countries that have yet to establish their own SEAMEO Centres will also need to assess the feasibility of having one. There is a need for us to provide necessary support to help in the feasibility studies in order to consider the best options. Cambodia, Laos and Timor Leste all have unique potentials that we can all benefit from.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Golden SEAMEO 2020

13. Through our 10-year strategic plan set in 2011, SEAMEO has embarked on achieving the Golden SEAMEO vision by 2020.

I cannot be presumptuous that efforts in one member country can be transferred to another. However, I trust we can all agree that commitment should be set towards realising this aspiration. I call upon your dedication and concerted effort for a SEAMEO status characterised by the features that we had aimed for (programme responsiveness, financial stability, social mobility, thriving application of modern technologies, and an increase in the organisation's membership).

SEAMEO College

14. As we convene in the 47th SEAMEO Council Conference, I am also pleased to see the realisation of our SEAMEO College that will be launched later today.

15. Conceptualised during the 46th SEAMEO Council Conference in Brunei Darussalam, I look forward to the effective functioning of this College to provide a wider avenue of specialised sharing and learning for education leaders and high officials. I believe, this mechanism will be able to provide a platform for regular, methodical dialogues that will enthuse and generate innovative ideas and initiatives to manage challenges and prospects on education, allow us to benefit from on-going trends, and learn from the experience and best practices of one another thus promoting the region's social development.

16. This high-level platform for meeting is, therefore, a valuable mechanism to better meet our educational goals and undoubtedly bring education leaders in SEAMEO Member Countries closer in camaraderie.

Conclusion

17. This year as the SEAMEO chairmanship changes over to the next minister/presidency, may I say what an exciting tenure it has been. The experience has strengthened my belief that whatever changes we want to introduce and implement, political commitment and concrete social support are crucial. I hope that continuous commitment and support will become stronger in the coming years. I thank you all for the support that I have been given during my tenure and hope that the rich conversations will continue and I wish you all the best in our endeavor to do what is best for our future generations.

Thank you very much.

ملاساو مكيداء محرو الله يتاكربو