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**OPENING REMARKS BY
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ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**AT
THE TECHNICAL MEETING ON ILO/APSDEP ACTIVITIES
BANGKOK, THAILAND, 8 OCTOBER 2001**

**Distinguished participants and guests
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning - it is a great pleasure to welcome you to this technical meeting, and to Bangkok. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you all for joining us here today. This is yet another demonstration of the continuing support that you have given to this programme and to its activities.

APSDEP is a regional ILO programme, designed to promote technical and vocational education and training. In the two decades since it was founded in 1978, it has done a great deal to further these goals, particularly through technical workshops, seminars and training courses. Many of the activities initiated by APSDEP have made strong contributions to vocational training systems in Asia and the Pacific.

APSDEP has a solid record of achievement. However - together with our tripartite partners - we see the need for change. Globalization and the revolution in information and communications technology are just two of the factors that have helped reshape the world of work. APSDEP, too, needs to be reshaped to take into account changing needs and priorities - so that it can provide the programmes and information that member countries need.

It is also important to view this reform process within the broader compass of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. Our organization's primary goal is to ensure that all women and men have access to opportunities for decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Globally, we face a huge deficit of decent work. Tackling it is an urgent task. The Decent Work Agenda, and the national plans that we draw up with our constituents, will help us focus and direct our efforts most effectively. Skill development has an enormous role to play in addressing this challenge. For every country in today's globalizing world, human resource development plays a critical part in determining economic success. Rapid technological change means that the training and knowledge required in sectors and industries can also change - and from month to month. The pace and the extent of this change have huge implications for human resource development. It affects all the actors in this field, the roles they play, and the work they do. The challenges facing those who develop competency standards is one example.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, we have discussed the ways in which APSDEP can cope with these changing demands and sought the views of member countries. We did this most recently in June in Geneva. At that meeting, I highlighted three key issues:

1. New skill requirements emerging from globalization, international competitiveness and the changing nature of work;
2. Information technology and vocational training; and
3. Constraints on resources and personnel.

In this new global environment, APSDEP needs to focus on the fields that are of highest priority. We must be ready to respond to the new challenges that we face. And our responses must be as just as strong and just as new as the challenges themselves. I believe we must use today's technology to our advantage. We can use that technology to build on our existing strengths - to promote networking between governments, training institutes and other organizations in the region, so that they can share information on skill development more effectively.

At our meeting in June, these considerations were at the forefront of our minds. The need to reform APSDEP to take account of new global circumstances is well understood. In the wake of this meeting, we issued a questionnaire to seek the opinions of ILO member States. I think that the response to that questionnaire reflects the strong support that has been given to our current efforts towards revitalization.

This meeting is the final step in the reform process and is intended to be conclusive and binding. I think that we can confidently say that our efforts to move ahead are taking firm shape. The next two days will do much to determine the outcome of the hard work done so far. Your thoughts, your inputs and your expertise in various fields will be of enormous value. I hope that you will not be hesitant about expressing your opinions and sharing your views. We are confident that this meeting will provide us with a firm foundation for APSDEP's future work in the region.

Once again, I thank you for your presence here today. I look forward to working together to lay the foundations for a renewed, revitalized APSDEP - an APSDEP that is a centre of excellence for human resource development in Asia and the Pacific.

Thank you.