CLOSING REMARKS

By Mr Gwang-Jo Kim
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Dr Young Lee, President of the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education;
Honorable Ministers and Vice-Ministers;
Distinguished delegates;
Dear co-organizers, colleagues;
Ladies and gentlemen;

It is my great pleasure to be here with you to conclude the Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education. This has been an extremely enriching and thought-provoking event. In the past two days and half, I have listened to you – both national authorities and experts. And I am truly encouraged to see that there is such a strong consensus across the board on the importance of early childhood as foundation of lifelong learning and human development. We are all united here to promote and support the right of every single child to quality early childhood care and education from birth.

I have also noted that despite the tremendous diversity among the countries in this region, we are often facing similar challenges from Central Asia to the Pacific islands, and we learn enormously from the exchange of good practice, innovations and lessons learnt. In this sense, I believe that we have achieved the primary objective of the Forum, that is, to provide a platform for high-level policy-makers of Asia-Pacific countries to share knowledge and discuss strategies for capacity
development, policy formulation, good practice, partnerships and research.

Ladies and gentlemen;

UNESCO is committed to supporting countries in building inclusive, sustainable and high-quality ECCE systems. UNESCO has identified three pillars to anchor our support from 2014 to 2021. These pillars reflect the global and regional needs in ECCE, as identified over the last decade since the World Education Forum in Dakar, and they will build upon UNESCO’s unique mandate as United Nations specialized agency in education as well as our strategic advantages:

Firstly, **advocacy, networking and partnership**: we support Member States in advocating for increased investments in early childhood by providing evidence on the importance of ECCE, highlighting good practices in policy and program development, providing platforms for dialogue and mutual learning, and strengthening partnerships in collaboration with our key partners and networks.

Secondly, **Research and knowledge dissemination and management**: UNESCO will identify and synthesize research and innovative practices in core areas of ECCE, such as programme quality, transition from ECCE to primary education, early learning outcomes, and teacher quality in ECCE, by ensuring wide dissemination of recent advances in ECCE knowledge and practice. In particular, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, in partnership with the Southeast Asian Ministers for Education Organization and with support of Japanese Funds-in-Trust, will embark a new project aiming to contribute to the qualitative improvement of pre-primary education by
professionalizing and strengthening the capacity of pre-primary teachers in Southeast Asia.

And thirdly, **capacity development**: UNESCO supports Member States in building and sustaining effective ECCE systems with a specific emphasis on developing capacity in policy formulation/reviews, planning, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Delegates and colleagues,

The momentum being built up by the Education for All Progress Assessment towards 2015 needs to be used as an opportunity to increase the visibility of ECCE by taking stock of the countries’ progress toward EFA Goal 1: “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” and by engaging the key stakeholders, including non-education sectors, in that assessment process. As such, the outcome of the EFA Goal 1 assessment will be used to inform the future policy directions.

Quality ECCE for all children is indeed a very challenging goal but it is a worthwhile and realistic goal. It is also imperative as a *right* of every child and as one of the best investments that a country can make for its development. Having listened to you in this Forum, I believe that we should continue the sharing, exchanging and co-operating among the countries in the region, and UNESCO will also collaborate with other partners in order to continue providing a platform such as this forum.
In this sense, it is my great pleasure to share with you the good news that the Deputy Minister of Education of Malaysia, Her Excellency Ms Mary Yap Kain Ching, has just brought to us. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, His Excellency Mr Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has offered to host the next ministerial-level ECCE policy forum in Malaysia. So let us maintain our commitment to ECCE and spirit of cross-country exchange and cooperation.

Thank you, Malaysia!

Before closing, please allow me to express my most sincere gratitude to such partners, with whom UNESCO has had the honour to co-organize this successful policy forum. First of all, the government of the Republic of Korea, including the host agency KICCE and KDI: we are grateful to your cordial hospitality, generous contributions and substantive engagement during this Forum. Our sister UN agency, UNICEF –both Regional and Country Offices–, and our trusted partner ARNEC: I am once again convinced about the value of our partnership and collaboration in supporting our Member States to achieve quality ECCE and lifelong learning.

I would also like to thank KICCE’s staff and the colleagues of UNESCO and UNICEF, who worked tirelessly to make this event a success. I also thank the interpreters who enabled the Central Asian countries to take part in this important policy forum and other participants to benefit from Central Asian experiences.

We are concluding this forum, but this is merely a beginning. Let us maintain the momentum, the sense of urgency, and the spirit of our renewed commitment to the well-being, development and learning of our young children.

Thank you very much, спасибо [spasiva], andпасивна