

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the beautiful Ho Chi Minh City. It is likewise my pleasure to welcome you to the ASEM LLL Hub Conference: Lifelong Learning and Resilience in Disaster Management – Asian and European Perspectives. It is a pleasure for ASEM LLL Hub, together with SEAMEO CELLL to be the host of this conference. And tonight I have been given the honour of welcoming you.

My name is Anders Martinsen and I am Head of Secretariat for the ASEM LLL Hub. The ASEM LLL Hub 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 provides a platform for dialogue between researchers, practitioners and policy makers in order to contribute to evidence-based educational reform and innovation within different fields. Having said that, the Hub is at the moment organized around five different research networks: e-Learning, Workplace Learning, Professionalization of Adult Educators, National Strategies for Lifelong Learning, Core Competences - and yes, you did not hear ‘Disaster Management’.

Are we then on shaky ground? I do not believe that is the case.

Historically this rooftop bar where we are standing was used for giving military press briefings during the Vietnam War. This press brief was given the derogatory term “Five o’clock Follies”, but I am not here to deliver a folly.

I invited you – 70 people - researchers, practitioners, and different stakeholders - from 18 different countries. And we are we are here to share knowledge and to learn from each other.

I am looking very much forward to observe how the conference, among others, can combine the technical aspects of resilience and disaster with a focus on lifelong learning, and also going as wide as learning from the aspect of restoring heritage.

So how do we prepare for, recover from, reduce and prevent disasters. And not least, how do we identify disasters, which on purpose has not been set for

this conference. There are no right or wrong. But there are different approaches that we with this conference hope to combine.

As described by Academic Network for Disaster Resilience to Optimise Educational Development (ANDROID) under the European Commission: "...the very difficult aspect of disasters has led to recognition that risk reduction through increased resilience will require a strategy that is inter-disciplinary. But with their words, "...capitalising on the vast amount of existing knowledge and improving the use and accessibility of research results for operational activities is a big challenge for policy-makers and risk managers."

So giving this complexity, lifelong learning is considered as an appropriate way of ensuring continuous education to the various stakeholders of disaster management.

During this conference, it is our hope that we can identify what is perceived as 'burning issues' in relation to education, lifelong learning and disaster management in the coming years. That we look at how the vision of lifelong learning and resilience is renewed within different fields of research and what impact it has, or will have, on policy in those areas and in the field of disaster management. And also that we can provide research-informed policy recommendations to policymakers and practitioners in terms of lifelong learning with a focus on disaster management and resiliency in the face of emergencies.

Reading all of the interesting, and also very diverse, abstracts I am not in doubt of the aforementioned. Instead, I am looking forward to hear presentations that, among others, state that:

- 1) 'more assured resilience to disaster will only be achieved if the cultural integrity of people is also maintained',
- 2) 'in the context of education, sustaining cultural values is indeed a lifelong learning experience',
- 3) 'we cannot wait for disasters to occur to learn from them'.

Along with all other interesting presentations, I am looking forward to get more knowledge of the Asian and European perspectives in the field of lifelong learning and resilience in disaster management.

I wish you all a good conference.