

**Opening Remarks by Anne Lemaistre, UNESCO Representative and ESWG Chair
National Workshop on the Dissemination of the ESP 2014-2018**

02 May 2014

*H.E. Minister Dr. Hang Chuon Naron,
Excellencies Secretaries of State and Under-Secretaries of State,
Director Generals and Directors of Technical Departments,
Representatives of Provincial Offices of Education,
ESWG colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,*

We are here today to officially commence operationalizing the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014-2018. On behalf of the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), I would like to congratulate the Leadership of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport for developing the ESP internally – demonstrating the Ministry’s institutional and technical capacities in education planning. Expectations from this ESP are huge as it is one of the strategic plans that provides the foundations to realize Cambodia’s aspirations in joining the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015, becoming an upper-middle income country by 2030, and becoming a developed country by 2050. To achieve these aspirations, the ESP is reflected within the National Strategic Development Plan. The ESP is a strategic roadmap to guide us while we are upgrading quality of human capital of Cambodia for rapidly changing job markets.

The ESP 2014-2018 also introduces a major shift in education planning in Cambodia. For the first time, the ESP is based on a sub-sector planning approach involving national and sub-national consultations, especially with the Provincial Offices of Education, District Offices of Education, and school directors and teachers. The ESP is also a result of several mutual dialogue platforms, including the Annual Education Congress, the Annual Education Sector Retreat, the Joint Technical Working Group in Education, and Sub-Technical Working Groups. The Department of Planning (DoP) of the Ministry has been instrumental throughout the ESP drafting and finalization – congratulations to the DoP! Through the ESWG platform, the development partners, NGOs, and all relevant education partners were engaged in providing technical as well as financial inputs to the ESP development process. I would like to particularly acknowledge the financial contribution of the Global Partnership for Education for the grant to support formulation of the ESP.

The ESWG is very pleased with the existing collaborative culture among all stakeholders during the ESP development. The ESWG hopes this collaboration remains throughout the ESP implementation. In addition, the ESWG welcomes the

Annual Operation Plan 2014 playing a role as a baseline for the ESP implementation within 2015-2018, especially for ESP monitoring purposes to be reported in the Education Congress in 2015.

Excellency, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is now the times to turn the ESP into deliverables that ultimately address the 10 Core Breakthrough Indicators (CBI-s) and sub-sector indicators. As discussed and agreed upon during the recent Joint Technical Working Group Retreat in Sihanoukville, a very close monitoring of the ESP implementation will be essential to ensure that we are on track in achieving the results set-out in this ESP. In this spirit, the ESWG encourages the Ministry to carefully plan its investment programmes to meet the ESP Objectives enabling clear linkages between budget and policies. ESWG looks forward to working with the Ministry and all partners in strengthening the ESP monitoring mechanisms that will enhance efficient delivery of quality teaching and learning for all learners.

An effective monitoring, based on consolidated data from EMIS, will help us to discover lessons learned which then will be useful for improving the ongoing efforts and for better planning the next steps. It is critical that monitoring is not be perceived as an act of judgment but rather as a tool of improvement. Therefore, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the ESP Management and monitoring structures at all levels: Central, Provincial, District and school levels. As envisaged, it is important that the Sub-Sector Leadership takes the lead, build ownership and be accountable for joint activities to respond to the sub-sector planning approach. The ESWG will be happy to support the Sub-Sector Leads in doing so, together with the technical support of the Department of Planning. In this regard, the ESWG welcomes the Ministry's functional and organizational structure review to reflect the ESP implementation needs. The ESWG appreciates an insertion of the ESP log frame with policies, strategies, outcomes and programmes following the ESWG's recommendation in the ESP.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The successful implementation of ESP requires support from the Ministry staff members of all levels including the PoEs, school directors, development partners, NGOs and civil society organizations, and all relevant education stakeholders - parents and students, and especially the 87,203 teachers. All of these stakeholders need to be well aware of vision and activities of the ESP and AOP. Then, they can feel more engaged in the ESP implementation. Keeping this in mind, we need to make

additional efforts towards a systematic approach to hearing their voices for their participation and feedback for continuous quality improvement.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by reiterating a point made by an independent appraisal of the draft ESP. To achieve Cambodia's educational aspirations and economic growth targets, Cambodia needs much more aggressive public investments in its education sector in a timely manner. In this spirit, the ESWG reaffirms our continued commitment to supporting the Ministry's goals in transforming the education sector. Thank you!