

Opening Remarks
by Mr Chaturon Chaisang
Minister of Education, Thailand
at the Opening Ceremony of Global Forum on Media and Gender
2st December 2013
Imperial Queens'Park Hotel

Mr. Janis Karklins, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO,
Mr. Ahmed Said OULD-BAH, Director of External Relations Department, ISESCO
Dr.Eun-Ju Kim, ITU,
Mr Luc Stevens, UN Resident Coordinator,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my very great pleasure and honour to welcome you here today to this milestone global forum on gender and media. This is the first global event on gender and media and is an important follow up to one of the critical areas of concern expressed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, “Women and Media Diagnosis”. The forum will promote the free flow of ideas by word and image, which is the solid foundation for peace, sustainability, poverty eradication and human rights. It will also enhance the importance of women and gender equality, and the potential and capacity of women to contribute to all fields of endeavour.

In this regard, Thailand is proud that our current Prime Minister, H.E. Yingluck Shinawatra, is a woman. She has actively encouraged more extensive women's engagement in politics, economics and social development and, in 2012, she initiated the Thai Women's Empowerment Fund and subsequently the Centre to Eliminate Violence against Women. Her commitment to empowering women in society, and her support of this idea, was recognised in April this year when she received the “Woman of the Year, 2013” award, and is reflected in such activities as the launch of “Smart Lady Thailand”, a reality show aimed at promoting the ability of Thai women..

The principal objectives of this meeting starting today are twofold. The first objective is to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in, and through the media. The second is to promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media. More generally, this forum will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment globally by improving the coverage of issues affecting women, and increasing female representation in media leadership and staffing.

If the Beijing Declaration was the first major step in empowering women globally, then this forum will hopefully be the second step and will see the formation of a Global Alliance on Media and Gender.

The media plays an important role in our daily lives. It shapes our thoughts and behaviours. And we are constantly exposed to media messages, images and advertisements. Such representations can either advance gender equality and women's empowerment, or they may reinforce discriminating and marginal attitudes to gender, oppressive stereotypes, misconceptions and prejudices, and fail to represent the voices of women.

For media to produce coverage that is complete and diverse, it is essential that media content goes deeper than male-centric and stereotypical perspectives. All journalists, both male and female, can play a role in creating an enabling environment for promoting gender equality and eliminating gender based stereotypes and disseminating particular values in and through the media.

As Minister for Education, I reflect on the role of education in this process. Education clearly has an important role to play. At a basic level, in primary and secondary school, it can promote the idea of gender equality and encourage future generations to embrace the concept. More specifically, the issue of equality and women's empowerment can be

addressed in professional media related education and training programmes. And, more generally, and perhaps more importantly, the media can be used a powerful educational tool and means of widely disseminating and reinforcing particular values.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, in welcoming you all and opening this meeting, I would like to say a special word of thanks to all those who have made this event a reality and for their strong commitment and collaboration in organizing and convening this Global Forum on Media and Gender.

It gives me great pleasure to officially declare this Global Forum on Media and Gender open.

Thank you.