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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the re-dedication of the Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary
Building

Bangkok, 27 December 2002

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here once again in Thailand on this, my second official visit to your beautiful country. My first official visit took place in January 2000, just two months after I assumed my duties as Director-General of UNESCO. That occasion, which was one of my earliest official visits to a Member State, was focused on a regional meeting on Education for All (EFA) in preparation for the momentous World Education Forum that took place in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be with you today to commemorate an important figure in education and in UNESCO's relationship to Thailand through the re-dedication of this building as the Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building.

Mr Pin Malakul was involved in education throughout his life and played a significant role in the advancement of education at all levels in Thailand, serving as Director-General of the Department of General Education, Permanent Secretary and, for eleven years, Minister of Education. He also was President of Silpakorn University.

A prolific writer, he also contributed to the literary arts and the safeguarding and conservation of historical monuments and sites. His works had an impact on Thailand's innovative education programmes leading to the creation of the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Through Mr. Pin Malakul's representation, Thailand was granted membership to UNESCO in 1949 as the 55th Member State. He later was elected to and served 2 terms on the UNESCO Executive Board in 1952-53 and 1954-55. His values and actions very much reflect the mission and purpose of UNESCO and therefore we are happy to be associated with the centenary anniversary of his birth next year.

In 1961, at the opening ceremony of the UNESCO Regional Office and Centre for Education, as it was then called, Mr Pin Malakul, Minister of Education in Thailand, assured UNESCO of his full support and co-operation, as well as that of all the officials of the Ministry of Education. Eight years later, in early January 1969, he returned to help lay the foundation stone for this very building to house the UNESCO and SEAMEO offices. Since then, the UNESCO relationship with Thailand has flourished and continued to grow.

UNESCO Bangkok values its close relationships with the Royal Thai Government and the Ministries of Culture, Education, Information and Communications Technology, and Science and Technology. The Royal Government of Thailand has generously supported the use of this building with an annual contribution. In addition, it has contributed a sizeable special allocation of funds, supplemented by funds from UNESCO, for the renovations we see in process today. For all of this support and generosity, we are greatly appreciative. However, I believe the relationship between UNESCO and Thailand has been and continues to be one of reciprocity.

In a statement released for the opening ceremony of the UNESCO Regional Office and Centre for Education, the then UNESCO Director-General, René Maheu, described the early sixties as a new era – one in which, for the first time in history, there was a call for at least seven years of free and compulsory education for all school children in Asia. It was a time when the Regional Office in Bangkok became integrally linked to the hopes and aspirations of the nations it is designed to serve.

In Thailand since then, UNESCO has been particularly active, planning and implementing programmes in a number of areas. This year, UNESCO's work in Thailand is being undertaken in the following areas:

- Education: through the programmes of APPEAL (the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All), APEID (the Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development), and the work of units promoting better educational planning and sector analyses and stronger national education statistics systems;
- Culture: working closely with the government, amongst many other things, on the improvement of monitoring and evaluation techniques of World Heritage cultural and natural sites;
- Science: making vital contributions of support to the initiatives on Coastal Regions and Small Islands (CSI) and Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS);
- Communication: developing important connections through recent regional conferences and seminars of the Asia Pacific Information Network (APIN) and the preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

- Social and Human Sciences: building capacity in poverty alleviation and teacher training in human rights education, and as focal point for the international Scouts Jamboree which opens tomorrow in Chonburi;
- HIV/AIDS: providing advocacy, support for preventive education and school health, capacity building, and research on the impact of the pandemic on education;
- The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education: involving Thailand in the development of better ICT policies, an ASEAN-wide Schoolnet, and the development of indicators to assess ICT use; and, finally,
- The collection, analysis and dissemination of information, in hard copy and through the web, by the Information and Programme Services unit.

The office's work in Thailand, as exemplified in its involvement in the Scout Jamboree with over 20,000 international participants, often links Thailand with other countries in the region and beyond in cooperative relationships and partnerships.

The activities of the UNESCO Bangkok office have three main dimensions. First, it is the UNESCO office for Thailand. Second, it is a cluster office serving countries of the Mekong region. And, third, it is the regional bureau for education. It also happens to be the largest office that UNESCO has. In association with these functions, UNESCO works in close proximity with many of the regional United Nations offices in Bangkok. In accordance with the United Nations Organisation theme of inter-agency collaboration, UNESCO's Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education is actively participating in activities which promote inter-agency cooperation both in national and regional programmes.

For example, in education, the office serves as chair, with UNICEF and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), for the Technical Working Group on Education for All. Meanwhile, the Culture Unit in Bangkok, in an inter-agency agreement with UNDP and UNOPS, is collaboratively developing and testing a village-based, GIS-linked sentinel surveillance system and computerized database for tracking and analysing the changing patterns in the trade in children and women from the Upper Mekong sub-region.

Another such collaborator is ESCAP, which has worked closely with UNESCO. Cooperative activities include Culture of Peace and Human Rights

programmes, and workshops and conferences on the development of tourism in the Greater Mekong subregion. Information exchange on a number of areas in education, information technology, policy and planning, HIV/AIDS research and programmes, youth, gender, and environment continue to be reinforced through direct and indirect linkages between databases in the two agencies.

Thus, the importance of UNESCO Bangkok in Thailand and within the region is clear and the outlook for further collaboration with the Royal Government of Thailand and the family of United Nations Agencies in the future is very positive.

In his remarks at the opening ceremony of this office in 1961, Mr Pin Malakul offered words of congratulations not to UNESCO but to the people of Thailand, for welcoming the establishment of a UNESCO Regional Office in the country's capital. It is my honour to say once again congratulations and an added heartfelt thanks to the people of Thailand for advancing the UNESCO relationship with Thailand and the region and for commemorating the legacy of Mom Luang Pin Malakul through the re-dedication of the Darakarn Building as the Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building. UNESCO looks forward to the continued reciprocity of friendship and support with the government and people of Thailand well into the future.

Thank you.