Closing Remarks From ARNEC

Honourable Ministers, Vice ministers, Heads of our Partner organizations, and Friends.

It is indeed an honor for me to thank each one of you on behalf of ARNEC for your very valuable participation in this Forum. We have about 25 ministers and Vice ministers participating in this forum, which is really commendable. I believe this conference has been very successful in meeting its objectives and the credit for this success goes undoubtedly to the active participation of not all of you and all country teams who actively participated and shared their experiences.

It is believed that ‘the early years of a child’s life last a lifetime’. Our eminent key note speakers have consistently communicated to us in this Conference the critical importance of the first few years of life when the foundation is laid for lifelong learning and development. *If the Foundation is weak how can the house stand and survive?* I hope all of us will take this strong message back with us from this Conference and the honorable ministers will be now inspired from this Conference to initiate significant policy level actions in their respective countries to ensure the right of every child to wholesome early childhood care and education. I am confident when we will again in two years’ time, they will share with us their outstanding achievements!

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce all of you to ARNEC, which stands for Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood. ARNEC has a five fold mission which is

(a) to serve as a professional regional network,

(b) provide support for capacity building,

(c) facilitate collaborative learning through active and meaningful interaction and networking,

(d) to serve as a resource for tools’ sharing, experience sharing, sharing of research findings, collaborative research, documentation of good practices etc.

(e) provide updated information on events and major activities in the area of ECD.

I would strongly urge all countries to become members of this network and use it actively both to share your experiences and initiatives and to learn from other countries in the region. The ARNEC web site is www.arnec.net and we are in the process of developing an ECD learning portal which will include children voices, resources, hot topic policy statements and a discussion board.

In conclusion I would like to invite you to the next ARNEC conference on “*ECD on the global agenda, equal opportunities for lifelong learning, health and success for all children*” from 18-20 November in Singapore. We look forward to seeing you there and I wish you all a safe and comfortable journey back home. Thank you.