Remarks by Ms. Esther Kuisch Laroche
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on the occasion of the 4th National and 3rd International Conference on Skills
Training and Employment

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am very pleased and honoured to participate in this Conference on Skills
Training and Employment.

This conference is being held at a very timely moment, as global consultations
with governments, civil society, the private sector and youth have identified skills
for work and entrepreneurship as a central priority in the education and
development post-2015 agenda.

As you know, millions of young women and men around the world are calling for
better skills to participate in their societies and economies.

Employers in all sectors are looking for skilled employees who are continually
learning.
Skills development in particular through Technical and Vocational Education and Training lies at the heart of all of this.

TVET is about opportunities, about making the most of the capacities of every woman and man for the benefit of economies and societies.

It is also about rights, about the dignity of every person and their potential for self-realisation.

The stakes are especially high for young people.

Their transition to the world of work poses challenges for all countries.

All of this raises a fundamental question – how can we unleash the potential of TVET to be a reliable driver for employability and job opportunities?

This question is posed for all countries, at all levels of development.

Every nation must answer the question in ways that are meaningful to its own context and needs.

Making TVET a reliable driver for employability requires transformed national skills strategies.

This calls for moving TVET to a centre stage and for developing high-quality, lifelong, and innovative Technical and Vocational Education and Training.
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

We are making progress.

The post-2015 education and development agenda acknowledges, to an unprecedented degree, the importance of affordable and high-quality TVET.

Developing and developed countries are seeking new ways to develop skills, to improve employability, to reduce poverty, to sharpen productivity, and to enhance social cohesion.

However, at the same time, in many countries, still too few people benefit from quality and relevant TVET, and TVET remains marginal in many national policies.

UNESCO’s position on this is clear.

TVET is essential for national sustainable development – it is vital for employment and more broadly for lifelong learning and human development.

This was the message of the 3rd International Congress on TVET, which was organised by UNESCO in China in 2012. This is also the message of the Incheon Declaration adopted by the global education leaders last month.

We need a 21st Century TVET -- better we need a post-2015 TVET, a TVET for employment, decent work and inclusive economies and societies. Hence, a TVET to build new patterns of sustainable development.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have seen progress in countries, for example, in Australia, Germany and Brazil, where Governments have married political will and strong policy contexts for strategies adapted to local needs and including all relevant partners.

There has also been progress, for example in Malaysia and Denmark, where qualifications systems are reformed to further reflect on the mechanisms for cooperation between the education & training system and the labour market, and where they continuously review and renew qualifications, and education & training provisions.

Progress in making TVET a reliable route to employment has also happened in Austria and the Republic of Korea where they have made TVET attractive, strengthened work-place learning, introduced flexible pathways between all levels of education including tertiary education, and have developed career guidance and counselling.

There has also been success in Colombia and Chile, where Governments have strengthened TVET to combat all forms of discrimination to overcome barriers to entry and progression in the world of work, especially for girls and women.

Strong TVET requires strong policy contexts. It needs comprehensive and inclusive national skills strategies and investment. India and South Africa’s skills strategies and skills funds are good examples in that regard.

A post-2015 TVET must go beyond job-specific skills to equip youth and adults with the knowledge, tools and attitudes for entrepreneurship, learning to
continuously learn and to positively contribute to societies. This requires qualified and motivated teaching staff, as is the case in Finland and Singapore.

A transformed TVET cannot just be for *some* – it must happen in multiple settings and be accessible to all women and men. This calls for broad partnerships with all stakeholders in particular the private sector as well as civil society, and particularly youth organisations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Technical and vocational education and training is a UNESCO priority.

UNESCO’s work in TVET is guided by our *TVET Strategy* (2010-2015) that has three areas of action.

First: to provide upstream policy advice and capacity development to Member States.

Second: to clarify skills development approaches, review and develop normative instruments, and improve monitoring and evaluation.

And third: to inform the global TVET debate and enhance international cooperation.

We have supported and continue to support TVET reforms in several Member States including Egypt, Madagascar, El Salvador, Malaysia and other countries.

We also act at the regional level. UNESCO is helping to review and prepare a regional TVET strategy for the Pacific, to be endorsed by the region’s Education Ministers next year.
We also recently published a reference book on TVET called: “Unleashing the potential, transforming TVET”¹. This book provides a review of a decade of TVET development across the world and sets an approach for TVET reforms which integrates economic growth, social equity and sustainability dimensions.

At the international level, UNESCO is making the case for TVET and supporting international dialogue. As a convener, UNESCO creates global platforms, like the Third International Congress in China in 2012 and the World Education Forum in the Republic of Korea, which allow Member States to share ideas and learn from peers around the globe and define common agendas such as the Shanghai Consensus and the Incheon Declaration.

The UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC), based in Bonn, Germany, is producing essential knowledge through its collection of promising practices, TVET systems database and TVET- ipedia. UNEVOC provides a hub to a global network, including 289 UNEVOC Centres in 167 States which cooperate on issues such as youth transition to the world of work.

Ladies and gentlemen

In closing, let me say that I hope the messages from this Conference will emphasise how TVET is essential to employability, jobs opportunities and sustainable development. I hope this Conference will recognise the urgent need in shifting the paradigm, from a view of TVET as a one-time, dead-end exercise, plagued by disconnected programs and institutions – to TVET as lifelong learning, offering clear and customizable learning pathways to attaining the skills and

¹ http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002330/233030E.pdf
qualifications learners need to enter the labour market and engage in further learning.

Partnership is essential to success. It needs the voices of policy-makers, parliamentarians, social partners, and civil society from all countries, along with the expertise of regional and international organisations.

And, it requires international cooperation and collaboration, peer learning and knowledge sharing.

In that regard, please allow me to reaffirm that UNESCO, through its services, institutes and networks, stands ready to support you in advancing your skills development agenda, in further developing your TVET system and unleashing its full potential.

I wish you all a very successful conference and I look forward to hearing the outcomes.

Thank you.