

**Brief remarks by Amb. Enksaikhan J. at the opening session of the conference
“University Development – a Common platform: Austria-Mongolia”**

Vienna

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Dr. Weitgruber,
Rector Schmoellebeck,
Esteemed Austrian and Mongolian participants of this conference,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to thank the organizers of this conference for inviting me and my colleague to the opening of what seems to me to be a very promising and useful conference. It was made possible first and foremost thanks to the Eurasia-Pacific UNINET that conceived the idea to bring together Austrian and Mongolia educational institutions to address the issue of establishing a common platform on university development. Our thanks also go to the Austrian side for organizing it in Vienna, Austria which is the country's prime educational center.

Austria was one of the first western countries to have established diplomatic relations with Mongolia and, until the demise of the socialist system, was one of the few non-socialist partners that provided an alternative development option. It was not only one of the important trade partners at that time, but also provided an educational model that de-emphasized ideological approach and emphasized scientific and practical approach.

Today Mongolia maintains diplomatic relations with almost 130 countries. In the increasing foreign relations of Mongolia, Austria has a special place. It is based on our similarities: land-locked location (meaning no independent access to the seas and oceans), bordering on great powers, promoting active neutral foreign policies. In our relations with Austria, one of our priorities is to promote relations in the educational and cultural areas.

Today Mongolia still can boast that its literacy rate is high¹. Knowing the importance of literacy in social development and overcoming poverty, Mongolia was the initiator of the 2003-2012 UN Literacy Decade: education for all. Mongolia's experience as a developing country is being shared in many countries.

However, as well know, literacy is only the first step in acquiring education or quality education. There are neo-literates, literates but not educated, functionally literates, science literates and many other categories. With still weak educational system it is important for Mongolia to prevent reappearance of illiteracy and increase synergies between formal and non-formal education. The disparity in quality of education in urban and rural areas is still enormous. In the higher education, the quality of education, of

¹ According to the 2006 Education for All global monitoring report, in 2005 the adult literacy rate in Mongolia was 97.8 percent.

teaching methodology still need to be improved, while learning material for adult literacy is still not fully developed. In these and other areas there is much that can be learned from Austria and its experience. On the other hand, Mongolia's experience and the challenges that it is facing would also be useful to addressing similar situations in other developing countries with which Austria promotes education cooperation.

The conference is being held in the spirit of the memorandum of understanding signed by the Mongolian and Austrian educational ministries in 2003. The planned 6 workshops will cover wide areas, including strategic development, services for strategic implementation of R & D, strategic considerations in cooperation with industry/consulting, etc. I am sure that the workshop on "University autonomy: teaching, research and finances" will be an interesting and useful workshop. I believe that such a multi-institutional conference with multi-dimensional agenda would be practically useful for all the participants. I wish participants a very fruitful work and outcome.

The program envisages a day trip to Wachau Danube Valley, Lower Austria, including tour of the well-known University of Applied Sciences of St. Poelten. The UAS is known for its studies in such fields as computer simulation, media management, social work, telecommunication and media. I am sure that this will be a memorable trip for our Mongolian participants and will also provide opportunity to get to know better their colleagues and their wonderful country.

With these few words I wish you all a successful conference.