Opening Speech
By Dr. Krissanapong Kirtikara
At the High Officials Meeting of SEA-TVET
Monday 24 August 2015 at 9:30am
Shangri-La Hotel, Chiang Mai

Mr. Paul Bute, the Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy
Dr. Gatot Hari Priowirjanto, the Director of SEAMEO Secretariat,
Dr. Chaiyapruek Sareerak, the Secretary-General, Office of Vocational Education Commission,
High Officials of Southeast Asian Vocational Education,
Mr. Andrew Glass, Country Director, the British Council, Thailand,
Regional representatives from SEAMEO,
High Officials of Thailand Ministry of Education,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Office of Vocational Education Commission, I would like to extend my very warm welcome to all leaders of vocational education of Southeast Asia, representatives from all participating countries, regional representatives from SEAMEO and Director of SEAMEO Secretariat, for participating in this High Officials Meeting on Southeast Asia – Technical and Vocational Education and Training, SEA-TVET.

It is a great honor for the Ministry of Education, Thailand, to host the first High Official Meeting for SEA-TVET. From this 3 day-meeting, we are looking for significant outcomes. We will be setting a strategic direction for the future of TVET cooperation and SEA competency standard developments. Moreover, we are making a commitment to work collaboratively in the region. This will, as a consequence, yield satisfactory educational results of the Southeast Asia population.

This High Officials Meeting on SEA-TVET is crucial for vocational education and training, which Thailand always has a strong commitment to support. It is one of the most important elements, playing very important roles in growing economy of the region. Technical and Vocational Education is one of the salient points that the Thai Prime Minister, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-O-Cha, had outlined in delivering the
government policy to the National Legislative Assembly in September 2014. I would say that technical and vocational education is now firmly established as a cornerstone for economic development of Thailand.

Few months ago in April, I was privileged to attend the Asia-Europe Ministerial Meeting (ASEM) in Riga, Latvia. Over fifty education ministers from Asia and Europe were attending. It is apparent that countries all over the world are facing a common challenge on matching education and work. Students everywhere are unaware of opportunities of future workplace, new skills, dynamics and uncertainty of changes. In bringing together education, work, vocation and profession, many countries have shared their experience that technical and vocational schools and colleges have to work closely with the real economic sector as well as the social sector. Schools, colleges, factories, companies and communities are inseparable if technical and vocation education is to be meaningful and relevant to work, to vocation, to professions and towards life. We are told that in many countries business and companies run orientation programs and activities for students on job opportunities, career paths, to name just a few. Work oriented education, immersion in workplace program are rules rather than exception for technical and vocational education. We are seeing that technical and vocational education are not solely restricted within the domain of technical and vocational schools and colleges. Technical and vocational schools and colleges have no monopoly on technical and vocational education. New generations of students are being exposed and primed to concepts and practices of work, of vocations from basic education level. It is recognized that by the time students come to technical and vocational schools and colleges, it is too late to prepare them for future workplace and work.

I myself see a great deal of this meeting. It is a significant initiative to have all colleagues from the TVET circle in setting a master plan, to uplift the quality and the level of TVET. It is an essential element toward the ASEAN community in 2015, enforcing the regional economic development, responding effectively to the global changing trends. I hope our endeavor will help launch and create the rise of professional ASEAN, the ASEAN community that is driven by quality manpower, and technically competent workforce

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thailand stands committed to work collaboratively with international organizations, regional organizations and neighboring countries, to sustainably promote vocational education and training. Particularly, we want to ensure that our youth receives the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and innovative thinking. The youths are our future quality population of ASEAN community.
In addition to education of our youthful students, Thailand as well as other countries want to lift our countries out of the Middle Income Trap. In so doing, productive workforce is the key. The new agenda for TVET in this regard is education of our workforce, most of which in Thailand, around 35-40 millions Thais, have received less than 9 years of basic education, and no vocational training whatsoever. For Thailand it is a challenge how TVET could be extended to this immense number of workforce. Delivering TVET to few millions students of education age-group of 15-20 years old is one thing, delivering TVET to 35-40 million workforce is a different matter altogether. It requires a new kind of thinking, stakeholders, logistics, not to mention financing mechanism. Moreover, many Asia countries are becoming grey, our population is aging. To create productive ageing economy, of which the ageing group is increasing, necessitates education of the ageing group. Taking the workforce and the ageing group into consideration, personally I am seeing that TVET has to migrate from TVET of the learning age group into the total population TVET. I would like to encourage all of us here to promote collaborative works, exchange experiences and views. By working together in the region and internationally we will be able to ease all the obstacles and challenges.

Finally, I would like to once again express my warm gratitude to all of you to the High Officials Meeting. I wish you enjoy your stay in Chiang Mai, known as the Rose of Thailand. Chiang Mai has its own uniqueness history, cultural and historical linkages with neighboring countries of Myanmar, Laos PDR and southern China. Its landscape and culture attract tourists from around the world. Apart from making fruitful meetings, I would like to invite you to take this opportunity to visit heritage sites in Chiang Mai.

I would like now to declare the open of the High Officials Meeting of SEA-TVET and I would like to wish you all successful meetings.

Thank you very much.