

Opening Address
 at the 10th SEAMOLEC Governing Board Meeting
 11 September 2007
 Samsorn Room, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University
 Nonthaburi, Thailand

Dr. Edilberto de Jesus, Director, SEAMEO Secretariat,
 Dr. Paulina Pannen, Director, SEAMEO SEAMOLEC,
 Distinguished SEAMOLEC Governing Board Members,
 Honoured Guests,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,



It gives me great pleasure to be here among friends at the 10th SEAMEO SEAMOLEC Governing Board Meeting. May I begin by extending my very warmest greetings to Dr. Pannen whose leadership has guided the Centre since January 2005; to all SEAMOLEC staff; and last

but not least to all members of the Governing Board who have joined us here today.

On behalf of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University-the first Open University in Thailand and Southeast Asia, and as Founding President of this institution, I would like to say what an honour it is to have been chosen as the venue for this year's meeting. I understand that it is the first time the Board has met in Thailand and we very much hope you will be pleased with the arrangements as well as the facilities here. May I also congratulate both SEAMOLEC and the university on their joint hosting of the timely international seminar on "Pursuing Quality in Open and Distance Learning" which follows the GBM.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may be aware, His Majesty King Bhumiphol Adulyadej of Thailand has always encouraged the appropriate use of advances in science and technology in order to improve the lives and livelihoods of his people. The development of open and distance learning is one means to do this. It was His Majesty, who first recognized the true potential of new technologies, integrating satellite tele-education at his own school, Wang Klaikangwon School in Hua Hin, as an interface to enhance outreach; promote lifelong learning; facilitate the transfer of knowledge; and help compensate for teacher shortages in certain geographical locations and in specific subject areas such as maths and science.

As reported at the 42nd SEAMEO Council Conference held in Bali, Indonesia in March this year, Thailand has made significant progress in recent years in terms of infrastructure to support open and distance learning. In addition to the more traditional technologies, and here I refer to the 24 educational TV programmes covering over 700 learning topics to an estimated 5.4 million viewers and a further 3000 internet viewers per month, the Ministry of Education has been working in partnership with communities and private sector and has succeeded in installing almost 200,000 computers in schools nationwide. This helps us build our schools as a community resource that can guarantee the lifelong learning needs of members of a community.

Nationwide, internet access has now been set up in all our schools and over two thirds now have their own websites to promote both teaching and learning, as well as to improve internal management and administration. Over 20,000 teachers are enrolled on online professional development courses. Following the centres of excellence model we also have 30 Model ICT Schools, as well as 1,852 primary and secondary Lab Schools nationwide, pioneering teaching and learning transformations through ICT.

At the higher education level, the Thailand Cyber University project has not only extended learning opportunities to those living in remote areas but also provided a means for universities to share their resources, including courseware, lecturers, and library materials, at the same time creating a channel for lecturers to upgrade their teaching skills. Through the Cyber University we are therefore managing to improve both the quality and reach of educational provision.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next five years (2007-2011), the Ministry of Education will be working to its new ICT Masterplan which builds on three key areas. The first focuses on improving quality in the

teaching-learning process and increasing access to new learning resources across all sectors. One of our major concerns is the development of materials and content to enhance the kind of values and behaviour that will strengthen society. Hence our emphasis on morals and ethics, or as we often refer to it “virtue led knowledge”.

Progress is being made on our initiative to ensure the creative and safe use of internet. This project comprises a series of activities designed to identify as well as develop appropriate filters, promote materials development and encourage the building of safe networks. As this is a concern shared by countries in the region I would like once again to suggest that the ethical concerns surrounding internet producers and users could be expanded as a regional project.

Another area which has been prioritised is educational management and ICT led management information systems. Special attention has been given to monitoring and evaluation, as well as the promotion of networks among schools at the local, national and international level. The third focus is the quality of ICT graduates and Thailand’s need to develop ICT specialists to stimulate innovations in education as well as other related sectors.



Over the years we have all witnessed many new developments and breakthroughs in modern communications technologies and entertainment devices. These devices are part of the everyday lives of many young people and as such, heighten awareness of the learning opportunities beyond the typical classroom setting. It is our job to identify and develop that potential where possible to reach out to the unreachable, to make sure everyone has access to education and that the education provided can meet the lifelong learning needs of this globalizing world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now have the honour of declaring officially open the 10th SEAMEO SEAMOLEC Governing Board Meeting. The annual meeting clearly demonstrates a continued interest and commitment to the development of open and distance learning. May I wish you all every success in your deliberations.

Thank you.