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**Creating regionally compatible TVET systems
in the ASEAN region!**

Opening statement at the „Regional TVET Conference – Supporting AEC-Integration
through Inclusive and Labour Market oriented TVET“

13 December 2015, Vientiane, Laos

(Salutatory address)

I am very pleased to be able to join you today for the opening of the **third regional TVET conference**.

Three years ago, we were hosted by Jakarta, one and a half years ago we met in Hanoi. At each of our past meetings there was the opportunity for us to have an open exchange and constructive discussions. At each meeting we were able to develop different solutions to the various challenges in the economy and the labour market and we all went home with many new ideas. I am sure that the same will be true after these two days here in Vientiane. I would like to thank the **Ministry for Education and Sports of Laos** for having organised this conference with us.

The world has moved even closer together since the last two conferences. The technical possibilities for sharing and accessing information are continuously evolving. Across borders, people are linked through networks and countries are moving closer together – by the day and by the hour, ever more rapidly and intensively.

Networks and **regional cooperation** are a huge benefit for any country. They help to further stability and peace, and they promote social and economic development. The way your countries have come together to create the **ASEAN region** is a case in point. ASEAN has become one of **Germany's key trading and business partners**. It is impressive to see how much growth and potential is being created through ongoing integration.

Germany will not only continue to observe how things progress, but will actively support the process. Because we know from our own experience how important regional associations are. **Creating a common economic area** opens up a wealth of

opportunities. In order to make full use of these opportunities, each of the countries involved must undertake targeted **reforms**.

One important area is **technical and vocational education and training** (TVET). It is a deciding factor for successful social and economic development. The **ASEAN Charta** and other international political frameworks like the **Sustainable Development Goals** (goals 4,5,8) quite rightly stress the importance of vocational education and training.

Just like the **markets for goods, labour** markets, too, are moving closer together.

Vocational education and training systems need to respond to that. They must not only be looked at from a national perspective, but must be made **compatible at the regional level**.

This conference will look at **four areas for action**, in which we want to improve vocational education and training. Let me share with you some thoughts for each of the four areas, drawing on our German approach to vocational training – the **dual system** – **TVET Made in Germany**. Some of it, I believe, can work in other countries as well.

1. Governance

In order for a **vocational training system** to be effective and meet the needs of the labour market, the following are needed:

- a sound **legal and financial basis**,
- an education system under which **transfer from and to other levels of the education system**, for instance to higher education, is possible and

- a strong and, most importantly, an active role for the **private sector**.

2. Inclusion

A good TVET system is **open to all population groups**, including disadvantaged people, for instance people with disabilities. Helping to ensure that the necessary **framework** for inclusion and equal opportunities is in place, is an **important goal of Germany's development cooperation work**.

This involves not only institutional and organisational matters, but also the **teaching aspect**.

- School curricula and classes must be designed in such a way that learners with disabilities can be integrated as well,
- learning assessments need to be adapted and
- teaching staff need to be given special training.

We have gained a lot of experience in this regard in Germany and will gladly share it with you.

3. Labour market orientation

The purpose of vocational training is clear. It is to prepare people for demanding, productive work. For it to be successful, **businesses with local, national and regional operations need to be involved as well**. That is the only way to train skilled workers in a way that is practice-oriented and meets the needs of the labour market.

The qualities of the various courses and degrees offered by different companies and schools must be **comparable**. Only then will people and businesses benefit from increased mobility. Common standards in the curricula and reference frameworks are a prerequisite. This is of particular importance in a labour market that is not defined by national borders, like for instance in future within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

4. Personnel

You can only train skilled workers if you have **trained trainers who can teach the skills and courses**. The group of teaching staff is very heterogeneous. Some are from management, others are trainers in TVET facilities and companies; trainers are specialised in different fields and teach at different levels. Their needs in terms of training differ; and they should all be trained specifically for their various tasks.

These four areas have proven key in **Germany** for ensuring that **graduates who have completed vocational training and taken the master craftsman's examination** are extremely well regarded. That is why I am all the more **delighted** that the **German Meister** (master craftsman's examination) has made it into a **government strategy paper** in Malaysia. The eleventh Malaysia Plan refers to it as an example for a **Malaysian Meister Programme**.

But let me raise a **fifth issue** which is becoming increasingly important for the global economy and thus for TVET worldwide. I'm referring to **Green Skills** – that is knowledge in areas such as energy efficiency and renewable energies. It is a **massive growth market** – and offers huge win-win potential. Green skills in the energy sector can help achieve several goals at once: providing people with affordable and reliable energy supply, saving raw materials and protecting the climate

and the environment. With a view to establishing a Green Economy in the ASEAN region, the definition of occupations and curricula in the areas of resource conservation, renewable energy, agriculture and health will need to be expanded and updated.

We can use **TVET** to **chart the course for the subsequent development of the economy**. But, naturally, this is not just about the future of different economies. This is first and foremost about the **future of people**. Practice-oriented vocational training designed to meet market needs, means that people can get jobs as skilled workers, earn a decent income, lift themselves out of poverty and lead a decent life.

Technical and vocational education and training clearly is a crucial instrument to counter the much feared phenomenon of **brain drain**. If people feel that they have attractive opportunities at home, they will not feel forced to seek better lives elsewhere.

Therefore vocational education should figure high on any development agenda.

We have already **achieved a lot** in this region through our cooperation. Germany will be happy to continue to support your efforts – in particular with an eye to your common **major project AEC** (ASEAN Economic Community), which will come into being in just a few days.

The main objective of this conference is to enhance **networks** and **regional cooperation**. We want to contribute in terms of political and technical exchanges, in terms of knowledge management, through alumni networks and cross-country technical working groups.

Germany, too, will make the **concept of networking a living reality**. We look forward to identifying new opportunities for cooperation with donor organisations and companies, both international and regional.

Our conference is to be marked by the same **spirit of exchanging and sharing**. I wish us all interesting discussions, good ideas and creative concepts.

May vocational education and training **open up new opportunities** in the entire ASEAN region, for countries, for the economy and, most importantly for the people.