

Speech by  
**Dr. Pisit Charoenwongsa**  
**Director SEAMEO SPAFA**  
given on  
**19 March 2007**  
at the  
Opening Ceremony of the SEAMEO-SPAFA

**Regional Workshop on Making Mangrove an Eco-Museum**

19-28 March 2007  
Bangpakong Bovorn Witthayayon Secondary School  
Chachoengsao, Thailand

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H.E. Professor Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, Minister of Education of Thailand

Distinguished delegates

Director of Bangpakong Bovorn Witthayayon School

President of the School Alumni Association

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Excellency,

We felt very much honoured when you accepted our invitation to grace the opening ceremony of our workshop. We are most delighted and happy that you could actually come amidst all the works which you are entrusted with in solving problems for the nation.

May I ask your permission to inform our colleagues here a little bit about the school and also our centre and its mission?

We are working with the school to raise awareness of the importance of the mangrove as one of the very many types of educational resources. This is to say that whatever you have near and in your school compound can be made teaching and learning materials.

We believe in the concept of 'interconnectedness', just as scientists have elaborated that 'everything is connected to everything else'.

As for the history of the museum, the mangrove was planted in 1975 with the initiative of the then school's Director Thamnoon Wisaichosu and was nurtured to become, in the first place, a study area of environment for students. It has subsequently been improved by all school administrators and has won many environmental awards so far.

In 1998, after the celebration of the school centennial, a working group led by H.E. Professor Dr. Wichit Srisan-an was set up to plan for the establishment of a museum in the school compound as an integrated learning centre on nature and culture by making use of the mangrove as educational resources first and then extending to cover other activities beyond mangrove use.

It was the school's Alumni Association's Museum Committee, chaired by H.E. Professor Wichit Srisan-an, that conceived the idea of developing the school area into a museum and centre for educational and recreational purposes. The museum was officially opened on 17 November 2001.

And now I would like to give some information about SEAMEO-SPAFA. SEAMEO-SPAFA is a Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts under the aegis of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education (SEAMEO), an inter-governmental organization with 11 Member States, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. There are also SEAMEO Associate Member Countries which are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Spain.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) was established on 30 November 1965 as a chartered international organization whose purpose is to promote cooperation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region. SPAFA is one of 15 Centres throughout the region and it is hosted by the Government of Thailand through the Ministry of Education to which H.E. Prof. Dr. Wichit is currently the Minister.

SEAMEO -SPAFA's vision is

"To instill pride in Southeast Asian heritage to enable the careful management of it and its promotion through sustainable development programmes that directly benefit communities and thus raise the quality of life of Southeast Asian people".

May I take this opportunity to elaborate a little bit more that SPAFA has covered many more disciplines than actually indicated by its name. Our regional programmes focus on the following areas:

archaeology, fine arts, visual arts, art education, architecture, museology, performing arts, cultural resource management, cultural heritage management, and tourism.

SEAMEO-SPAFA is focused on (1) longer-term sustainable programming and (2) working in partnership.

We believe that the most effective results are obtained from longer-term programming and by working in partnership - we have the added benefits of combining resources; not just funds but people also; and can avoid duplicating efforts.

Our motto is:

*Educating for Sustainable Development through Cultural Resource Management*

Throughout our work efforts we have identified community involvement as the real or key issue that needs attention because our emphasis is on people and their relationship with conservation and heritage. We firmly believe that to safeguard heritage and to develop programmes that will be sustainable that they must be inclusive i.e. they must involve all interested parties.

This is why we are so pleased to be involved in this community project here at Bangpakong and to see the active participation of the local community.

The message we send out from Southeast Asia is that we are rich in resources and that we are aware these resources require wise management. To make wise management a reality we try to maximize the benefits of networking, building relationships, learning from each other, and developing strong mutually beneficial partnerships.

We believe that over the coming days, this workshop will indeed help us improve upon 'wise-management' strategies, directly benefit the museum here at the school, and also the work of all participants from around the region.

Thank you.