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**AT ASEM INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
ON LIFELONG LEARNING 2014**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS
NATIONAL POLICIES ON LIFELONG LEARNING : ISSUES,
CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

**MONDAY, 25 AUGUST 2014
PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE (PWTC)
KUALA LUMPUR**

1.Salutation

Distinguished participants and honoured guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam Mualaikum, Salam Sejahtera and a very Good morning.

1. First and foremost, Selamat Datang and welcome to Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to all our guests and participants who have taken the time off to attend this Seminar on Lifelong Learning. Your presence here from far and near at this Seminar has indeed made it very meaningful for the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia as we are looking forward to enhance the agenda of Lifelong Learning in the country. Thank you very much and congratulations to the ASEM Secretariat in Jakarta, the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub in Copenhagen and the MOE, Malaysia for making this event possible.

2. I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to deliver this key note address entitled “National Policies on Lifelong Learning: Issues, Challenges and The Way Forward” .

Distinguished Guests and Ladies & Gentlemen

3. Malaysia believes in regional empowerment. We believe that we can work together, with our neighbours, more so as members of a family, to promote our common interests. This seminar is a platform for us to emphasize the idea of lifelong learning among members of the public and society in general

4. We know that the ASEM LLL Hub established in 2005, is an official network of Asian and European higher education institutions, working and learning together to achieve excellence in comparative research on lifelong learning, to offer research-based education policy recommendation, and to develop mutual understanding between Asia and Europe. It also facilitates researcher and student mobility and exchange within and between the two world regions.

5. These efforts are in tandem with our Blueprint for the Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia 2011-2020 launched in 2011. The Blueprint has advocated that lifelong learning expands life choices and enhances people's quality of life. Through its initiatives, MOE has adopted an integrated human capital and talent development framework through the provision of quality education at all levels, including adult education. Now that LLL has been recognized as the third pillar of the country's human capital development, the national framework will promote and encourage adult learners in Malaysia to continue to learn throughout their lives. The Blueprint on Enculturation of LLL for Malaysia 2011-2020 strengthens the

nation's LLL agenda and provides more LLL opportunities to its citizens to raise their overall living standards. The Blueprint provides the much needed roadmap for an effective transformation of the nation's human capital.

6. The country will continue to promote lifelong learning among its population as we are targeted to reach 34.3 million people by the year 2020 and a working age group of 15 years old and above of about 26.2 million people that will form the bulk of the workforce in the country. Thus, the development of human capital and quality of life can be further enhanced through various lifelong learning initiatives.

Distinguished Guests and Ladies & Gentlemen

7. On the international front, The Ministry of Education Malaysia will continue to collaborate with institutions both in Asia and Europe to drive the LLL agenda at all levels including lifelong learning programmes and technical & vocational education and training (TVET). The MOE's role is to ensure that universities and colleges here continue to offer courses that are relevant and match the labour market. Lifelong learning courses including TVET will have to continuously engage the manufacturing, industrial and the services sector players to promote training and up-skilling or even reskilling courses to meet the demand of technological changes and innovation. This brings forth the challenges of finding employment for our graduates which is the phenomena for the growing global trends of unemployment among graduates.

8. The Government has responded to the post-2000 phenomenon of rising numbers of unemployed graduates with numerous commendable policy initiatives. These initiatives aim to make graduates more employable through job attachment and retraining programs, to place them in employment through incentives to employers, or provide them with the knowledge to set up small businesses. They are recognized as short-term lifelong learning policies, and as stated earlier -- the graduate unemployment phenomenon is largely due to a short-term imbalance between supply and demand of graduates, and unemployment that accompanies initial search for a good match by young graduates. The main challenge for policy makers is not simply ensuring that graduates find employment, but rather employment that best uses their education. Are government across Asia and Europe instituting lifelong learning programmes to enhance graduate employability ?

9. In an article written by Prof Allie Clemens from Monash University (sources: ASEMagazine for Lifelong Learning, May 2013), she puts forward the hypothesis that learning leads directly to employment is built more on fantasy rather than a reality. On the same note, her research findings on “A case study of lifelong learning and employment prospects in Australia” undertaken for UNESCO Bangkok indicated that Australia’s notion of level of education correlate directly with employment, is just too narrow for an educational logic or vision and it is not to life in a broader perspective. Thus, providers of lifelong learning including those in Malaysia may put forward our thoughts on what drives lifelong learning and why enhancing levels of

skill development only works for certain individuals on improving their employment status.

10. Interestingly the employment data shows those with qualification progress better than those without but it does only for some. I presume our panel of experts would deliberate on such important findings later on their respective workshop.

11. Does lifelong learning leads to the notion of employability which may put the responsibility of the government to prepare employment for the individual?

12. This and many other questions on lifelong learning versus employability lead us to formulating policy surrounding the purpose of lifelong learning vis-à-vis for employment market or just a motivation to learn and relearn.

13. Quoting from the same source, ASEMagazine for Lifelong Learning, May 2013, Professor Karen Evans postulates that adult learning gives good payoff and return of investment which justify for future investment in more lifelong learning programmes. It promotes employability and enhanced employment prospect, learning boost confidence in workplace. Adults on lifelong learning acquire higher skills level and use their skills more at workplace too. However Karen Evans sums up that growing polarization may occur in society when those most likely to participate in lifelong learning are those who already have higher level of qualification and education. As suggested by her, our policy matters need to look at serving

the needs of the under-served portion of the community through lifelong learning system that penetrates all levels of society.

14. One of the challenges is the need to consolidate efforts from various and diversified providers of lifelong learning in the country. Currently there are 14 Ministries in Malaysia offering various lifelong learning courses in their respective training institutions to cater for their specific needs. It is therefore crucial to have a coordinating body to facilitate and coordinate the various training providers in promoting lifelong activities in a sustainable and effective manner. This is to ensure our resources are efficiently used and minimize duplication of similar courses. Likewise across Asia and Europe, there are numerous lifelong learning associations and organisations that can perform better if more coordinate efforts are available.

15. Not only there are many LLL providers in Malaysia, there are certainly very diversified fields in LLL across ASEM too. In the article “Regional Qualification Frameworks are still only a promise” by Que Anh Dang, Head of ASEM Secretariat for the ASEM LLL Hub and Roger YChao Jt, PhD candidate in City University of Hong Kong (ASEM Magazine for Lifelong Learning, May 2013), stated that the diversity of Asia and European regions poses challenges to harmonise quality assurance and mutual recognition of higher education qualification and certification across both continents. These diverse education systems pose a complicated task for both regions to relate and equate qualifications, to promote students and academic mobility as well as research collaborations. Such diverse nature

also hampers articulation of education qualification and quality assurances at all levels.

16. Perhaps the differing rates of development and capacity of both regions (Asia and Europe) pose major obstacles in establishing Regional Qualification framework for Asia and Europe. As reported the regional qualification framework encountered political, administrative and educational barriers. The issues revolve upon the trusts element across the education system for Asia and Europe region. This implies LLL initiatives may not be necessary recognizable across the countries in both region.

17. One of the major challenges above will be the accreditation and recognition of LLL programmes across the countries in both regions.

Distinguished participants and honoured guests Ladies and Gentlemen

18. In the ASEAN region, the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL) was established in 2012 by the Minister of Education and Training Vietnam. SEAMEO CELLL aims to cater for the regional needs in promoting lifelong learning and provide opportunities for cooperation in the field of lifelong learning among SEAMEO Member Countries and Associate Member Countries, help strengthen the relationship and increase mutual understanding among educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers of the region, in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.

19. Thus, the vision of SEAMEO is to become a regional centre of excellence in research and training on lifelong learning, a regional forum for educational policy development on lifelong learning and a focal point for linkage among Southeast Asian, Asian and European countries to promote cooperation in lifelong learning.

20. With that SEAMEO also collaborates with international LLL organisations like ASEM LLL Hub based in Denmark and The Asia South Pacific Association For Basic And Adult Education (ASPBAE) based in Australia. Today **ASPBAE** advocates the right of all citizens to quality basic and adult education and meet the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. ASPBAE is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals such as dvv international (Germany), Dutch government, Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), ActionAid International, UNESCO Paris, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), British Commonwealth, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid), the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) among others. It works towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, life-long adult education and learning.

21. The common thread that runs across all the LLL organizations in Asia and Europe is that they provide more opportunities for lifelong learning to adults and community as a whole. The challenge is always the coordination of such programmes so that they complement each other and synergize in

terms of human capital development and transnational recognition within different LLL education system across Europe and Asia. In addition, funding remains a contentious issue in LLL to ensure sustainability of the programme which will need to be supported by the respective Government.

22. One of the main challenges for policy makers is not simply ensuring that lifelong learners continue to learn and make learning as part of their lives, but rather employment that best uses their lifelong education. The issue then is not just lifelong learning into any job, but the effective transmission of knowledge and skills acquired that will best use them both in their workplace as well as for their well-being.

23. This means that policymakers should be guided not just by whether these LLL courses are productive and effective for their specific purposes, and that policies to assist them are both efficient and cost-effective in delivering the desired outcomes as compared to the alternative of not intervening. This will require a greater degree of focus on monitoring and evaluation, and on evidence-based assessments of policy effectiveness than has hitherto been the case in Malaysia. Key recommendations should be in place to increase the productivity of labour forces and more broadly to improve the functioning and well-being of labor markets and the effectiveness of government interventions.

Distinguished guest, Ladies and Gentlemen

24. The Blueprint for the Enculturation of Lifelong Learning in Malaysia: 2011-2020 by the Ministry of Education prescribes four strategies for the enculturation of lifelong learning in this country, namely: to upgrade mechanisms and infrastructure for lifelong learning; to enhance public awareness and participation in lifelong learning; to ensure continuity and appreciation of lifelong learning; and to provide financial support for lifelong learning.

25. As the largest higher education lifelong learning provider of the country, Community Colleges, Polytechnics; Malaysia Technical Universities and the Open University in Malaysia need to play their roles effectively in this national agenda. The Blueprint signals the government's adoption of lifelong learning as a new national agenda. Lifelong learning is now recognised as the third pillar of human capital development after the school system and tertiary education. At present, Malaysia has 20 public universities, 33 Polytechnics, 90 Community Colleges, more than 60 private universities and universities colleges, 9 foreign universities branch campuses as well as over 400 private colleges throughout the country. These institutions will continue to drive the national education agenda as well as provide wider access and continuous learning courses both short and long term programmes for the general public including international students.

Distinguished guest, Ladies and gentlemen

THE WAY FORWARD

26. As a way forward, MOE, Malaysia will continue to promote LLL among the masses through the development of our portal site and having online directory for LLL programmes offered by various Ministries and Agencies in the country.

27. Other initiatives include sponsoring and organizing Seminar to create awareness and sharing of best practices and knowledge in LLL. MOE will continue working with both local institutions, private entities as well as other international bodies such as ASEM and UNESCO in promoting LLL as a way of life and to provide for the labour market needs.

28. MOE will also work closely with the industry to ensure workers are trained and updated their knowledge on a regular and consistent basis. We anticipate more involvement of the industries or private sectors in providing and supporting LLL among its workers. Incentive schemes will be put in place for higher remuneration for competent workforce that will be upgraded accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Distinguished Guests and Ladies & Gentlemen,

29. In conclusion, Malaysia hopes to play an important role in encouraging and promoting LLL not only in this country but in the region, especially between nations of Asia and Europe. We appreciate your cooperation and attendance at this seminar and I wish everyone here a fruitful seminar.

30. Once again, Selamat Datang to Malaysia and while you are here, please feel free to visit our beautiful country, savour the potpourri of food and experience the friendliness and warmth of our people and of course do some shopping as well.

31. I hope I have shared with you Malaysia's agenda on LLL, issues and challenges and the way forward, and that they will be useful for you. Wishing you every success in your coming plenary sessions as well as your workshops in these two days seminar.

Thank you and have a wonderful stay here in Malaysia.